

**FRIDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 1996**

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

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable members, I have to advise the House that today I received from the Auditor-General a report titled Queensland Audit Office Auditing Standards July 1996 and the report on Audits of Universities and Grammar Schools for 1995.

**PETITIONS**

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

**School Cleaning**

From **Mr Purcell** (7 signatories) requesting the House to reverse the decision by the Minister for Education to privatise cleaning in Queensland schools.

**Colmslie Beach Land**

From **Mr Purcell** (51 signatories) requesting the House to support and encourage the sale of 8.99 hectares of land—real property description 201432, Lot 2, Colmslie Road, Murarrie (also known as Colmslie Beach) to the Brisbane City Council without delay at open space prices for the purpose of parkland to be held in perpetuity for the people of Brisbane. The majority of prime riverfront land has been sold to industry and the undersigned believe the State Government should sell this site to the Brisbane City Council for the benefit of the people of Brisbane and future generations for recreational purposes.

**Gateway Bridge Toll; Busway Project**

From **Mr Purcell** (352 signatories) requesting the House to (a) remove the toll on the Gateway Bridge to remove the impediment to peak hour traffic and encourage use of the Gateway Arterial which would also reduce traffic congestion in the central city area and (b) support the Brisbane City Council's busway project which is designed to massively increase patronage of Brisbane buses to reduce the increase in private vehicle use.

**Mother/Baby Residential Unit, Gold Coast**

From **Mr Quinn** (1,840 signatories) requesting the House establish and fund the daily operation of a mother/baby residential unit on the Gold Coast.

**Public Housing**

From **Mr Roberts** (362 signatories) requesting the House to take actions to ensure that the coalition Government meets its commitments to (a) tenants in public housing, that they are not charged more than 25 per cent of their income in rent (b) tenants in public housing, that they are not disadvantaged and (c) introduce accountable strategies for addition and replacement of housing stock to ensure that proceeds of sales of public housing to tenants are reinvested in public housing.

**Suncorp**

From **Mr Welford** (1 signatory) requesting the House to reject any move to sell off Suncorp.

Petitions received.

**PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table—

- (a) Premier (Mr Borbidge)—  
Report on visit to the United States of America from 14 to 25 August 1996
- (b) Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for the Arts (Mrs Sheldon)—  
Queensland Office of Financial Supervision—Annual Report 1995-96
- (c) Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport (Mr Veivers)—  
Report on study tour to Atlanta, New York and London from 16 to 30 July 1996.

**OVERSEAS VISIT****Report**

**Hon. M. D. VEIVERS** (Southport—Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport) (9.34 a.m.): I table a report on a study tour to Atlanta, New York and London. This report informs Parliament of the major purpose of my visit to Atlanta and my presence at Queensland's two official functions. I think that I should tell members of this House about that trip.

These functions had the specific objective to attract teams to our State by showing international sporting teams' management the standards of our Queensland's sporting facilities. As can be seen by the report, the trip was highly successful in achieving that basic objective.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! This is not a ministerial statement.

**Mr VEIVERS:** No. Mr Speaker, I just wanted to inform members that Parliament should note—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! This not a ministerial statement. Does the Minister have something to table?

**Mr VEIVERS:** I am about to table the report. Parliament should note that most of the international teams' management had not heard of Queensland. I table the report.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

##### World Environment Exposition 2005

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (9.36 a.m.), by leave: Honourable members are well aware of the success that Queensland has had in staging major events such as the 1982 Commonwealth Games and World Expo '88. These events raised our international profile and provided a significant boost to economic growth, primarily through tourism and infrastructure development.

On Wednesday I outlined to the House Queensland's latest efforts to secure the right to stage the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Today, I advise that the State Government is to undertake an immediate evaluation of a proposal to host a world environment exposition in the Brisbane-Gold Coast corridor in the year 2005.

As well as the State taking steps to assess the feasibility of such a proposal, it will also be necessary for the Federal Government to agree to submit an application to the Bureau of International Expositions by 18 October 1996. In this regard I will be advising the Prime Minister of Queensland's interest and seek his support for such an application provided, of course, that initial assessments vindicate such action.

To date, both Japan and Canada have notified the BIE of their desire to host the 2005 environment exposition, so strong competition is to be expected. If Queensland, through the Federal Government, notifies the BIE of its candidature before 18 October, it

would have until June 1997 to place a detailed proposal before the bureau for its consideration. A final decision by the bureau's general assembly is not expected until December 1997.

The Government believes it is in the State's best interests to fully investigate the feasibility of hosting such an event. The Co-ordinator-General will oversee the evaluation process and I will report back to State Cabinet shortly on its outcome.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

##### Brisbane Festival

**Hon. J. M. SHELDON** (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: I rise in this place to speak about the outstanding success of this year's inaugural 15-day Brisbane Festival, which concluded on Sunday, 8 September.

As Treasurer and Minister for The Arts, I am proud that the \$1m allocated to the festival by this coalition Government has played a major part in this success by allowing programming to be very ambitious and helping to keep ticket prices at an affordable level for the general community.

The Government's trust in the artistic director, Mr Tony Gould, as evidenced by the size of our contribution, has proven to be very well founded.

**Mr Elder** interjected.

**Mrs SHELDON:** I know that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not think much of Mr Gould, but I think that he is a man whose ability has been well proven.

**Mr ELDER:** I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and I ask the Minister to withdraw. I happen to think a lot of Tony Gould.

**Mr SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mrs SHELDON:** Mr Speaker, it is a pity that the member said the words that he did when he interjected.

Over the years, Tony Gould has made the Queensland Performing Arts Complex the most financially successful arts centre in Australia and a centre which has become very well known on the international scene.

With only eight months' lead time, Mr Gould and his creative team put together a quality arts program where international and national performers happily rubbed shoulders with the cream of our local performing arts

talent, creating a program of huge scope and diversity.

Before I talk about the cultural aspects of the festival, I have to applaud its extraordinary financial success. The festival's budget of close to \$7m was made up of this Government's contribution plus \$1.5m from the Performing Arts Trust; a similar amount from corporate sponsorship; \$500,000 from the Brisbane City Council; \$500,000 in carryovers from Warana; \$250,000 from merchandising fees and projected box office income of \$1.5m.

In the event, with more than 80,000 tickets sold, box office revenue was in excess of \$1.7m—a figure that augurs very well indeed for future festivals with longer periods of planning time. This is particularly true when one considers that the well-established Melbourne Festival took a similar amount at the box office at last year's festival and Melbourne has over twice the population of Brisbane.

The Government recognises the flow-on advantages from that \$7m budget as vital to economic growth in Queensland's cultural tourism, an increase in employment opportunities in the cultural industries and, most importantly, work for our local performing artists. All in all, we shall find that the economic gains of the festival total many times the original investment. On the artistic side, the gains of such a festival as this are immeasurably rich.

As I said at the opening of the festival, clearly it was to be an event where all of the components of our multifaceted Queensland society were represented or given voice through a fine community program consisting largely of local performance and performers. The vision that I have for the arts in this State embraces the preservation of our cultural heritage, as well as Queensland's emerging cultural life, as we develop and define our identity and place within the Australian nation and the wider world. It is from our multicultural society, our Aboriginal communities, the British, Irish and European facets of our heritage and our place in the Asia-Pacific region that our Queensland individuality is being forged, and becoming more and more clearly expressed and charted by our very talented artists.

The local content of the Brisbane Festival reflected this well. Hugh Lunn's adaptation of his novel, *Over The Top With Jim*, and Margery Forde's award winning "Snapshots from Home", which gave great pleasure at the

festival, will both tour regional Queensland. Importantly, many of the festival's events were free to the public, which makes the Queensland Performing Arts Trust's feat in exceeding its budgeted income even more remarkable.

I was pleased by the quality and variety of this inaugural festival, and I intend to see that the Brisbane Festival continues indefinitely as part of Queensland's cultural right—a fulfilment of our cultural needs. Elements of this dramatic development of the performing arts in Queensland will be shared by the rest of Australia via an ABC television documentary which is scheduled for national viewing within the next few weeks.

This year is an historic one for the inaugural Brisbane Festival, marking, as it does, the financial and artistic triumph of Tony Gould and the Queensland Performing Arts Trust. I congratulate the Brisbane Festival on its outstanding achievement.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Neerkol Children's Orphanage

**Hon. K. R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—

Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: Until about 15 years ago the Sisters of Mercy conducted a children's orphanage at Neerkol, near Rockhampton. Today, however, Neerkol provides conference and accommodation facilities to the public. Residents of Neerkol included migrant children from England and children whose parents paid for them to receive their education whilst boarding at Neerkol, as well as some children in the care of the State.

To date, six calls have been received from former residents on the child sexual abuse hotline within my department. Further allegations continue to be received about abuse of both male and female children. Callers to the hotline allege a pattern of incidents of physical and, in some cases, sexual abuse by the priests and nuns at the orphanage. In all but one case, the alleged perpetrators are deceased.

Upon their receipt, the allegations against the living person were referred to the Queensland Police Service which is conducting appropriate investigations. All callers to the hotline reporting abuse have individually requested that there be an inquiry into Neerkol. Following the completion of the present police investigation, I will refer all matters to the children's commissioner, when that position is created.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Fleay's Wildlife Park

**Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD** (Western Downs—Minister for Environment) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday in the House the member for Everton made a deliberate, uninformed claim that the Department of Environment intends to sell Fleay's Wildlife Park. This statement, intended for political point scoring, deserves the strongest political condemnation. Even the most rudimentary investigation would have revealed that Fleay's Wildlife Park cannot be sold. It is held in trust by the Queensland Government. Other land adjacent to the conservation park, but part of the complex, is held in trust by the Gold Coast City Council.

Mr Welford's statement yesterday did, however, reveal two things. Firstly, he has scant regard for his own credibility and will say anything if he thinks it may help him politically. Secondly, it revealed to the public that gross mismanagement by the Goss Government has seen Fleay's Wildlife Park expend \$400,000 more than it earned last year—yet another example of Labor being careless with other people's money. I state categorically that Fleay's Wildlife Park is not for sale.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Regional Forest Agreements

**Hon. T. J. PERRETT** (Barambah—Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday the member for Bundamba deliberately and cynically misrepresented the positions of the State and Federal Governments on Regional Forest Agreements. He took a thoroughly dishonourable leading role in a dishonest campaign mounted by the members for Maryborough and Fitzroy. Neither Government will tolerate the blind adherence to the arbitrary 15 per cent reserve dictated by the Keating Government and promoted by the Goss Government's Cabinet Office.

The member for Bundamba pretended to base his case on a reported conversation between a Labor staffer, Justin Murphy, and a member of the staff of the Federal Minister. That Federal staffer categorically denies the Labor version of the conversation and the member for Bundamba owes him an apology.

I seek leave to table a letter signed by the Commonwealth Minister for Primary Industries and Energy.

Leave granted.

**Mr PERRETT:** I ask all honourable members to read that letter carefully. As they

will see for themselves, it comprehensively puts the lie to Labor's claims about the Regional Forest Agreements process. It clearly shows that the Queensland position matches that of the Commonwealth. That position is that 15 per cent is no magical figure, but simply an analytical tool to be used in conjunction with socioeconomic studies on the effects of resource withdrawal. Neither Government will allow the forest industries to be damaged. Neither Government will put forest industry workers on the scrap heap and neither Government will allow the collapse of country towns and regional economies.

Labor should reconsider its campaign aimed at causing needless fear among timber workers, mill owners, and country towns. These people should not be pawns in some political game.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

### Report

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel) (9.47 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the CJC's summary of activities for the months of July and August 1996. These summaries are something that this Government has reintroduced. Whilst the CJC has a specific responsibility to table reports in the Parliament pursuant to section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act, as the committee has previously advised the Parliament, there is currently no definition of "reports" in the Act. The chairman believes that it is in the spirit of the Criminal Justice Act that all non-confidential publications by the CJC are tabled in the Parliament. Therefore, the document is being tabled in accordance with the prior request of the committee to that effect.

The committee stresses that it has in no way conducted an inquiry into the matters which are the subject of the publication. The committee simply believes that the Parliament and the people of Queensland should be informed of all non-confidential publications produced by the CJC. The committee also stresses that it is the CJC which has determined this document not to be a report of the commission for the purposes of section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act. I table the report.

## MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

### Report

**Ms WARWICK** (Barron River) (9.48 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House

a joint report by myself and Mr Clem Campbell, as Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. The report concerns a study tour by us on behalf of the committee to the House of Commons and the Irish Dail. Although not required to report in regard to this travel, we thought it appropriate to do so in order that members be kept informed as to the developments in other jurisdictions on issues such as codes of conduct for members of Parliament, pecuniary interest disclosures and parliamentary privilege generally.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Primary Producers; Tax Exemptions

**Mr BEATTIE** (9.49 a.m.): I refer the Deputy Premier and Treasurer to comments by the Primary Industries Minister reported in yesterday's *Queensland Country Life* that primary producers can rest assured he will fight for industry rebates from her taxes on oil and tyres. I table that report. I also refer to a media release of the same day by the Environment Minister, saying that he was attempting to convince the Treasurer that there should be no exemptions from these same taxes. I table that for the information of the House. I also refer to the Treasurer's own comments in this place that there would be an exemption on these taxes for on-farm vehicles. I ask: can the Treasurer tell the House who we are to believe—Mr Perrett, Mr Littleproud or the Treasurer—or are taxpayers so confused that they have every right to believe that none of these Ministers have a clue what they are doing and they are not up to the job?

**Mrs SHELDON:** I am very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition brought up the position of the Queensland Farmers Federation. I notice that it has given the coalition's Budget a rating of between 8 and 9 out of 10. I thank it for its understanding of our Budget, which is obviously considerably better than that of the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Beanland:** Nine out of 10?

**Mrs SHELDON:** Yes, it was 9 out of 10, which speaks for itself. Our position in the Budget was that off-road, unregistered vehicles would not be levied, because we were trying to help out people affected by the drought. All farming groups contacted us and said they felt that there should be no discrimination.

**Mr Mackenroth:** Oh!

**Mrs SHELDON:** No. They felt that they should do their bit. They felt that their organisations would be prepared to support a

small levy being put on off-road, unregistered vehicles, which we had intended to exclude because of the severe drought people have been going through.

**Mr Mackenroth:** Tell us another one.

**Mrs SHELDON:** It is a fact. If the honourable member would like to speak to those people, he should go ahead. The Minister for Environment has discussed the issue with me. He will be taking a submission to Cabinet seeking the permission of his Cabinet colleagues to review the position so that all on-farm vehicles will attract a levy.

**Mr Hamill** interjected.

**Mrs SHELDON:** No, we are not. The fact of the matter is that these farming groups have shown in a very clear manner that they are prepared to make their contribution to the State. They have indicated that they would be prepared to pay this levy. As a result, Mr Littleproud will take to Cabinet a submission based on what they want.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before I call the Leader of the Opposition for his second question, I point out that it is too rowdy. Hansard would have difficulty recording the answer. When the Opposition asks a question, I think it requires an answer. I ask members to show some decorum in the Chamber. I now call on the Leader of the Opposition to ask his second question.

#### Criminal Justice Commission; Investigation of Organised Crime

**Mr BEATTIE:** I direct a second question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. I refer to comments by CJC Chairman Frank Clair that the funding the Government has allocated to the CJC in 1996-97 is \$2.7m short, forcing it to consider abandoning its role of investigating organised crime, and I ask: how does the Treasurer justify this cutback when she found \$83.6m for the Sunshine Coast tollway debt? Does this not give the green light to organised crime groups such as the Mafia, the Yakuza and the drug barons that Queensland, under the coalition, is soft on crime?

**Mrs SHELDON:** That question was about as obtuse as is the Leader of the Opposition. The fact of the matter is that this issue is before Parliament. We are debating the Budget.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs SHELDON:** We will be doing so until all hours tonight and tomorrow if honourable members opposite want to. They

will have adequate time in which to ask those questions.

### **Workers' Compensation; Sugar Industry Strike**

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the 24-hour strike by sugar industry workers over proposed changes to Queensland's workers' compensation scheme and the threat of an escalation in industrial action by the ACTU State Secretary, Mr John Thompson, and I ask: what impact is such action having on Queensland's economy and is such action a threat to the future of a viable workers' compensation scheme?

**Mr BORBIDGE:** It is unfortunate that yesterday up to 7,000 workers in the Queensland sugar industry were placed in a situation by their unions whereby they went on strike in what is an increasingly blatant and irresponsible political campaign. The estimated cost to industry of yesterday's strike was half a million dollars. The estimated cost to employees in lost wages was some \$400,000. Mr Bill Ludwig, the State Secretary of the AWU, the former State President of the Labor Party, is reported as saying that it is just a taste of things to come. We also have the ACTU State Secretary, John Thompson, the person who demands meetings to talk about issues such as workers' compensation and who then does not have the decency to front up to those meetings, also warning of an escalation in industrial turmoil as the Government gets closer to finalising the workers' compensation legislation.

I suggest to rank-and-file union members across Queensland that they should have a very close look at whether the action being advocated strongly by their union leaders is in their long-term interests or is simply being undertaken to serve political purposes. I ask honourable members opposite: do they support the action taken yesterday? Do they support the action of the unions in calling a strike in the sugar industry?

**Mr Purcell:** I do.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** The honourable member does.

**Mr Purcell:** You continue to put their lives at risk. By not covering them with compo, you will get more of it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Bulimba is putting his seat at risk.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I am happy to hear it. I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition

whether he supports the comments just made by his colleague. What is the position of the Labor Party?

**Mr Beattie:** Am I allowed to answer the question?

**Mr BORBIDGE:** Yes.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Yes, you can interject. The Premier has asked a question.

**Mr BEATTIE:** In answer to the Honourable Premier's question—let me make it clear that this side of the House will always fight to save the working conditions of Queenslanders, and we will make certain that workplaces are safer for all Queenslanders.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** We have just seen Nero calling the fire brigade! The mob opposite, which sent the workers' compensation scheme broke, is actively endorsing industrial action which saw the sugar industry close down for a day. We have now heard the admission by the Leader of the Opposition that the action taken yesterday has the support of the Labor Party. The industrial action yesterday which brought the sugar industry to its knees in this State has the full support of the alternative Government or the man who would be the alternative Premier of Queensland.

What the Leader of the Opposition and what the Opposition are saying today is that it does not matter that legislation is not yet before the House. It does not matter that the ACTU general secretary does not front up to meetings that he requests to discuss this issue. It does not matter that the Labor Party is the party which has clocked up a \$400m black hole in workers' compensation. It is quite happy to be party to a reckless and irresponsible decision by the trade union movement which has cost the sugar industry in this State half a million dollars and which has cost employees in the sugar industry \$400,000 in lost wages.

What we are seeing is the ongoing negligence of the Labor Party in this regard. The Labor Party was warned about the blow-outs in workers' compensation. As the problems with workers' compensation were becoming more and more evident, what did it do? It increased the benefits to employees and reduced the premiums. Then it allowed the legal professional to advertise in this State. As common law claims went up and up, Labor raided the reserves of the Workers Compensation Fund. It raided close to \$118m in the reserves of the Workers Compensation Fund at a time when it knew that common law claims were increasing. What we have had is a

legacy of neglect from the Labor Party. What we have is a party which created a problem and which has made no positive contribution to rectifying that problem, except to endorse industrial action which is against the interests of workers, against the interests of the sugar industry and against the interests of the State of Queensland.

What we have seen this morning is an admission by the Leader of the Opposition and an admission by the member for Bulimba that they support the reckless, irresponsible and politically motivated industrial action that we saw in this State yesterday to the detriment of Queensland workers, to the detriment of the sugar industry and to the detriment of the Queensland economy.

#### **National Park Passes**

**Mr ELDER:** I refer the Environment Minister to his \$3 per person national park pass, and I ask: how will the Government collect and police this tax to walk in or surf off the beach in Noosa National Park? Would the Minister not agree that Mrs Sheldon's Sunshine Coast toll road has been replaced by her Sunshine Coast toll beach at Noosa? Where will the sun lovers who frolic at the Alexandria Bay nudist beach pin their passes?

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** I hope the member who asked the question does not have a personal interest in the beach he referred to! The intent of the park pass system is to bring Queensland into line with other national parks across Australia. Many of the passes will be presold. We are asking people to be supportive, and the research shows that people are supportive, of the national parks system in Queensland. When people buy their \$20 annual pass to all the national parks in Queensland, we may be able to give them a sticker for their cars which says something like "I support the national parks system of Queensland".

**An Opposition member** interjected.

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** The Opposition has asked the question; I will answer it.

**Mr Gibbs:** What shape will they take at the nude beach, the passes?

**Mr LITTLEPROUD:** The member can go on a personal study tour and come back and tell the House!

People who live in the Noosa area or who are visiting the Noosa area, as so many do, and who want to go through the national park will be able to go to the local office and buy a daily pass, a monthly pass or a yearly pass.

They will also be approached by departmental personnel in the park. It is anticipated that the collection rate across Queensland will not be 100 per cent. A feasibility study on the economics of putting in place extra officers and weighing that against the amount of money that would be collected revealed that that was not an option, so we have opted for the approach of appealing to people to be supportive. Research has indicated that they will be supportive of buying a pass to the national parks of Queensland. It will apply all over Queensland, be it the Noosa National Park, the islands off the coast of Queensland or the remote national parks in south-west Queensland.

#### **Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Subsidy**

**Mr CARROLL:** I ask the Minister for Local Government: in view of the Premier's announcement at a recent Local Government Association State conference in Brisbane, would the Minister please explain to the House the benefits of the doubling of the water and sewerage infrastructure subsidy to local governments from 20 per cent to 40 per cent and public reaction to that?

**Mrs McCAULEY:** I thank the honourable member for his question. This is undoubtedly the greatest boost for local government since the seventies. It will see \$600m over 10 years available for the construction of water and sewerage treatment plants throughout the State. It will mean that those basic services that should be provided to all Queenslanders—and sometimes are not—will be set in place. Councils throughout the State will be hopping in to get their subsidy so that they can start building and putting this infrastructure in place.

There are some minor drawbacks. I noticed while attending a recent country Cabinet meeting that a fellow Minister got to inspect the local winery and I got to inspect the sewage treatment plant! I expect that there will be a lot more of that in the next 12 months. However, let me tell the House what the Executive Director of the Local Government Association, Mr Greg Hallam, had to say about this. It bears repeating. He said—

"Local Government is delighted, we believe the State Government has just about got it right. The balance is okay, certainly the emphasis on infrastructure is very much welcomed. The Government has kept their commitments, their promises to Local Government and there will be an extra \$600 million for water and

sewerage capital works over the next 10 years. These sorts of programs, including the extra roads funding will ensure that the basic services are provided to Queenslanders in both urban and rural settings."

The State President of the LGAQ, Mr Jim Pennell, also gave his support. He said—

"In these hard times, that support permits local governments to not only enhance the quality of life of their citizens but also contributes to meeting the increased demand for an improved environment . . ."

Mr Pennell's entire press release welcomes the Budget and points out the benefits that it will bring to local government. This \$600m over 10 years is simply one of them. It includes a special \$150m package for smaller communities. That will not be a 40 per cent subsidy; it will be needs based and will probably be much higher. This will mean that small communities, which previously have been able to access ARCWSSS funding, will be able to do the same thing again.

**Mrs Sheldon:** It's good for the environment, too.

**Mrs McCauley:** It is excellent for the environment, because it includes a \$22m package for effluent re-use and technological innovation, such as is being done in Caboolture. That is the way we need to move. We need to encourage people to re-use their waste water and to re-treat effluent, because water is going to be our most precious commodity. Coming into the year 2000, we need to be looking at this issue. This package will encourage councils throughout the State to do just that. It is one of the most important planks in the back to basics Budget philosophy. Local government was treated as the poor cousin by the Labor Party, but I am very proud that local government now knows that it has a partnership going with the State Government. We will assist local governments as much as we can.

#### **Domestic Violence Hotline Service**

**Mrs WOODGATE:** I refer the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care to his statement to this House on 24 July 1996 that he will expand assistance to programs to assist victims of domestic violence. I ask the Minister: is he aware that Queensland's 24-hour domestic violence hotline service is now being forced to become a part-time, 9 to 5 operation because of a funding shortfall? Will the Minister honour his commitment and

ensure that vital services such as this will receive adequate funding to provide the very important support for domestic violence victims? Finally, what does the Minister advise victims to do between 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. and on the weekends, as this is the time when most domestic violence occurs?

**Mr LINGARD:** The one thing of which I have assured all women is that I have not removed any money from domestic violence programs for women. In fact, this Budget shows an increase for domestic violence programs for women. However, we have expanded the domestic violence program into three special areas: the first is for the elderly; the second is for counselling for children who have witnessed domestic violence; and the third is for men who are affected by domestic violence, whether they are victims or perpetrators.

We all know that elderly victims need assistance. There has been a significant increase in the Budget to assist elderly people who are affected by domestic violence. There has been a similar funding increase for children affected by domestic violence, and I have increased quite significantly the funding available to assist male victims. As I have said, we will provide a hotline service through Maroochydore. From 7 o'clock on Wednesday morning, a program commenced whereby any victims of domestic violence who ring in—especially men—will be referred to certain agencies through which they can obtain assistance. There are eight such agencies. I have expanded the program that allows people to ring in on the hotline. Men will be able to receive assistance. They will not get advice from that hotline, they will be referred from there to agencies—agencies which I have checked to see that they are true to their service agreements. I can guarantee that those men's agencies to whom those men will be referred do adhere to the service agreements. The hotline service is available for all people who wish to use it.

**Mrs WOODGATE:** I rise to a point of order. My concern is for the women, not the men, the women—98 per cent of the victims. My question was about the women's domestic violence hotline.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is answering the question. Has the Minister finished?

**Mr LINGARD:** Yes, Mr Speaker.

#### **Boat Building Industry**

**Mr GRICE:** I ask the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to inform the



House of his and his department's plans for the rejuvenation of the boat building industry and other associated industries within the marine sector.

**Mr JOHNSON:** At the outset, let me say that the marine industry and in particular the boat building industry in this State is on its knees because of legislation introduced by the former Government. That legislation has virtually crippled the boat building industry in this State because it had to align itself with Queensland's survey rules, which isolated it from the rest of the nation and the international community.

In answer to the honourable member's question—I am happy to tell the House that very soon this Government will introduce legislation that will once again make the marine industry, including the boat building industry and many other industries—

**Mr Hamill:** What happened to the Mackay marina?

**Mr JOHNSON:** I will answer that interjection in a minute. There are a number of issues here relative to economic benefits for this State. The Labor Government virtually turned its back on this industry, which is worth \$270m to \$300m a year.

**Mr Hamill:** Where's the money for the Mackay boat harbour?

**Mr JOHNSON:** I will come to the Mackay boat harbour in a moment, my very good friend. You are the architect of the dilemma in the boat industry today, and if I were you, I would sit back and cop this.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will refer to the member as "the honourable member for Ipswich".

**Mr JOHNSON:** I will, Mr Speaker. I will refer to the honourable member for Ipswich directly.

**An Opposition member:** That's a threat.

**Mr JOHNSON:** No, it is not a threat; it is a promise.

**Mr Quinn:** It's a fact.

**Mr JOHNSON:** As the Minister for Education says, it is a fact. The one thing that we have to talk about here today, and the honourable member for Broadwater—

**Mr Elder** interjected.

**Mr Quinn** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Capalaba and the Minister for Education!

**Mr JOHNSON:** It was under the stewardship of the honourable member for Ipswich—

**Mr Hamill:** That's when they were going to get the Mackay boat harbour—under my stewardship.

**Mr JOHNSON:** The member's stewardship was very questionable on many issues. I am not one to cut personalities about, but the member certainly is. I have told the member before that he is a very intelligent man and he is a very nice man, too, but that is probably where it ends, so he should remain as the Opposition Treasury spokesman.

**Mr HAMILL:** I rise to a point of order. I want to say that I do not find those remarks offensive and I do not want them withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! That is a frivolous point of order. I think the Minister was speaking tongue-in-cheek.

**Mr JOHNSON:** Does the member want me to withdraw? It was under the stewardship of the member for Ipswich that we saw the boat building industry and many other parts of the marine industry in this State crippled because his Government, the Labor Government, would not consult with the people. This Government is going to bring back the marine board. That board will consult with and listen to the views of the marine industry, the boat building industry and every other associated industry.

Last week, my colleague the member for Toowoomba North opened the annual Boat Show in Brisbane at which he and this Government received accolades because we are listening to that industry—an industry that has been crippled. I say to that industry that this Government is going to make the boat building industry and the marine industry in Queensland one of the great industries of this State and this nation, because it deserves to be.

I will return to the member for Broadwater's question. We have seen what has happened to the Gold Coast with the silting up of the Broadwater and many other estuaries along the coast. We are going to put in place a Gold Coast port authority which will look after exactly what was not looked after by the previous Government. Yesterday, we heard that the honourable member for Woodridge's boat ran aground somewhere. He will not have to worry about that happening again once we fix up this problem.

This Government is going to look after the tourist traffic, the commercial traffic, and every other aspect of the industry within this State. I

thank those involved with the Marine Industry Consultative Council for their efforts. Unfortunately, the Labor Government never listened to that consultative council, but this Government will listen to the new marine board and we will listen to the people who are associated with the marine industry right throughout this State.

#### **Sale of Queensland Nickel Shares**

**Mr McELLIGOTT:** I refer the Deputy Premier and Treasurer to her statement that the \$83m that she intends to use to partially pay off the Sunshine Motorway toll debt has been raised from the sale of shares in the Townsville-based Queensland Nickel, and I ask: why was this money not used for much needed infrastructure projects in Townsville and north Queensland? Is this not just another example of the Treasurer looking after herself at the expense of the rest of Queensland?

**Mrs SHELDON:** I draw the honourable member's attention to the fact that the Budget shows record spending for north Queensland. If he looked at the infrastructure that the coalition Government has put in place in Townsville in the seven months that it has been in power, he would realise that we have done more for Townsville and its surrounds than all the Labor members for that area have ever done, particularly in the past six years.

#### **Environmental Management Charge**

**Ms WARWICK:** I ask the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry to advise the House what action he has taken on behalf of the tour operators in Queensland who will be affected by the proposed increase in the environmental management charge.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** I thank the member for Barron River for the question. The member has had an interest in the increase in the environmental management charge. She has raised many concerns about it with me and I know that she is keen to see this issue resolved on behalf of the tourism industry in far-north Queensland.

In common with the Leader of the Opposition, I was overseas at the time of the Federal Budget and I became aware of the increase in this environmental management charge only two or three days after the Budget. The moment I returned from overseas, I met with representatives of the industry and I immediately wrote to both the Federal Minister for Tourism, John Moore, and Senator Robert Hill, the Minister for the

Environment. I outlined my concerns to both of those Federal Ministers.

In fact, I would like to read into *Hansard* a letter that I wrote to both the Honourable John Moore and Senator Robert Hill a couple of weeks ago. The letter states—

"The planned increase of the Environmental Management Charge (EMC) from \$1 per person per day to \$6 per person per day announced in the Federal Budget has caused great concern among tourism operators in Queensland.

I am disappointed at the lack of consultation prior to the Budget by the Federal Government with these operators, on this issue. I am informed that in many instances this increase will have to be met by the operators themselves, as their prices are pre-set for up to the next 18 months.

While I believe that the Great Barrier Reef must be managed and protected I also believe that as the Reef is a nationally significant asset, it is a responsibility for all Australians to share.

The planned increase, combined with a 3% reduction in Federal funding to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, seems to suggest the Federal Government is neglecting part of its responsibility and shifting the onus for the management of the Marine Park further towards the tourism operators in Queensland.

The implementation of this increase will see nearly 40% of the Authority's operational revenue being raised from the EMC. This clearly contradicts the recommendation of the review of the EMC which stated 'Equity requires that a substantial part of the Authority's income must come from the public at large, through consolidated revenue'.

It is reasonable to require commercial users of the Marine Park to contribute to its management, but I strongly oppose a 600% increase with no industry consultation.

In addition, the operation of the EMC has always discriminated against people using tourist operations on an extended basis.

If a family or group now hire a boat or travel on an extended cruise in the Marine Park, the EMC will increase the total cost of their holiday by up to 7.3%.

This seems unreasonable when compared to the concessions allowed for longer stays or larger groups visiting most National Parks.

I ask that you reconsider the planned increase of the EMC and address the anomaly affecting people having extended visits to the Marine Park.

We in Queensland are very fortunate to have the Great Barrier Reef within our boundary but I am sure you would agree that Australia, via the Federal Government, has a duty to maintain and protect one of its greatest assets. The EMC should not be used as a crutch to enable the Federal Government to reduce or stop funding to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority."

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. Would the Minister table the letter that he just read?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is answering the question.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** I would be very happy to show the letter to any member of the Opposition.

Immediately on my return from overseas, I wrote to Senator Hill and the Honourable John Moore to raise this issue with them. When the Prime Minister, John Howard, was in Brisbane two weeks ago addressing a luncheon at the Hilton, I met with him personally. I raised this issue and discussed with him the concerns of industry and the effects and impacts of this increase on the tourism industry in north Queensland. I have done nearly everything that I can. My office has been in contact with both Senator Hill's and Minister Moore's office every day of the week. Every day we have rung them to see when an announcement will be made. We have written to all people in the industry affected by the increase in this charge. We have also had regular contact with leaders of the industry.

What concerns me is that I have sat here during question time for three weeks waiting for a question on this issue from the Opposition. The honourable Mr Beattie, the Leader of the Opposition, is apparently the shadow Minister for Small Business and Industry, and the member for Whitsunday, Mrs Bird, is apparently the shadow Minister for Tourism. For three weeks I have waited for them to raise this issue with me. For three weeks I have sat here thinking, "Well, at least those two members, on behalf of the industry,

will ask me a question." They have both issued press releases. They have both asked questions on notice. In their press releases, both of those members have made some very strong statements against the Federal Government in relation to the increases in charges, and so on. So I thought I would do a bit of research. I thought, "I wonder how genuine they are. Maybe they have not had the opportunity to ask a question, but maybe they have written to the Federal Ministers on behalf of the tourism industry and the tourism operators in Queensland."

As a result of an interjection during question time yesterday, I had my staff ring both Senator Hill's and Mr Moore's offices in Canberra. I am absolutely astounded that Opposition members seem to have such a great concern about this issue. They have raised it in press releases. They have asked questions on notice about it. They have run around this House making interjections about it. They have made all sorts of statements right across this State. But I am absolutely amazed that they have not taken the time or bothered to write to either of those Federal Ministers or the Prime Minister and represent the people in their own electorates.

**Mrs Bird:** Sit down.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** Mrs Bird has not made any effort or even taken the time to make representations at the Federal level. All honourable members—especially the member for Whitsunday—and all business people in Queensland can be assured that, when these issues arise, as the Minister responsible I will always do everything within my power to make representations on behalf of business people in this State.

### 2006 Commonwealth Games

**Mrs ROSE:** I refer the Minister for Sport to Queensland's bid to host the Commonwealth Games in the year 2006, and I ask: how can Queensland's bid be seen as anything other than a joke when funding for the construction of major sporting facilities has been cut by this Government by over 65 per cent, or two-thirds, from \$20.4m to just \$7.3m? What chance do Queensland athletes have of winning medals at either the Sydney Olympics or the 2006 Commonwealth Games when funding to the Queensland Academy of Sport has been cut by \$400,000? And how does this massive cut in funding help cater for Queensland's growing demand for sporting facilities when, by the Minister's own admission, his department has over \$130m worth of funding applications on its books?

**Mr VEIVERS:** That is such a complex question. It comprises about seven parts. I am only too happy to answer the member's question on notice.

### Hospital Funding

**Mr J. N. GOSS:** I ask the Minister for Health: would he please inform the House of any new funding initiatives for key Queensland hospitals?

**Mr HORAN:** Once again, there is more good news and more exciting news for hospitals throughout Queensland as the Queensland coalition Government gets back to basics and starts bringing back some real service. One of the serious problems we have experienced in recent years has been a Commonwealth funding agreement which provided some millions of dollars for the contracting out of public patients to private hospitals. The previous Labor Government was able to do nothing about this, nor was the previous Federal Government. However, through negotiations, we now have verbal agreement that the remaining amount of money in that fund, which is some \$500,000 to \$700,000, can be used for public patients. That was always logical and sensible. It can be used for public patients in public hospitals.

What we are going to do with that money is attack the ophthalmology waiting lists in Queensland, in other words, in relation to eye surgery, particularly in Townsville in north Queensland and on the Gold Coast, where there are extremely long waiting lists. I would like to express my appreciation for the support that has been offered to us by the AMA and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in recruiting people to those positions where required.

In other good news for Queensland Health—due to the deficiencies of the Budget applied to the Princess Alexandra Hospital, staff had been unable to use some four anaesthetic sessions per week at that hospital. Because of the Budget that we have brought down and the improved funding for the Princess Alexandra Hospital, they are immediately moving to reopen those four anaesthetic sessions. That means that every single operating theatre in the Princess Alexandra Hospital will now be operating every day of the week. That is a real example of the sorts of things we are doing—

**Mr Hollis:** What about the staff at the Redcliffe Hospital?

**Mr HORAN:** I take that interjection from the member for Redcliffe, because the next bit

of good news concerns the Redcliffe Hospital. For Redcliffe Hospital there is \$600,000 extra so that they can open the two theatres that were closed under Labor. So under this Government, the Redcliffe Hospital will go from four theatres, plus two of them empty, to six theatres, with all of them operating. I would have thought that members opposite would be grateful for that. Aren't they lucky that we are fixing up the deficiencies in the unfunded portions at those hospitals?

The good news continues. At the Gold Coast Hospital, another \$600,000 has been allocated to open a high-dependency unit, so that the Gold Coast Hospital can now have high-dependency beds to back up the intensive care beds in that particular unit. That is just another example of what is being undertaken in our hospitals.

Finally, another \$600,000 is being provided to the Nambour Hospital in order to meet the increased and growing demand. I have some more good news for north Queensland, which we will be releasing very shortly.

I believe that the most important thing has been the breakthrough in negotiations with the Commonwealth Government, so that we can use that Commonwealth money for public patients in our own public hospitals without having to contract them out to private hospitals. That is going to mean a major attack on the eye surgery waiting lists in Queensland, particularly in Townsville and on the Gold Coast, where the waiting lists have been in the order of years. This will make a huge difference to our Surgery on Time plan. It will reduce the time that people wait for eye surgery and will certainly make a major difference to the health of Queenslanders.

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

## APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (No. 2)

### APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)

#### Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Debate resumed from 12 September (see p. 2871).

**Hon. D. J. HAMILL** (Ipswich) (10.30 a.m.): In this cognate debate we have two Appropriation Bills before us. We have the appropriation for the Parliament itself, and in that Bill we find that there is an appropriation provision for some \$39.1m for 1996-97. That is an increase, Mr Speaker, of which I am sure you are delighted. It is a 10.4 per cent

increase in your current budget and is certainly an improvement for the Parliament in outlays from the \$37.3m expended during 1995-96. Overall we see a 4.8 per cent increase for the Parliament in the Budget that is before the House.

The other Bill before us, of course, is the general appropriation, which reveals what a number of people have said already this week, that is, that it is a big-spending Budget that has been brought down by the coalition this year. We see outlays increasing in real terms, with total expenditure from the Consolidated Fund estimated at \$13.5 billion. In the Appropriation Bill, we find that the total appropriation from all funds will exceed \$20 billion in 1996-97 and that it makes provision for some \$8.7 billion of expenditure in 1997-98.

Having said all that, it is important that we recognise that the Budget should not merely be an accounting exercise. The Budget is an important fiscal tool to enable us to shape and better manage the economy. The Budget is an important fiscal tool that allows us to smooth the business cycle and deliver public goods and services to the community. The Budget also provides us with a very important mechanism whereby Government can redistribute income and wealth, hopefully to achieve a more just and equitable society. This Budget, like all Budgets, should be judged against those criteria.

We must first address an important question: how appropriate is this Budget for the economic climate in which Queensland finds itself? The Budget forecasts that were made by the Treasurer are hardly optimistic. They do not indicate that, in the view of this Government, the Queensland economy will boom in 1996-97. I think that is a real tragedy, because this Government claimed that it would restore—to use its words—Queensland's position as the economic growth generator of Australia. If we look at the pattern of the Queensland economy and how it has performed over the five years through to March 1996, we find that the Queensland economy was the economic powerhouse of the country. Under Labor, the Queensland economy grew at an average of 4.7 per cent per annum. That was the best economic growth in Australia. It was a full two percentage points per annum above the national average.

If we look at 1995-96, we see a much more subdued Queensland economy. The Treasurer likes quoting trend statistics when giving economic data and so, in deference to

the Treasurer, I will do just that with respect to growth patterns of the Queensland economy and also to employment data. In the September quarter of 1995, Queensland's economy recorded a 0.7 per cent growth; December 1995 again showed a 0.7 per cent growth; and March 1996 showed a 0.6 per cent growth. In Government we recognised that the Queensland economy was going through one of those flatter periods. We were told by the Treasurer that, with the coming to office of the coalition, that flat period in the economy would be rapidly turned around. Yet, if we are to reach the Budget figure that has been delivered by the Treasurer, one can only conclude that the quarterly growth figure when it is announced for the June quarter will show even more modest growth, 0.2 per cent under the first quarterly figure that the coalition can properly call its own: all told, 2.2 per cent growth in 1995-96 for the Queensland economy.

I contrast that with the very much more bullish figure which the Treasury had forecast for economic growth in the State for the year just gone. In that context, I think we need to look at the figure that has been announced by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer as similarly suspect. In her speech, the Treasurer has forecast 4 per cent growth for the economy in the current fiscal year, claiming that growth in Queensland will outstrip the figure for Australia as whole. Similarly bullish forecasts have been given for the years through to the turn of the century.

The low growth pattern of 1995-96 shows no sign of abating. In fact, if we look at the initiatives that have been taken by this coalition Government, we will see that they have actually contributed to the prolongation of that slow economic growth in the Queensland economy. We see little prospect of improvement in the housing and construction industry. When we look at business investment, the Budget forecast for Queensland delivered by the Treasurer indicated business investment growing by 9 per cent. What this Treasurer failed to add was that the figure for Australia as a whole for this fiscal year was business investment rising by 14 per cent. So we have that continued subdued level of activity in the Queensland economy and, therefore, we can have no confidence that the Treasurer's projections for growth will, in fact, be delivered.

We are seeing an economy that is in difficulty. If we examine the Budget in terms of job creation, we see further evidence that there are real problems that this Government has not only failed to address but has also

contributed to in terms of the state of Queensland's economy. In the five years to February 1996 under Labor, 45,000 jobs a year, each and every year, were being generated. This Budget plans to achieve only the same average level of job creation in Queensland in 1996-97; yet, in the context of a much larger economy with a much larger population base, it will achieve only the levels achieved by Labor. Consequently, we are seeing a further and real decline in employment generation in the Queensland economy in this financial year.

The Budget forecasts employment growth of only 2.5 per cent. Last year, in subdued economic activity, Queensland's employment grew by 2.8 per cent—significantly in excess of the Budget projection brought down by the Treasurer on Tuesday. The Budget forecast unemployment rate is averaging 9.3 per cent; yet, last year, the average unemployment rate for Queensland in that subdued economic environment was 9.3 per cent. This Budget, which talks so much about generating additional activity in the Queensland economy, is not going to deliver more jobs; it is not going to deliver a real reduction in unemployment in Queensland. In fact, on the basis of unemployment data that were released yesterday by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which showed an unemployment figure rising in Queensland to 9.8 per cent—up from 9 per cent—we see that the fundamental problem in the Queensland labour market with respect to employment generation is getting worse, not better.

As I said, these days the Treasurer likes to quote trend figures. I guess if she were to quote the trend figure and not the seasonally adjusted figure for unemployment then, certainly, she could obtain a lower unemployment figure. What the Treasurer does not seem to understand is that that unemployment figure is not just a statistic; rather it is a symbolic representation of the tremendous amount of hardship and misery in the Queensland community.

Let us have a look at the Treasurer's trend figure. Let us have a look at what is happening in unemployment. When this coalition Government came to office, in the first full month in which it was in office the unemployment trend figure for Queensland was 9.1 per cent. The following month, 9.1 per cent was again recorded as the trend unemployment rate in Queensland. In May, the trend figure was 9.2 per cent. In June, the trend figure was 9.3 per cent. In July, the trend figure was again 9.3 per cent and for August, that trend figure was 9.4 per cent. I believe

that even this Treasurer, who has such difficulty with concepts such as surpluses and deficits and who has difficulties with plus signs and minus signs, should realise that, under the coalition in Queensland, the trend in unemployment is clearly going up, not down. Nothing in this Budget arrests that trend.

On the Treasurer's own admission, over this 12-month period, the unemployment rate will remain static. Consequently, the underlying factors generating the unemployment rate will not be addressed and will not be turned around. Despite this big-spending coalition Budget, we should expect the trend to be maintained and unemployment to be on the rise.

If in that context the Budget does not address one of the fundamental problems in the Queensland economy, we should perhaps look to see whether the Budget addresses some of the features that were outlined by the Treasurer as allegedly being important when she brought down her definitive address on 19 March this year at a Conservative Club luncheon. At that time, the Treasurer stated that her intention for the coalition was to "restore Queensland to its position as the engine room of national economic growth." The economic data to which I have just referred shows clearly that already she has dishonoured that promise. It is another deception, another element in the whole fabric of dishonesty and deceit which has become the hallmark of this Government.

In terms of the Budget framework, what else did the Treasurer say at that luncheon in March during the halcyon days of the coalition Government? She claimed that for 1995-96 we would see a modest Budget surplus in the Consolidated Fund of around \$2m to \$3m. However, she went on to say that she had concerns that receipts over the year would exceed expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the order of \$48m. She then went one step further: she claimed that there were one-off funding sources used which, when added to the \$48m, revealed an underlying deficit—and this is the start of the cult of the underlying deficit—of \$185m. Clearly, that was the start of a determined campaign to denigrate the fiscal legacy of Labor and to denigrate the sound economic management which was the hallmark of the handling of the Queensland economy by former State Labor Governments.

Over the following weeks and months, we heard the underlying deficit figure being bandied around and increased in the coalition's endeavour to try to undermine the

confidence that the people of Queensland had in the economic credentials of the former Labor Government. Let us look at those claims by the Treasurer and see whether they have been borne out over the last seven months. It is true Labor started the 1995-96 fiscal year with money in the bank. Notwithstanding a record \$3.6 billion Capital Works Program—and I might say a Capital Works Program of a magnitude which was wholly appropriate to deliver improved services as well as stimulate the State's economy and create jobs—at the end of the last fiscal year there was still money in the bank for the coalition Government. In 1994-95, Labor delivered an underlying surplus in the State's accounts of \$1.23 billion. At the time the Treasurer launched this attack on Labor's financial record in March, the very time this new Treasurer was talking about an underlying deficit in the Budget, the figures that were being published by her department were revealing not an underlying deficit but an underlying surplus in the State's accounts of in excess of \$1 billion.

I refer the Treasurer to her own Budget papers—table A.12 on page 142 of Budget Paper No. 2. That table reveals that the underlying surplus delivered in the State's accounts for 1995-96 was, in fact, \$1.354 billion. So much for the Treasurer's underlying deficit! The underlying surplus of \$1.354 billion was in line with the projections that the Opposition made repeatedly in response to the Treasurer's claim that there was an underlying deficit in the Queensland Budget.

Why would the Deputy Premier and Treasurer run around this State and this nation trying to talk down Queensland's economic performance?

**Mr Ardill:** Even in Japan.

**Mr HAMILL:** I take the honourable member's interjection. Even in Japan! Why would the Treasurer of this State be so irresponsible, at a time when we all knew that the economy needed a boost and not to be talked down, try to destroy confidence in the Queensland economy? It was all a political strategy to seek to discredit Labor's record and at the same time enable the coalition Government to dishonour key parts of its platform in relation to revenue raising and to dishonour key parts of its platform in relation to a number of its election promises.

So, not content with trying to run the furphy about underlying deficits in cash terms, which were clearly disproved by the Treasurer's own words and her department's own publications, and not content with clearly trying

to mislead the community regarding the position of the Budget in GFS terms—which again has been shown to be extraordinarily sound by the documents published not only by this State but also by the Commonwealth—this desperate Treasurer and this desperate Government employed another tactic to try to further their political agenda. They rolled out a Commission of Audit report which would give them a different figure based on a different means of collecting the data and keeping the accounts. The Treasurer could not compare apples with apples and oranges with oranges to get the outcome that she wanted, so this Treasurer decided to compare apples with oranges and try to confuse the issue even further. So we saw the Commission of Audit report.

It was incidental that the Commission of Audit report should use the famous graph on the front cover to seek to try to undermine further the financial position that was left by the former Labor Government. We heard that, in the 1995-96 accounts, on an accrual basis there was a \$337m operating deficit and that the Treasurer would have to bring down strong medicine in the State Budget to arrest this inexorable decline. However, on Tuesday in the Treasurer's Budget Speech, what did she say? I will use the Treasurer's own words and throw them back in her face. On page 4 of the Treasurer's Budget Speech she states—

"In terms of the preferred budget measure of the Commission of Audit, the final result for 1995-96 is an operating surplus in accrual terms of \$48m."

It is a shame that this is not a game of baseball—strike one, Treasurer, a cash base surplus; strike two, Treasurer, a GFS underlying surplus; and strike three, Treasurer, a surplus on the Government's favoured accrual accounting basis. Three strikes and you're out! One wonders about the competence of this Treasurer, who got it so wrong on every basis of accounting.

**Mr Ardill:** It doesn't say much for the Committee of Audit.

**Mr HAMILL:** It does not say much about the Commission of Audit. It says even more about the lack of capacity of the Treasurer to be honest and truthful about the state of the Queensland Budget. It speaks volumes about the lack of capacity of the Treasurer to handle the very important job of managing the State's economy.

Let us return to a second point made in the Treasurer's speech in March about allegations of one-off expenditures under Labor from one-off sources of funding and the

suggestion that this was a measure of the financial irresponsibility of the former Labor Government. Allow me to again quote the words of the Treasurer in the Budget Speech at page 11. In referring to certain capital works spending, the Treasurer states—

"This one-off boost to infrastructure spending will be funded entirely from one-off sources. The consistent use of one-off funds only for one-off spending is now enshrined as a basic principle of Coalition economic strategy."

What an acrobatic little Treasurer we have, to be able to do such backflips in the space of but a few months. One-off spending was allegedly a no-no in March, but one-off spending is the paragon of economic responsibility in the Budget that the Treasurer brings down in September.

I have concerns about the position taken by the Treasurer in relation to this and a range of other matters. My concern is that the one-off funding sources that are being used by the Treasurer in her one-off spending spree are one-off funding sources indeed, because they are funding sources which cannot be renewed as the Treasurer sprays the funds up against the wall—

**Mr Ardill:** Flogging off the silver.

**Mr HAMILL:** Flogging the silver and flogging off income-generating funds that were in trust funds, such as the Queensland Infrastructure Financing Fund and the proceeds of the sale of the State gas pipeline. There is no better example of this squandering of the financial legacy of Labor than in the self-indulgence of the Treasurer in taking \$83m of funds from the proceeds of the sale of Queensland Nickel and spraying them against the wall up in her own backyard on the Sunshine Motorway.

**Mr Ardill:** How can that be a one-off when it is a \$200m debt and she is paying off \$83m?

**Mr HAMILL:** In fact, the Treasurer told us that removing the tolls from the Sunshine Motorway and removing the income stream would cost only \$4m a year. I remember hearing that from the Treasurer time and time again. We now find that not only do we spend over \$83m in one hit, but there will also be another \$12.5m taken from the roads program each and every year for the next 20 years to pay for that particular election promise made by the coalition. My good friend, the Minister for Transport, who spoke so highly of me earlier today, comes in and wiggles his head "No", but he knows full well that the his budget

is \$12.5m the lesser each year for the contribution which it will make to the Sunshine Motorway debt.

The Government does not deal with Queenslanders fairly and equitably. Whilst the Treasurer's constituents can be so benefited by the finding of such large sums of money, the people who live in the eastern suburbs of Brisbane, because there will be a by-election there in a few weeks, will receive a one-off 20c break, or a two litres of oil break, in the new tax regime of the Treasurer through a reduction in the tolls on the Gateway Bridge. Is it not a shame that we could not have a by-election near my electorate or that of my colleague the member for Ipswich West, because there is no relief at all for the people of Ipswich and Logan who use the Logan Motorway.

In the Treasurer's speech in March, she launched another little policy initiative, which was her celebrated freeze—the temporary freeze that she placed on all initiatives of the previous Government while they reviewed the Budget. The Treasurer went on to attack the former Labor Government in extraordinary terms. Allow me again to use the Treasurer's own words, because they make such a wonderful weapon for the Opposition to use in attacking the performance of this Government. Does the Treasurer remember these words—

"In capital works, year after year, the former Government failed to spend the funds it allocated. The Coalition will make sure that the entire capital works budget each year is in fact spent."

Weren't they prophetic words!

This is a clear example of how a statement of intent and policy delivered in March was not delivered three months later. Under the Treasurer and the Government, a massive amount of capital works was, in fact, delayed or abandoned altogether. Projects worth over \$400m were not delivered in a timely fashion by the coalition Government. The Capital Works Program brought down by the former Labor Government totalled some \$3.6 billion. It was forecast as generating 49,817 additional jobs. Yet, the true enormity of the irresponsible behaviour of this Government can be seen in the Government's own Budget papers. Budget Paper No. 2 acknowledges the massive carryovers of capital budgets unexpended by the coalition Government in 1995-96.

I remind the Treasurer that these were capital works that were necessary not only for enhancing service delivery—delivering the schools, the police stations, the hospitals and



so on—for the people of Queensland but they were also projects which were designed to generate employment and to give the economy the kick along which it needed. Particular among the capital works abandoned was the former Government's Accelerated Capital Works Program, a \$745m program announced at the end of last year. When we saw what was happening in the labour market, we moved responsibly to address the need to generate employment growth in the economy. What did the Government do? It chopped it off altogether, and with it the Government abandoned the hopes of 2,600 Queenslanders to get jobs. That is the legacy of the irresponsibility of the Government. That is the legacy of the Government's freeze.

When we look at the Budget brought down by the Treasurer, sure, a lot of money is allocated for capital works but a significant part of it is money that should have already been spent on services and works which were already needed in the community. However, the Treasurer's Capital Works Program will deliver 8,405 fewer jobs than the Capital Works Program and Accelerated Capital Works Program brought down by the former Labor Government.

If that is not enough, let us see how the Treasurer delivers on some of her other promises. The other big promise made in that wonderful speech in March—a speech which will haunt the Treasurer—was to keep taxes low. She went out, as is her want, in a boastful manner and said, "Not only will there be no new taxes in the State Budget, but there will not be any tax increases in the State Budget either." What a joke! The trouble is that nobody is laughing. They are certainly not laughing with the Treasurer; they might be laughing at her. They are not laughing, because she has betrayed their trust again in what was a key policy platform of the coalition. What a hide the Treasurer has to state, at page 29 of her Budget Speech—

"Mr Speaker, I am proud to say that in this Budget there are no new taxes."

Only three pages before she delivered those memorable lines, she introduced national park user fees and increased camping fees. She has introduced environmental franchise fees, that is, the tyre tax and the oil tax. She has increased fees for TAFE. She has increased motor vehicle registration charges, on top of the \$66.50 increase brought down on 1 July on compulsory third-party premiums. She has increased the tobacco licence fee and, just for good measure, she has increased the bank account debits tax. That is not a bad effort for

a Budget which did not deliver any new taxes or tax increases. The Treasurer's credibility is in tatters.

Then we saw the Treasurer's attempt to find an alibi. Again, in the Budget Speech we heard the claim that these tax increases were necessary to fix a funding shortfall from the Commonwealth. As recently as Tuesday, the Treasurer claimed again that the Commonwealth's alleged cuts to Queensland had cost the Budget \$250m. That is yet another example of the deceptive politicking peddled by the Premier and Treasurer on the people of Queensland. The Government is deceptive and dishonest. The coalition Government has been about trying to set in place circumstances such that, in bringing down its Budget, it could break willy-nilly its promises in relation to taxation and a number of spending initiatives.

Let us have a look at the Premiers Conference and the so-called cuts to Queensland. The Government's Commission of Audit sought to quantify the cut at \$184m. That consisted of a \$114m contribution this year to Mr Costello, a \$60m cut to specific purpose payments to Queensland from the Commonwealth, and a \$10m cut whereby sales tax exemptions were removed for certain State Government vehicles. On 21 August, the day after the Federal Budget came down, the Treasurer rushed out with a revelation. Mrs Sheldon said that Queensland faced cuts of up to \$250m in Commonwealth funds, well above the \$190m figure anticipated. She went on to say that included in the \$250m in cuts was an unexpected extra cut of \$20m in financial assistance grants and \$40m in cuts to the Building Better Cities Program. Unexpected? Unexpected my fat aunt! The facts are that, as part of its election platform, the coalition said that it would abolish the Building Better Cities Program. So much for unexpected cuts to the State Budget!

In that press release the Treasurer further inflated the figure. First, it was \$184m, then \$190m, and then \$250m. The Treasurer is trying to spread confusion and lay the groundwork in place such that she can dishonour her commitments to the Queensland public. The Treasurer's own Budget papers show what a fraud she is. For Commonwealth payments to the Consolidated Fund for 1996-97, we see a figure of \$5.068 billion. That is an increase—a plus sign, not a minus sign—of \$263.4m, or 5.5 per cent. That is more than enough to cope with inflation and to accommodate population growth as well. If we delve a little further into the Budget papers, we certainly see a reduction in funds from the

Commonwealth into the trust funds, but overall the total Commonwealth payments to Queensland into the Consolidated Fund and the Trust Fund are \$127m higher this year than last year. That is the sort of cut I would not mind having every year—a cut which delivers an extra \$127m, or a 2.3 per cent increase.

However, the thing I most object to, apart from the dishonesty which has surrounded Commonwealth/State payments discussions this year, is the fact that the Treasurer took all of the money for Mr Costello from the public housing budget. The Treasurer ripped more than \$114m out of the budget which delivered housing to the most disadvantaged people in the Queensland community. The Treasurer shall forever wear the shame for that.

On Wednesday, the Government which has cried that its funds are so limited engaged in a major advertising blitz around Queensland. Advertisements appeared in newspapers all over the State about the back to basics Budget. It is back to basics all right—back to basic dishonesty. No other element can better exemplify that than the claim that there are no increases in average tax per person in the Budget. There is in fact a real increase in State taxation in this Budget. Total taxes and fees will increase by \$183m in this Budget. That is a 4.5 per cent increase. That is a plus sign. That is greater than the rate of inflation. It is a real increase. But the point which Government speakers seem to miss is that not only is there a real increase in taxation revenues in this Budget but also the way in which the taxation burden falls is made even more inequitable under this Budget.

Let us have a look at the tax increases that have generated such a windfall for this Treasurer. The bank account debits tax increased. This year, receipts will increase by a projected \$31m, or 23.7 per cent. The Treasurer should ask all Queenslanders—and I have plenty in my electorate—who operate an EFTPOS or credit card account in conjunction with their cheque account whether they think there is no increase in taxation in the Treasurer's Budget. They will tell the Treasurer something very different when they receive their bank statements and find that their contributions to the Treasury coffers have gone up by such a large amount this year—almost 25 per cent. In particular, account holders with Suncorp, who will find for the very first time that those fees will be listed on their accounts, will be particularly grateful for the policies of this Government. People will remember the Treasurer every time they use accounts with an EFTPOS/cheque facility.

When they buy their groceries and fuel and when they go out to a restaurant, every time they use that facility there will be some money for the bill and some extra money for the Treasurer—the Treasurer who promised no increases in taxes. They will remember, and we will not let them forget.

What about Queensland motorists? I have already said that my constituents have had a \$66.50 increase in their compulsory third-party insurance. They do not benefit from any of the largess of the Treasurer when they use the Logan Motorway. Not only that, that \$66.50 will go up to \$70 because of the Treasurer's increase in motor vehicle registration charges, which she projects as collecting an extra \$37m this year. That is an increase of 8.2 per cent, and it is in the Budget.

What about the tobacco licensing fee? I am not a smoker; this one does not affect me. I happen to believe that anything we can do to discourage people from smoking is a good thing. However, the basic dishonesty of this Budget is that in no way is the increase in tobacco tax about discouraging people from smoking. We all know that smoking is highly addictive, and that is why the Treasurer is banking on an extra \$44m—almost \$545m this year—from smokers. That is an increase of 8.8 per cent, in spite of the fact that the Premier was in Mareeba only a few weeks ago promising with his hand across his heart that there would be no increase in the tobacco tax; that he would honour his promises to the tobacco growers at Mareeba. They are very angry about the deceit of this Government, and they are not going to forget it, either.

Government speakers might say, "Oh, but Labor in Government increased the tobacco tax." It sure did, but it had the basic honesty to make it a key plank in the 1992 election campaign. We went out there to the people of Queensland and said, "If you vote for us, we will increase the tobacco tax." What the coalition did in 1995, and as recently as last month, was to say, "If you vote for us, we won't increase the tobacco tax." Yet this deceitful, dishonest Treasurer delivers the whammy for the tobacco industry and for smokers in the Budget.

What about some of the other tax promises of this Government? We were told over weeks and months that there would be cuts to payroll tax and cuts to land tax. We actually see payroll tax collections increasing by \$39m in the Budget—a 3.7 per cent increase—notwithstanding a lifting in the threshold level from the beginning of next

year. But is it not more interesting to note that, even though the Treasurer has said that adjusting payroll tax threshold rates will create more jobs, her Budget Speech and every bit of economic data reveals that there will be no reduction in unemployment in Queensland this year. In fact, as I have already demonstrated, the trend in unemployment is up, not down. The same can be said for the Government's tax regime. It is up, too, with ordinary Queenslanders paying more to live in this State.

While we are on the subject of taxes—the absolute hypocrisy of this Treasurer can be exemplified by her now well-known aversion to traffic offences and speeding fines at the same time as speed cameras are introduced in this Budget, not for road safety measures at all but to generate another \$15m in revenue from Queensland motorists. That means that 150,000 Queenslanders will not be given the benefit that Mrs Sheldon's driver got and be waved on after exceeding the speed limit. Rather, 150,000 Queenslanders will be asked to pay up to boost revenue for the State Budget. They will pay up \$15m this year, and they will pay up \$40m in a full year. That is a lot of people who are going to remember the different treatment that is meted out under this Government according to whether a person is a friend of the Government or whether a person just happens to be an ordinary Queenslanders going about their day-to-day business.

Again in this context, we have the justification of these tax increases—the increase in the debits tax, the increase in tobacco licensing. It is claimed in Budget Paper No. 2 at page 39 that these increases are to offset the cuts from the Commonwealth. Which cuts? We have already found that the Commonwealth did not actually cut expenditure to Queensland. In fact, we have an increased Commonwealth expenditure. So again we have another example of this Treasurer's deceit and duplicity in claiming one thing and doing the other—in turning minus signs into plus signs; in claiming that surpluses are really deficits.

But there is another part of this Budget which demands close attention as well. I refer to the other ways in which this Government is tightening the screws to generate additional revenue. I said that the Government was delivering on payroll tax reductions by increasing payroll tax collections. We see that the \$20m promised each year to the property industry was not delivered, either—so even when the Government promised a tax cut, it could not deliver it—and that land tax

collections will go down \$6.5m this year at the same time as taxes that are paid by ordinary Queenslanders are going up.

What is most telling is what is happening with stamp duty in the Treasurer's Budget. The answer is: not much is happening with stamp duty at all. Collections are actually projected as going down by half a million dollars. Stamp duty is one of the great economic barometers, because it is collected by the State Government on things such as motor vehicle transfers, conveyancing transactions in relation to land and so on. High rates of increase in stamp duty indicate a lot of activity going on in the economy. Without any adjustments to stamp duty rates, what we find is that stamp duty collections at best will remain static and may indeed decline this year. That is further clear evidence that the Treasurer does not have a clue when it comes to managing the Queensland economy and that her Budget is doing nothing to foster economic growth in this State.

I guess the only other people who can be pleased about some declining contribution to revenue are those who are paying rentals on Crown property. We actually see a reduction in collections in Crown rentals this year. If a person happens to be, presumably, someone in the primary sector on Crown property or if a person happens to be a holder of developmental land that attracts land tax, sure, such a person will get some tax breaks. But most Queenslanders are not in that category. Most Queenslanders just go about their day-to-day lives—they use their cheque account and EFTPOS; they go about their day-to-day lives driving their car; they go about their day-to-day lives putting tyres on their cars and buying oil for various purposes; they like to visit our national parks and they like to go camping there. That is what happens to ordinary Queenslanders. That is what their lives are about, and it is those ordinary Queenslanders that the Treasurer hits and hits again as she delivers a tax burden which is unfair upon ordinary Queensland.

**Mr Ardill:** Isn't 25 per cent of the land tax collected from Surfers Paradise and the Sunshine Coast?

**Mr HAMILL:** I suppose that the Sunshine Coast or Caloundra got so much that the Treasurer had to deliver a bit to the Premier in Surfers Paradise as well. They are about the only two localities that benefit under this regime.

Let us look a bit further at the finer print of this Budget when it comes to income. The State Government is tightening the screws on

the public sector generally. If we look at Budget Paper No. 2, we find that the Government is actually reaping a windfall on the backs of all those Queenslanders who did not get a job because it did not spend the money allocated to the Capital Works Program last year. We see that interest received by Government this year will be up \$77m. A significant part of that will be on the back of those unexpended balances that I referred to earlier. There is a 12 per cent increase in revenue to the State through interest this year, up to \$716.4m.

As to dividends—there is a swingeing increase in the amount of dividends that are being extracted from public enterprises this year. They are up in excess of 100 per cent—from \$351m last year to \$699.2m this year. As to tax equivalents paid by State enterprises—their contribution is up from \$47.3m last year to \$162.5m this year—a 41 per cent increase. Property rents—mostly gaming machine rents—are up 11.4 per cent to \$76.3m this year. Add all that together, and what we see is the other very disturbing aspect of this Budget. Not only is it big taxing on the backs of ordinary Queenslanders but it is also big taxing—a very taxing Budget from a very taxing Treasurer—on the backs of the Government corporations and Government activity.

Who is paying these dividends? I guess ordinary Queenslanders are again, through the prices which are charged by Suncorp, QIDC, the electricity industry, the port authorities and Queensland Rail for the services that are provided. The Government is actually taking public enterprises such as Suncorp—and particularly Suncorp, which it is so keen to flog off—the electricity industry, that is, AUSTA and the transmission and supply industry, and Queensland Rail and it is squeezing them. The Government has them in the vice and it is squeezing them. It is making those entities bleed by way of massive increases in dividend payments and tax equivalent payments to the Budget. Out of this whole area of property income, the Treasurer is actually bleeding half a billion extra dollars this year. This was the shadow Treasurer who, last year, was railing against dividend payments which were only half of what she is extracting from public sector corporations this year. Last year, the Treasurer was claiming that the Labor Government, by taking dividends worth \$350m, was crippling the capacity of those bodies to deliver services to the community. It does not stop her increasing their tax bill 100 per cent.

The deception and the dishonesty continues. The Treasurer claims to justify these tax increases by cuts to Commonwealth revenue, yet the Treasurer salts away \$259m in the Treasurer's advance. She cuts programs to deliver training to the unemployed and she stashes away the money she makes from that into her Treasury slush fund. Let me do the figures so that honourable members can understand the enormity of what she is doing. She increased the Treasurer's advance in the order of about \$160m this year, yet she extracts the \$114m she is going to pay back to the Commonwealth out of public housing. Alternatively, the amount of extra money that she is salting away—for whatever reason we would love to know—is in excess of all the additional increases in taxation in fees and fines that she is levying on the Queensland people.

In other words, if she was not deliberately salting money away in the Treasurer's advance, in the Treasurer's slush fund, she would not have to increase bank accounts debits tax at all, she would not have to increase motor vehicle registration charges at all, she would not have to increase tobacco tax at all and she would not have to introduce new taxes on oil and tyres at all. There is more than enough money there to more than cover the revenue increase. The Treasurer cannot have it both ways. She cannot claim Commonwealth cuts to increase taxes when there are no Commonwealth cuts, and she cannot justify cuts to important employment and training and public housing programs when she has the money sitting in her back pocket.

The other point I would like to make about this Budget is that so much of the Budget strategy of this Government flies in the face of the Treasurer's own Commission of Audit. I refer the Treasurer to page 130 of the Commission of Audit report where Commissioner FitzGerald and the other members of the commission warn this Government that the State should not rely on payroll tax and gaming and tobacco tax to meet revenue needs. The Commission of Audit suggests very strongly indeed that gaming and tobacco tax would be a declining source of revenue, yet the Treasurer has gone out to increase collections in both of those areas. The Commission of Audit goes on to warn the Government even further in relation to payroll tax. It says that payroll tax is a declining source of revenue as well in relative terms. It can be seen in the Budget that, even with delivering payroll tax concessions, there will be an increase, albeit a small one. The tax

falls on only 5 per cent of employers in the State. That is not the 5 per cent of employers who are represented in the major growth areas in the Queensland economy. Many of those are small employers who go nowhere near paying \$1 in payroll tax. Also, it is in the slower wages growth area of the economy.

What FitzGerald warned in the audit report was that, by continuing to increase the thresholds and so on, the Treasurer effectively undermined the efficacy of payroll tax itself, yet she flies in the face of the audit report's clear recommendations on that point, as indeed she has flown in the face of a very strong recommendation in the audit report that appeared at page 169. In the report, FitzGerald makes this point—

"Dividends and tax equivalents paid by state trading enterprises contributed \$358 million or six per cent of the State's own-source revenue in 1994-95."

In this Budget that the Treasurer has brought down, tax equivalents and dividends from public trading enterprises will contribute \$861.5m in 1996—over double the figure that was quoted only two years ago in the audit report figure, and it will now contribute over 10 per cent of State sourced income or State sourced revenue that the Treasurer will extract out of the Government trading enterprises by way of tax equivalents and dividend payments. What did Commissioner FitzGerald say about that? Page 169 of the Commission of Audit states—

"Dividends and tax equivalents from public trading enterprises should be set on a commercial basis and should not be relied upon as a revenue source for the bulk of current State Government services."

The Treasurer is becoming increasingly dependent on the money that she can squeeze out of Government trading corporations by way of dividends. There is a 100 per cent increase this year in the collection from dividends. The Treasurer is doing that to prop up her other expenditure. She is again flying in the face of the clear recommendations of FitzGerald. She is ignoring the clear things that he said should be done to try to address some fundamental structural issues in the Queensland Budget.

What should be done? This Government should abandon its approach to economic management which is all about boom and bust and it should abandon the approach that the Treasurer has adopted in relation to the management of the State's economy over the past seven months. Before this Treasurer

became a member of Parliament, she was a physiotherapist, and I know that the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that this physiotherapist has massaged the figures a lot since she became Treasurer. I would remind the physiotherapist of what I thought was a major principle in the way in which physiotherapists undertook their profession. If a person came to a physiotherapist after perhaps an accident and that person's muscle had deteriorated, a physiotherapist would not embark upon an extraordinarily rigorous and exacting program of exercises for fear that it would do more damage than good. A good physiotherapist would embark upon a program of steady improvement through exercise to restore the muscle fibre and the muscle tone. What this Treasurer has done, though, with the Queensland economy is allowed its employment generating muscles to decline and to wane. She did it deliberately through her own political agenda by cutting and freezing capital works, by denying the capacity of the employment generating factors within the economy and then, after denying those funds, she turns around and throws the carryovers into this Budget with a big bang approach, an exacting approach, to try then to engender growth in the economy which she admits is not going to work.

The economy requires careful and sensitive nurturing. As I said at the outset, a responsible Budget should seek to smooth the business cycle. A responsible Budget should apply counter-cyclical strategies to lift the economy at a time when the economy is stagnating. When in Government, Labor was committed to that approach. When in Government, Labor used the Budget responsibly to generate economic activity when it was needed and to moderate it when the economy was overheating. When in Government, Labor did not squander the family silver to do that. We did not bleed the public sector dry and raid trust fund balances and public sector corporations to balance the Budget. When we return to Government, Labor will not follow the reckless path of this Treasurer. We will manage the Budget responsibly and we will use capital works appropriately to generate activity in the Queensland economy. Our No. 1 priority will be delivering jobs, jobs and more jobs for Queensland, and we will not flog off the family silver in the process.

**Mr BARTON** (Waterford) (11.29 a.m.): This Budget fails to deliver in the crucial area of law and order. It demonstrates that this Government is all about rhetoric. It is very tough on words, but it is very wimpish when it

comes to delivery. It ran very hard on law and order in the July 1995 election campaign and the Mundingburra by-election earlier this year. This Government conned the voters of Queensland. In the run-up to the July election last year, the Attorney-General ran Denver's Travelling Law and Order Sideshow all over Queensland. But his sideshow paled into insignificance compared to the actions of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services in his efforts in the Mundingburra by-election.

The Police Minister and his eyes and ears, Matt Heery, and his chief adviser, Russell Grenning, certainly took action to push law and order to the forefront by doing a dirty, secret deal with a small number of the membership of the Queensland Police Union's leadership—and I stress that it was just a few; certainly not the majority—to organise a tough, more-police campaign by that union which was run back to back with the more-police campaign of the so-called Concerned Citizens for Mundingburra, which was nothing more than a covert campaign run by the National Party's Matt Heery and his friends in the National Party's Alice River branch—a campaign in which the star was none other than the Police Minister himself who, of course, is subsequently starring in another very public event as a result of his actions and the actions of others in Mundingburra, an event in which the curtain, and possibly the axe, is yet to fall.

This Minister talked tough on law and order, promised more police to everybody who would listen, and yet, when given his chance as part of the Government, on this very Budget fails miserably in the real test on whether he really is sincere about more police and being tough on law and order issues. This Minister claims an extra 139 police in his press release, a figure that cannot be confirmed in the Budget papers or in the Minister's Ministerial Program Statements. It simply does not appear. It is a figure that is lower than what would have been delivered by Labor had it remained in office, because Labor was committed to delivering 175 additional operational police last financial year and a further 175 operational police for 1996-97. Labor was delivering what it had promised on police—police numbers, I might add, that the Police Service itself asked for. This Police Minister engaged in a Dutch auction by promising more police than the numbers that the Police Service itself believed were necessary to do the job. But as we have seen, the Minister made those promises to deliver more but is actually delivering less.

It sounded good when the Minister conned the people in the July 1995 election and the February by-election, but he has broken that promise. This Police budget is one of the biggest broken promises of this Government's Budget. The Police Minister himself, even in his documentation, and the Treasurer in her documentation admit that the Police budget has increased by only 7.3 per cent overall. Labor's last Budget increased the Police budget by 7.5 per cent. Even by their own admission, they have failed to provide increases in police expenditure larger than what was delivered in the last Labor Budget.

The Police budget is also flawed in another way. It may not be a genuine 7.3 per cent increase, because Racing is now in the Police budget and the Budget papers are so deceptive that it is not possible to tell if this transfer of the Racing Division's budget makes up part of that increase of 7.3 per cent—a Racing budget that formed part of a different department's budget in 1995-96.

**Mr Johnson:** Why don't you go and ask Mr Cooper?

**Mr BARTON:** I assure the Minister for Transport that I will certainly be raising that in Estimates Committee B next Wednesday. However, I make the point that the Budget papers are so deceptive that it is impossible to tell on reading them whether it is the case that that would be pursued.

This is a Budget that also appears to be a sleight of hand in the Police Service's capital expenditure, because many of these projects were held up as part of the Treasurer's capital works freeze. Money for police capital works projects, including some new necessary police stations and watch-houses, was not proceeded with or had been deferred and held over for the 1996-97 Budget. It is a really cute trick: do not spend it; transfer the money and the project to the next Budget, claim the project and the expenditure commitment as your own, and then say you are delivering more than Labor, but do so with Labor allocated funds.

This appears to be the case with approximately \$18m worth of capital expenditure in the Police budget alone. The Government then hides it by providing the information in a very unclear way in the Program Statements. It does explain, of course, why the Treasurer put on the capital works freeze, which was very damaging to business and jobs over the past seven months. To add insult to injury, the Government also cancelled some of the projects committed to by Labor and

transferred those funds to lower priority projects in Liberal, National and Independent electorates in a pork-barrelling exercise.

**Mr Johnson** interjected.

**Mr BARTON:** I say to the very noisy Minister for Transport: watch this space at Wednesday's Estimates committee hearing because, by then, we will have thoroughly identified precisely what has been done from the deliberately confusing material in the Program Statements. From what I am hearing from other shadow Ministers, including the member for Cook, the very same cheap political stunt is being pulled in their portfolio areas as well.

This confused position also exists on police numbers. The media also had the same problem in identifying the actual numbers of additional police who were being provided by this Budget. Media reports on Budget day from various journalists who had tried to find the answer from studying the Budget papers and this Minister's Program Statements were quoting figures ranging from 102 additional police to 152 and various figures in between. The only place where the Police Minister's figure of 139 additional police is referred to is in the Minister's press statement on Budget day. And even that is not clear on whether those 139 police are additional, real, extra police officers or whether some have been released to police duties by some of the new civilians who are to be employed.

The Budget papers refer only to an extra 800 police over a three-year period. That is additional police on the never-never. The Minister says that most of these will be provided in the 1997-98 and 1998-99 Budgets, but can we believe him? This is the Minister who provided the grand total of an additional 12 extra police in the two years that he was the Police Minister and Premier in the late 1980s. This is the Minister who has presided over a cancelled police recruit intake of 40 in July this year and has admitted publicly that the next two intakes will each be cut by 20 from what had been planned at the Oxley Police Academy.

Now, I may seem sceptical about the information provided in these Budget documents. I suggest to all members of this Parliament that I have good reason to be sceptical, because the Minister's Program Statements contains major flaws—not just deception, but major mistakes. The figures quoted for the subprogram Corporate Services on page 1-33 are really the figures for the subprogram Operational Support, the figures for which are on page 1-27. They are identical.

But it can be determined that the Corporate Services figures are the ones that are wrong by reference to the global information on all subprograms on page 1-5.

We the Parliament and the people of Queensland are deprived of the detailed information on the Police Service's Corporate Services subprogram in these Budget documents. This makes any proper analysis of the actual police numbers and other staff employed by the Police Department impossible, particularly as Corporate Services is the third-largest subprogram and employs a disproportionately large percentage of sworn officers. This is an issue that certainly received some criticism in the Bingham report only in recent weeks.

Not only are the Police Program Statements deceptive but also they contain major errors. We are entitled to ask—and I would suggest not only members of the Opposition but also every member of this Parliament—how did such a seriously flawed document get past the Minister, his staff and presumably the Treasurer and her Budget Review Committee? We all know that this Police Minister has been distracted for many months by events at the Carruthers inquiry and that he has a revolving-door policy on personal ministerial staff, which may explain why those serious flaws were missed. But this is simply not good enough. It constitutes the misleading of this Parliament and the people of Queensland by this Minister and this Treasurer. It is further proof that this accident-prone Minister is not up to the task and that the same applies to this Treasurer who is, presumably, finally responsible for all formal Budget documents.

In the Parliament yesterday morning, I flagged the fact that this document was badly flawed in relation to police numbers. I expected that, as a matter of urgency, the Police Minister would have had it checked and provided the factual figures to this Parliament. All members of Budget Estimates Committee B have certainly been disadvantaged because, in the absence of necessary factual information, we had to frame our questions on notice before last night for them to be provided to the Minister.

This State needs more police. This Minister should be taking steps to meet his promises. In Townsville, grand promises were made in the by-election earlier this year about increases in police numbers—numbers on which not a single officer has been delivered. In Proserpine, the numbers are so low that the police station is frequently not attended by a

police officer in the middle of the day. In Gladstone, a shortage of police—which has not yet been addressed; not a single extra officer has been provided for Gladstone—was one of the two reasons given for the forced resignation of the Goss Government. In Hervey Bay, 10 officers and a paddy wagon were promised by the Minister who said, "I'll provide that by the click of my figures." It is about time that he clicked his fingers. In Logan/Beenleigh, at the heart of my electorate, 150 additional police officers as a minimum were promised immediately should the coalition win Government. They are still waiting, and the Police Union is talking very openly about the fact that, unless those officers are delivered very quickly, it will be taking unprecedented strike action. That has been repeated in every other Queensland centre that received personal promises from this Police Minister. There has been no change, apart from the one additional police officer provided in one of the small, outlying towns in the Keppel electorate.

As to Corrective Services—the 20.2 per cent increase in its budget looks impressive until it is dissected. In reality, it is only 10.6 per cent more than last year's actual figures. There is certainly to be a large increase in capital expenditure on new prisons in this State. As I pointed out some months ago, that expenditure is way above the amount that was promised in the 1995 election campaign.

However, even that figure does not take into account the anticipated increase in prison populations as a result of promised tougher sentencing, tougher juvenile justice laws and higher crime clear-up rates from the promised larger Police Service. Most importantly, some estimated operating costs for both correctional centres and the juvenile detention centres have been cut in this Budget. In the Corrective Services Estimates, the basis for the estimated figures for secure custody prisons is certainly very questionable. The additional number of prisoners estimated is approximately only half the increase that occurred last year. The Budget was blown for 1995-96 due to additional prisoners above the estimates. To drop this estimated figure is a recipe for an even bigger costs blow-out during this financial year.

At the same time, estimated revenue from the Prisons Business Program has been increased compared with last year's revenue targets; but last year's targets were not even met due to, as the footnotes in the Program Statements state, "a more competitive market place". The estimated lower costs are mainly dependent on what the Program Statements

call the "impact of savings initiatives undertaken within the Commission's Organisational Support program". What does that mean? There is a potential quadruple negative effect: firstly, if prisoner numbers increase at the same rate as in 1995-96—and that is the most likely outcome; secondly, if the revenue from the business program falls again—and that is the most likely outcome; thirdly, if the operating costs savings are not achieved—and that is the most likely outcome; and fourthly, if even yet more prisoners arrive, or are held for longer periods due to the promised tougher sentencing legislation. If all of that occurs, the Corrective Services budget will blow out so far that we will be searching for it on the dark side of the moon. The Corrective Services budget is highly irresponsible and framed on a basis that no responsible person could accept.

This Budget has similar problems for the juvenile detention centres. There are similar concerns that show up in the Ministerial Program Statements for this area. Its budget is also largely capital works driven. Again, unexpended funds for capital works committed by Labor in 1995 were frozen and are to be spent by this Government in this financial year. Total current outlays, which cover operating costs including wages and salaries and non-labour operating costs, are estimated at \$2.79m less than the 1995-96 actuals—even after the allowance of \$2.17m for the period from 1 July to 15 August when the Corrective Services Commission took over from the Department of Family Services. The 1995-96 budget blew out by over \$4.5m due to additional numbers. With the already-passed tougher juvenile justice laws, we must expect the numbers of juveniles detained to accelerate even further. In those circumstances, how can operating costs be reduced?

We have already seen lock-downs used as a management tool to save operating costs rather than meet the costs of additional staff. That is an inhumane practice, particularly when we are talking about juveniles, and has already led to the serious injury of a young man in the Cleveland Centre in Townsville and an industrial dispute at the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre. Sadly, we are already seeing the Corrective Services culture entering juvenile detention centres. The Budget Estimates for juvenile centres are also irresponsible and unrealistic, and they will also blow out above what has been provided. One of the most important concerns is the use of that totally inappropriate method of lock-downs, because, potentially, they will occur



very frequently as a cost cutting management tool as the commission struggles to try to meet the paltry budget that it has been allowed.

The budget for Police and Corrective Services is totally inappropriate. It does not provide significant numbers of additional police. Promises have been broken. It will provide new correctional facilities and juvenile detention centres, but it will not provide adequate operating funds for them to be properly operated. Next year, when we study the Budget outcomes, we will have either a huge cost blow-out or very serious problems in prisons and juvenile detention centres as a result of the inappropriate actions that will have been taken to try to contain costs.

I am nearly out of time, but I point out that this is also a bad news Budget for my electorate. The major expenditure is on the South East Freeway, where the Government is smashing down literally dozens of homes and disrupting the lifestyle of everyone else. The Logan Motorway crosses my electorate. The tolls remain. There has not been even a miserable drop in that toll.

Time expired.

**Mr GRICE** (Broadwater) (11.50 a.m.): This morning it is my sad duty to inform the House of very serious allegations concerning the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission. The allegations are of such a serious nature that I believe that they clearly fall within the terms of reference of the judicial inquiry foreshadowed by the Attorney-General. I seek their inclusion in the matters to be considered by that inquiry.

It gives me no great pleasure at all to raise these issues in this place. However, I must, as the Queensland Police Service is subjugated in many ways to the Criminal Justice Commission. Also sadly, the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee has never been endowed with sufficient powers and resources for a criminal investigation of this magnitude.

On 25 July 1995, Queensland's most powerful law enforcement official, the Director of the Criminal Justice Commission's Official Misconduct Division, Pierre Mark Le Grand, denied before the Hanson inquiry that he was the source of leaks surrounding the CJC's Operation Wallah investigation into former Labor Senator Graham Richardson. He stated—

"The allegation is totally without foundation, totally baseless, betrays everything I have stood for the whole of my professional career. I have never

breached the public trust in this way—in that way. I would never breach the public trust in that way."

Evidence that has since been provided to me raises more than considerable doubt about Mark Le Grand's denial and significantly raises the prospect that perjury may well have been committed in this regard.

Quite clearly, as I shall demonstrate to the people of Queensland, there is evidence that he has betrayed the trust given to him by the people and should be made accountable to the people for his actions. On 9 May 1994, Le Grand met a person in Brisbane at approximately 0800 hours and handed—

**Mr BREDHAUER:** I rise to a point of order. This is an Appropriation debate. Mr Speaker, I ask you to rule on the relevance of this issue to the appropriations before the Parliament of Queensland.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I will. We usually have a wide-ranging debate in relation to budgetary matters. I understand that the honourable member would be referring to the budget of the CJC.

**Mr GRICE:** Not the crux, but certainly the corollary of my speech is to do with the funding of the CJC in general and the Hanson inquiry in particular, which I will get to.

On 9 May 1994, Le Grand met a person in Brisbane at approximately 0800 and handed over a sealed envelope. That envelope contained the highly secret information outlining Operation Wallah. The exact detail of what occurred on that day has been fully documented and is verifiable.

Prior to that meeting, a series of telephone conversations involving the most senior CJC official, Mark Le Grand, determined how and when the handover of these highly sensitive files would take place. Le Grand's alleged actions make a mockery of a claim he made before the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee on 24 April 1994, only 18 days before that.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Where is your proof?

**Mr GRICE:** Wait for it. Mark Le Grand stated—

"The sustained leaking of important, confidential information from the commission is enormously debilitating to its operational effectiveness, and there are other implications for the security of witnesses and personnel."

Le Grand also told the parliamentary committee that the leaking of various CJC reports into organised crime activities—

**Mr BARTON:** I rise to a point of order. I think that it needs to be clarified whether the quotes to which the member for Broadwater is referring were quotes made in a public hearing or whether they were quotes made to the PCJC in a private meeting. If the member is quoting from confidential documents of the PCJC, then this member is in very serious breach of the privileges of this Parliament. I was a member of that PCJC, and I would certainly like to see that matter clarified to be sure that this member is not breaching the privilege of the Parliament.

**Mr GRICE:** Le Grand stated—

". . . goes to the heart of our accountability, are destroying the credibility, the effectiveness and the operational integrity of the CJC."

That is a quote from public documents. Le Grand then added—

"Someone has been selling us out, destroying us, eating us out internally."

Indeed, I would suggest that one need look no further than Pierre Mark Le Grand.

Lest there be any doubt about the facts, or claims that I have made unfounded allegations under the cloak of parliamentary privilege, I now seek leave to table a copy of an extract of one of the joint CJC and Queensland Police Service secret files allegedly leaked by the Director of the Official Misconduct Division of the CJC. This is but two of many pages of evidence and material I hold identifying Mark Le Grand as the source of the CJC leaks.

Leave granted.

**Mr GRICE:** I do have regard for the secret and confidential markings on all the documents, and for that reason I will not table them all today. However, I am happy to make available to the Leader of the Opposition, or his nominee, additional evidence in my possession. If the Opposition Leader needs convincing, I will do that on a confidential basis.

Members should note that the numerical digit imprinted in the middle of page 2 of this extract is a security code that identifies clearly the source of the document. Together with the verified testimony of several witnesses, I want to make it clear that there is no doubt in my mind of Le Grand's deliberate actions and how they have compromised the integrity of the very organisation for which he works. I have also been provided with a comprehensive signed and witnessed statutory declaration verifying the basis of the evidence provided by me. I also assure the House that all the

evidence in my possession has been examined by sound, eminent legal practitioners. In respect to those who insist that all this evidence be made public—

**Mr BREDHAUER:** Mr Speaker, I draw your attention again to the relevance of the debate. For six minutes there has not been one reference to any item of appropriation in respect of the Bills before the House. This is not a matter that is appropriate for discussion during the debate on the Appropriation Bills. During the course of debates in this Parliament, there are other times during which these sorts of issues can be raised. Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the Standing Orders and I ask you to rule on the relevance of the debate.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no debate on it. I call the honourable member for Broadwater. Earlier, he did indicate that he will refer to budgetary matters pertaining to the CJC, and I ask him to do that through his speech.

**Mr GRICE:** I also assure this House that all the evidence in my possession has been examined by sound, eminent legal practitioners.

In response to those who insist that all this evidence be made public, I am confident that, in time, all will be revealed. By now, members of this place should know me well enough to realise that I do not stand in this place and make such claims without being able to substantiate them. I also remind members that section 132(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1989 is very clear about what happens to those who leak confidential information from the CJC, which is a body that is funded by the people of Queensland. The law also states that those who tell lies whilst on oath face even more severe penalties.

The evidence is overwhelming and I call upon the State Government to refer it to a competent inquiry such as that foreshadowed by the Honourable the Attorney-General. Also, I am willing to make myself available to the member for Gladstone and provide her with a comprehensive briefing on these matters as she considers the allegations. Furthermore, I give a commitment that all the information in my possession would be provided to the appropriate body for examination.

In view of the seriousness of the matters raised today, I also demand that the CJC immediately remove Mark Le Grand from his position as Director of the Official Misconduct Division pending the outcome of an inquiry. Only then can there be a full and open investigation into the Criminal Justice

Commission, its Official Misconduct Division—in particular the conduct of its director, Mark Le Grand—the way in which the CJC is funded, for how long it has been funded and for how long it will be funded.

The mere fact that we are now faced with a prospect of a public inquiry into the Criminal Justice Commission at further cost to the people of Queensland signifies a tragic sequence of events. Seven years ago, the Fitzgerald inquiry, initiated by the National Party, created an organisation that was dedicated to establishing and maintaining a standard of accountability, propriety and respectability for all Queenslanders, which the excesses of the 1980s demanded. That organisation was given powers seldom seen in this country and seldom seen in the Western World: the power to hold hearings so secret that even the participants are prohibited from revealing even their presence and the ability to seek bugging powers to spy on the conversations of members, or me, or anyone else it chooses. We put in place an organisation more powerful than any police force in our nation. At what cost to the people of Queensland? It is an organisation that costs more to run than the entire Parliament.

Is it too much to expect that this elite law enforcement agency should itself embody all the ideals that came from the Fitzgerald inquiry? Is it too much to expect that this organisation, the CJC, should be the model of probity, truth and honesty demanded by its creator? Sadly, on many occasions the CJC has proven itself to be politically motivated and biased, and in not one particular direction. In this instance, the CJC is not motivated by loyalty to any particular party but simply to its own survival. Political bias can often be dependent on the eye of the beholder, but the truth can never be accused of political bias because the truth is the truth.

Hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars were wasted during the Hanson inquiry to get to the bottom of the CJC leaks involving Operation Wallah. Eight elected members from both sides of the House were called before the inquiry and subjected to intense questioning over a leak of information. There is now evidence that the material was in fact leaked by the instigator of that very same expensive inquiry, Mark Le Grand. The compelling evidence in my possession not only identifies Le Grand as the leak behind Operation Wallah, but indicates that he also committed perjury on the stand. This evidence puts the gratuitous comments made by Mr Hanson, QC, into perspective when he

summed up Le Grand's evidence at the inquiry by stating in a public document—

"I had the opportunity to observe Mr Le Grand in the witness box. He indignantly denies Mr Cleeland's"—

the Federal Labor member—

"allegations and any other suggestion that he is the source of the journalist's information. He was prevented by parliamentary privilege from calling into question his accuser's motives, so that I was presented with the farce of a politician having slandered a man under parliamentary privilege, and that person being hampered by the same parliamentary privilege in fully defending himself. I dismiss Mr Cleeland's allegations with contempt."

The Labor member, Mr Cleeland, was correct. The only farce here is that this very inquiry was set up by the person who allegedly leaked the information so that he would have a stage on which to demonstrate his alleged innocence and from which to point the finger at the Federal Police or the politicians or the Queensland police—anybody except himself. I ask honourable members to reflect on who funded this elaborate farce.

Furthermore, it is inconceivable to suggest that not one person within the CJC had any concerns about Le Grand's alleged behaviour and his attempts to undermine the Operation Wallah investigation by allegedly leaking highly secret information. This fact alone raises significant concerns about the extent of the corruptors within the ranks of the Criminal Justice Commission. Are there more? The deliberate abuse of public office, public trust and public funds for improper political purposes must be inquired into.

In response to the many critics who will now howl in protest at what I have said today and who will question my motives I say this: in recent times we have heard much debate about the Criminal Justice Commission being the last bastion of honesty, accountability and integrity in Queensland. In fact, in recent days the current Chair of the CJC, Frank Clair, has made much about defending the integrity of the CJC and its role in our society. Mr Clair apparently wants us to believe that the State's most powerful institution and its most senior official, Mark Le Grand, are vigorously upholding law and order in the State and operating in the public interest.

The reality is that this powerful organisation, regarded by many as "The Untouchables", is now under suspicion. It is

under suspicion for having leaked highly confidential information, putting at risk the lives of its informants, perverting the course of justice and creating an environment which has resulted in its most senior official allegedly committing perjury on the witness stand. The apparent hypocrisy of the CJC is simply breathtaking and many in its employ must hang their heads in shame.

The alleged actions of the Director of the Official Misconduct Division and his organisation have now brought into question the ideals, role and function of the Criminal Justice Commission and the money that goes towards it. Questions must now be answered about the CJC and its obsession with survival. This is the true motive and this is the issue which deserves public scrutiny. To achieve this end, there is evidence that Le Grand is prepared to lie, cheat, pervert the course of justice and use the CJC as a political tool. Members opposite must themselves share the same disquiet about the role and function of the Criminal Justice Commission and what it has become.

What has occurred within the CJC and its Official Misconduct Division provides a timely reminder of the dangers facing law enforcement agencies which refuse to be accountable, which seek to build empires and which fail to implement safeguards preventing allegations of dishonesty, deceit, treachery and corruption that have now become apparent within the CJC. Friday the thirteenth is truly a sad day for all Queenslanders.

**Mrs ROSE** (Currumbin) (12.05 p.m.): Unlike the previous speaker, I will speak to the Appropriation Bills and the budgetary direction in which the minority Government is taking our State. It concerns me that all Queenslanders are being made to suffer for the ludicrous promises that the Government made prior to the last election. The coalition promised to spend like drunken sailors who had just made a port of call after 12 months at sea—in the coalition's case, six years in opposition. So much money was forthcoming that it managed to buy its way into power. Already we have seen millions of taxpayers' dollars wasted by this Government which obviously has no idea how to function properly. The \$65m stock market gamble and \$200m tollway buy-out in the Treasurer's own region are just two examples.

The problem with the Government behaving in such a way is that someone has to come up with the cash. Unlike the drunken sailor who goes back on board ship and works for another 12 months to pay off his debts, the

Premier and the Treasurer have decided to slug Queensland taxpayers and cut back on many worthwhile projects.

This "Back to the Future" Government has spawned a new star. I am sure all honourable members will be aware of Tim Shaw, the Demtel man, and his famous catchcry, "But there's still more." There is a new Demtel man, and I can say unreservedly that the Premier has taken over the mantle with more bad news for Queenslanders. This minority Government has become the product which the new Demtel man is trying to sell to Queensland, but there is still more. There is a resounding echo in the ears of all Queensland taxpayers—more taxes, more charges, more pain for battling Queensland families. There is one item, though, which the Government has managed to deliver less of, and that is services. And by the way, there is no money back guarantee for the taxpayer if the Government is found to be faulty.

With taxpayers already reeling from a \$66 rise in third-party insurance, the new Demtel man has gone one step further and announced that there is still more to come. Here are a few more features of Queensland's minority coalition Government. This uncompassionate Government offers taxpayers an increase in the bank accounts debits tax, higher charges for national park use and a \$3.60 rise in car registration, but there is still more. There is the introduction of speed cameras and fees for the use of cheques at Suncorp, but there is still more. The Demtel man, Mr Borbidge, wants Queensland motorists to cough up for new tyres and oil to help pay for the Treasurer's toll road. However, that is not where our top of the line Government ends.

Not content to do things by half, the Government wants to sell off our public assets like electricity, Suncorp and the QIDC. Just for good measure, the Government will throw in extra charges for smokers. And let us not forget the TAFE students. The Demtel man and his band of snake oil merchants are trying to sell a real lemon here. They have made promises that they just cannot afford to keep.

Queenslanders are asking themselves, "Is this the same Demtel man who, at the last election, promised no new taxes or charges, or has the Premier suffered some sort of amnesia along with the rest of the members opposite?" Unlike Tim Shaw, Mr Borbidge will not get a job advertising the *Courier-Mail* when the people of Queensland have a chance to boot his Government out.

Along with more taxes and increased charges, the Government has decided on a policy of slash and burn in relation to services and projects. In an effort to bring its spending under control, schemes which are vital for the benefit of Queenslanders are being cut left, right and centre. Of particular concern for Gold Coast residents is the lack of any concrete plan to extend the new Gold Coast rail line south of Robina. With the Premier trying to shift blame for the delay in extending the rail to Robina to the coalition Federal Government, it seems that it is very unlikely that this Government will honour another of its election promises to move quickly on the further extension of the rail line south of Robina.

Before the last election, the Premier made a big song and dance about having the line go to Coolangatta. Indeed, in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* of 15 July last year, the Premier and the Ministers for Transport, Education and Emergency Services were quoted as saying that the railway would be extended immediately. Fat chance! The Demtel man has trouble even getting the rail link to Robina. Indeed, in November last year the Minister for Education demanded to know if the former Government would have the Helensvale to Robina link completed according to schedule.

In the *Daily News* of 1 November last year, the member for Merrimac theorised—

"Is there a hidden motive, such as what is really happening about this railway?"

The Minister's silence about this issue has been deafening. It appears that the only hidden motive in relation to the Gold Coast rail link is that the Minister's own Government is attempting to pay for the Treasurer's \$200m road toll and the \$1m art gallery in Caloundra. It would not surprise me if this "Back to the Future" Government decides that it cannot afford to extend the rail line further and starts tearing up the tracks from Robina north, repeating an act of vandalism which the Liberals and Nationals inflicted on Gold Coast residents some 40 years ago when they tore up the original rail line.

Ordinary Queenslanders are being hit hard by other cuts to vital services. Pensioners and the elderly have been hit by a reduction in assistance from the Home Assist and Home Secure schemes. Parents of school children will no longer get a \$50 uniform allowance to help them with back to school costs. In my electorate, people in desperate need of dental treatment are being made to travel to Southport for assistance, because this

Government has slashed the \$3.8m in funds needed for the health care centre. It tried to wriggle out of this commitment by allocating only \$690,000 in this Budget to establish the service. The former Labor Government purchased the site in January and intended to have the facility up and running months ago. This delay is seriously hurting senior and frail residents who urgently need to see a dentist.

On 17 April this year, in the *Sun*, which is a Gold Coast newspaper, the Minister for Health, Mr Horan, stated that the health centre would be open in August next year. About a month or so later, in other Gold Coast newspapers he said, "We'll actually have it open by May next year." How can it open by May next year if he allocates only \$690,000 of the \$3.5m needed to build the centre? He is trying to hoodwink the southern Gold Coast, and it will not work. An example of the pain that the Health Minister has inflicted on the residents of the southern Gold Coast came to my attention last week when a gentleman who was suffering from a very sore tooth came into my office. He was proud of the fact that he had managed to keep his teeth throughout his life. But he could not afford to see a dentist to have his sore tooth fixed. He was in extreme agony and could not eat solid food. Not having a car, he had to travel by bus to the Gold Coast Hospital at Southport, where the dental clinic is located. The journey only made the pain worse. As the member for Southport well knows, the trip from the southern end of the coast to Southport can take up to an hour. When he eventually reached the clinic, he was forced to wait four hours for treatment. This is a man who served our nation in time of war, who paid taxes all his life and volunteers regularly to help with community groups. It is just not fair.

The Minister for Health—the Demtel man in training—must take the blame for this pathetic situation. How much longer will residents of the southern Gold Coast wait until they receive the medical and dental treatment they deserve? This Government has paid lip-service to the establishment of a community health service at Palm Beach in an attempt to save itself from the flak which I can assure it will be generated when residents realise they have had the wool pulled over their eyes concerning this issue.

But the deception does not end there. There is still more. Under pressure from the southern Gold Coast community, this Government has said that it will set up a police station at Palm Beach. This one is a beauty. The Demtel man shines through! It seems we got a real bargain. The Government has tried

to con the community into thinking that it will build a police station for \$75,000. That is right: \$75,000 has been allocated to build a new police station at Palm Beach. As one person said, \$75,000 will not even buy a toilet block at Palm Beach. There is no commitment to further funding. The Government has made a token commitment in an attempt to wriggle out of its election promise. It was identified in capital works outlays that \$2m was needed to build it, but the Government has allocated only \$75,000.

The Government's former Demtel man, the Minister for Police, made a big song and dance about this issue on the southern Gold Coast before the last State election. He promised to all and sundry that he would deliver a brand spanking new station as soon as he was elected to the Government benches. What did he deliver—\$75,000 and no commitment to further funding. Both the community health centre and the police station are prime examples of the way in which this Government has misrepresented the truth and deceived its way into power.

The member for Burleigh, who is heading an inquiry into truth in political advertising, could well find herself mentioned as a purveyor of porkies, as she has told all and sundry that Palm Beach has got its police station. Where does she expect the rest of the funding to come from—chook raffles? One really has to wonder at the motives behind the Government's attempt to make it look as though it is doing something. Knowing it would be lambasted by the community and media if it failed to deliver on the health centre and police station, it needed to show that it was doing at least something by allocating tiny amounts. In the case of the police station, the Government has allocated only 4 per cent of the total budget needed. Could the Government be considering an early election? It realises that it must win seats and not lose any in order to gain power in its own right so it had to spend a pittance in order to shore up the member for Burleigh. However, I will make sure that its little game of deception does not succeed and that it is held responsible for its actions.

Residents on the southern Gold Coast need the health centre and the police station delivered now, not in a couple of years' time. Both the Minister for Police and the Minister for Health must, and will be held accountable for their actions in abandoning the residents of the southern Gold Coast. But there is still more. The new Demtel man, along with the Treasurer, has delivered another blow to the southern Gold Coast. This time they have

attacked small business, which is currently finding it hard to survive.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr J. N. Goss): Order! When referring to another member in the Chamber, the member must refer to the member by the correct title.

**Mrs ROSE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Yesterday's announcement that Queensland's unemployment rate had jumped to 9.8 per cent under this Government should signal that this Government should follow the performance of the previous Labor Government and help small-business operators in this State. What have we seen instead? We have seen a Government fumbling to fund its election promises. It has introduced a levy which will mean the loss of small businesses in my electorate and the destruction of a number of jobs. The ill-considered tyre levy will cause problems. Although I agree that something must be done to reduce the impact on the environment of old tyres, this is not the way to go.

My electorate abuts the Queensland/New South Wales border and, as such, tyre retailers will be forced to either absorb the Treasurer's levy or face seeing their customers go across the border where tyres are cheaper. Mr Barry Sawtell, who owns a tyre business at Coolangatta, has told me that this measure could force his business to the wall. He already pays \$1 per old tyre to have them recycled, and estimates that the Treasurer's new tax will cost over \$7,000 per year plus costs of administration. Mr Sawtell was mentioned in both the *Gold Coast Bulletin* and the *Courier-Mail* on Wednesday. I agree with what that small-business person on the Gold Coast said. He stated—

"This Government was supposed to help small business, not break it up."

The Treasurer's action will give large firms the ability to cut out the small operators, such as Mr Sawtell, as they can quite easily move their business across the border, thereby taking away trade from the smaller operators. Potentially hundreds of jobs could be lost on the Gold Coast because of the Government's actions. Unfortunately, we have not heard a peep from any other members with electorates on the Gold Coast, including the member for Surfers Paradise. What will the Demtel man say to the struggling tyre retailers in his electorate when they see their customers going across the border to buy new tyres? I want to know so that I can explain that to the families in my electorate who will lose their business as a result of the Government's

actions. It is imperative that the Government reconsider this act of contempt, which will only enhance employment prospects and the State coffers in New South Wales. Let us not forget the oil tax as well. When Mr or Ms Bloggs from Coolangatta or Elanora want to get a new set of tyres or an oil change, they are going to go across the border where it is cheaper.

Another ill-considered move that will cost jobs on the Gold Coast and help prop up the New South Wales Treasury is the increase in the tobacco tax. I have managed to ascertain that currently the New South Wales Government loses around \$25m in revenue to Queensland annually as a result of smokers or retailers coming across the border to Queensland to purchase cigarettes. This means that Gold Coast businesses are benefiting from increased sales and that the Queensland Treasury pockets extra income. But the Government's ill-thought-out plan will mean that this market will cease to exist. New South Wales smokers and retailers will no longer venture across the border to purchase their supplies. Again, while I agree that something must be done to discourage smoking, especially among younger people, this is not the right course of action. Members opposite say that the former Government was the one that increased taxes on cigarettes, but they forget that this was done before an election so that people could vote on it. This Government has broken its solemn election promise not to increase taxes, and it will be forced to pay.

It can be seen, therefore, that the Gold Coast, especially my electorate, will be made to suffer from this ill-conceived and deceitful Budget. Families and businesses will be hurt just to help the Demtel man and his Treasurer pay for their litany of promises—promises such as the Treasurer's toll road. As this Government has the majority of members in this House who represent seats on the Gold Coast, I would have thought that they would have joined with me in condemning the Budget. Do they not realise that families and businesses in their electorates will be hurt by this Budget, or have they grown accustomed to Government and therefore could not care less about the people who elected them?

Indeed, the smell of ministerial leather may have intoxicated several Gold Coast members into blindly following the dictates of the Demtel man and his Treasurer. If they were serious about looking after the interests of their constituents, then they would join with me in my opposition to the Government's plans and help me lobby to have the Gold Coast made exempt from the Government's

planned tyre, oil and cigarette taxes. In New South Wales, they tackle the problem of having higher fuel prices than Queensland by insulating the Tweed Heads area from State fuel tax. This means that local businesses are not hurt by people crossing the border to buy fuel. I will be having a close look at the New South Wales legislation that exempts the Tweed from fuel tax and will be presenting a proposal to the Government to undertake a similar scheme in Queensland for tyres, oil and cigarettes. By undertaking this action, we can safeguard local small business on the Gold Coast and continue to tap into New South Wales smokers as a source of revenue. Coalition members will, I hope, join with me in supporting this action.

As members would know, the Gold Coast possesses one of the most beautiful coastlines and hinterlands in the nation. They are a magnet to millions of visitors and locals each year. Unfortunately, though, some of these people get into difficulty. Whether it be people or boats in trouble at sea or bushwalkers or hikers caught in the hinterland, the RACQ Careflight helicopter provides a vital service to help ferry injured people to hospital and perform other vital operations. The service was hoping for an increase in funding from the member for Southport. However, it was sadly disappointed. I am sure that the member for Southport saw the comments of Ashley Van de Velde in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* yesterday. The service will have to rely on generous donations from sponsors and the public. This service deserves greater recognition from a Government which boasts three Ministers and a Premier based on the Gold Coast. But again, the Demtel man and his shonky deals have deprived the Gold Coast of valuable funding.

As I mentioned previously, the Gold Coast is a mecca to millions of tourists each year. The magnificent McPherson ranges contain some of the most beautiful and picturesque national parks not just in Queensland but in Australia. Lamington National Park and Springbrook National Park feature. The poorly conceived levy on national park users will serve only to drive tourists away. When combined with the Federal coalition Government's idiotic 600 per cent hike in the tax charged on Great Barrier Reef users, it could lead to a fall in interstate and, more importantly, international visitors to our State.

Let us not pretend for one minute that people come to Queensland just to visit the Gold Coast or the Great Barrier Reef. They come for a combination of attractions. This Government will hurt the tourism industry,

which will eventually become this State's leading industry and employment generator. Just like the tyre, oil and tobacco taxes—

Time expired.

**Mr BREDHAUER** (Cook) (12.25 p.m.): The first Sheldon/Borbidge budget for education can best be described as a status quo document. Although the Budget papers are remarkably bereft of information and details in respect of specific areas of spending in education, what can be gleaned from reading the documents and comparing them with last year's Budget papers is that, at best, education in Queensland is marking time. Undoubtedly there are a number of areas in which the Government has moved to increase resources or to establish new initiatives but, simultaneously, other areas can be readily identified in which the Government has cut or reduced programs as it has reshuffled resources from one area in the budget to the other.

The Treasurer and the Minister have attempted to convince Queenslanders that there has been an 8.9 per cent increase in funding for education in this year's Budget. This is demonstrably not the case. When one compares the actual expenditure in 1995-96 with the Budget Estimates for 1996-97, the budgeted increase in education excluding TAFE is \$123m or 4.6 per cent. When one allows for the inflation figure indicated in the Budget of 2.2 per cent and the fact that Queensland is expected to experience enrolment growth in Queensland schools in 1997 of in excess of 5,000 students across the education system, then the real increase in the Education budget is closer to 1.5 per cent. That 1.5 per cent increase also includes the alleged 43 per cent increase in capital works funding, which, as I will go on to establish later in this speech, is a masterful sleight of hand by the Treasurer and Minister. An accurate assessment of the Capital Works Program increase further reduces the notional increase in education funding and hence reinforces my assertion that essentially what the Government has achieved is a status quo budget for education.

The Government has trumpeted an increase of 1,000 in teacher numbers, and the additional increase is welcomed. But the Opposition's support for this increase is qualified. What the Government has failed to advise the public of Queensland is that, of those 1,000 extra teachers, 425 are needed just to keep pace with enrolment growth and 309 are required to deliver the Government's obligations through an industrial agreement to

provide non-contact time for primary, special and preschool teachers. It is clear that this Budget will have no impact on class sizes. In fact, at the opening of the Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens Association State conference in Townsville one week ago today, the Minister acknowledged that class sizes in certain areas may rise marginally. I thought that was a fairly astonishing admission for the Minister to make—that class sizes may in fact rise as a result of this Budget.

The Government has made much of its claims that it is increasing the Education capital works budget by 43 per cent. But what it has failed to advise the people of Queensland is that the main reason it has achieved such an increase is the capital works freeze which it has implemented over the last six months, which has meant that the last Education capital works budget was dramatically underspent. In fact, in primary education alone the capital works budget was underspent by \$15.5m or 16 per cent, and in secondary education the capital works budget was underspent by \$18.2m or a massive 25 per cent of the Capital Works Program. This Government has starved Queensland businesses and Queensland schools of \$33.7m in capital works over the last financial year.

Under Treasurer Sheldon's capital works freeze, this Government deliberately withheld those resources from Queensland school students so that it could roll them over into this year's budget and make the budget scenario in education look far better than it is. In fact, if one takes the \$33.7m underspent in primary and secondary education from last year's capital works budget which has been rolled over and recognises that that amount should have been added to the base level of this year's budget, if the Government had not withheld the resources, then in fact over \$67m of the so-called \$101m increase in capital works has been engineered by the Government's capital works freeze in order to prop up its Education budget.

The other thing which needs to be recognised is that, when the Labor Government initiated its Building Better Schools Program, it was always intended to be a three-year program with increasing Budget allocations in the second and third years as the program got into full swing. So, essentially, the Government is trying to claim credit for a Labor initiative and basically is honouring one of our previous commitments. I also understand that computer hardware is included in the capital works component of the Budget this year for the first time. The



combined effect of all of these factors substantially undermines the credibility of both the Treasurer and the Minister because it undermines the supposed \$101m—43 per cent—increase in capital works touted by them both.

One of the areas which the Government has cut is a damning indictment on the short-sightedness of the Minister and the Government. In 1995-96 the Labor Government allocated \$11.1m for its Computers in Schools Program. In 1996-97, this Government is planning to spend \$7.2m on computers in schools. That is a cut of around 35 per cent in the program allocation for computers in schools. Even if we add in the \$2m which has been allocated for the Global Classrooms Project, the Computers in Schools Program has still been cut by around 17 per cent. It is an absolute outrage for the Government, at this time when we are trying to prepare our young people for life in the twenty-first century, to be cutting investment in computers and technology in schools.

We should not forget that the coalition's election promise, made on 27 June 1995, in relation to the Global Classroom Project was that they would have a budget of between \$25m and \$30m for capital and recurrent expenditure over a three-year period. The \$2m allocated to the Global Classroom Project in this year's Budget is a poor apology for yet another broken election promise. In one of its press releases, the Government says that it will spend \$34m on technology in schools in the next financial year, but this is another con job, with the bulk of that money being allocated to fund the Schools Information Management Systems—SIMS—which is an administrative program for bureaucratic convenience, not a program that provides resources to students in classrooms. I will have more to say about that at a later time.

The Government has also reduced funding for the Languages Other Than English Program, which is hardly surprising since the review of LOTE announced by the Minister in March has not been heard of since. In fact, I am reliably informed that, when the Minister announced the review of Languages Other Than English, he forgot to give anyone the responsibility for undertaking the review and he set no time lines, so nothing happened for a considerable period of time. Meanwhile, the future employment prospects of young Queenslanders which are enhanced through LOTE continues in a state of uncertainty. LOTE also provides an important opportunity to improve our cultural and social

understanding of our nearest neighbours and biggest trading partners.

The Government's recognition of the value of Labor initiatives in literacy and numeracy and behaviour management and their continuation of support for those programs which we initiated is welcome. It should be noted, however, that the budget for the curriculum reform initiatives of the former Government, including the Reading Recovery Program, remains constant. Last year, the Labor Government spent \$11.1m on behaviour management, which is a key issue for many parents and teachers. This Government's allocation of \$6.9m for additional teachers and counsellors is welcome but falls well short of the commitment behaviour management would have received under a Labor Government. However, members of this House will recollect that, once again, the coalition's election promise was that it would double the number of guidance officers in Queensland schools in its first term in Parliament. In 1995, the Education Department employed 396 guidance and counselling officers at a cost of \$17.1m per annum, in addition to the above mentioned \$11.1m for behaviour management. Providing 83 teachers and 12 counsellors in a \$6.9m program falls dramatically short of the commitment made by the coalition to double the number of guidance officers, which clearly would require an additional \$17m per annum in 1995 terms if it were to be achieved. That is yet another broken election promise.

The Remote Area Incentive Scheme is an important issue for people in rural and remote parts of Queensland. Budget statements by the Minister claim that the Remote Area Incentive Scheme will be increased from \$2.2m to \$5.6m in the current year. Whilst that increase is welcomed, it is a shame that the Minister could not be brought to the negotiating table to discuss the Remote Area Incentive Scheme with teachers representing rural and remote schools in Queensland. They were forced into the situation of having to take unprecedented strike action to get the Minister to even come to the negotiating table to talk to them. The Minister stands condemned for, once again, failing to negotiate with the key stakeholders in education over that important issue.

If one looks at the Budget papers, one sees that the Minister's claim that funding is going from \$2.2m to \$5.6m appears very shaky because, according to the Treasurer's speech and the Budget documents, only an additional \$2.3m has been allocated. I do not

think one needs to be an Education Minister, or even the member for Moggill, to work out that \$2.2m plus \$2.3m does not equal \$5.6m. I would be curious to know where the other \$1.1m has gone. I know that the Minister has trouble with his literacy and his comprehension. We heard him on radio saying that the word "reverse" actually means "review"; I do not know what dictionary he got that from. However, until this Budget, I did not know that the Minister has a problem with numeracy as well. Maybe he could go back to school and benefit from the Labor initiatives in literacy and numeracy. There is no sign of the other \$1.1m which this Government professes to have committed to improve the Remote Area Incentive Scheme.

It should also be noted that the Government has essentially abolished the construction of new housing for teachers in rural and remote areas. Every National Party member who represents a country town, a remote area or a provincial city where teacher accommodation is provided because there is insufficient accommodation to house the necessary teachers should be putting the question to the Treasurer and to the Education Minister about why the teacher accommodation program has been abandoned. Last year's Budget allowed \$2.6m for the completion of 23 units of teacher accommodation; this year's Budget allows a little over \$670,000 for two units of teacher housing on Saibai Island and Mer Island in the Torres Strait. The only reason funding for those two houses is on the program is that they have been rolled over from previous years' housing programs because of difficulties resolving native title issues in respect of siting those units of accommodation. So, really, there is no new teacher accommodation in this Budget, only an allocation of funds for maintenance and upgrading.

Another important issue for the Queensland education community is the provision of appropriate education resources for students with disability. In October 1995, the then Minister for Education, the member for Ipswich, announced a major program of reform of services to students with disability. At that time, it was anticipated that the Government would spend an additional \$72m, or \$14.5m per annum over the next five years, to fund additional teachers, teacher aide hours, therapy positions, capital facilities, training programs and transport for students with disability. This year's Budget allocates \$12.1m, and whilst the additional resources the Budget will fund will help, there is no doubt

that this Government has not lived up to the expectations generated by the former Labor Government's commitment in this area.

I can find no reference in the Budget papers to the former Government's \$2.9m annual allocation for Sunsmart. In a State which has the world's highest incidence of skin cancer, most of which is related to exposure to the sun, educating young children about the dangers of that exposure and encouraging good habits to prevent skin damage which will ultimately result in skin cancer is an important health initiative. I will be seeking clarification from the Minister as to whether this program has been abolished.

It should also be noted that the former Government allocated \$27m per annum for the back to school uniform allowance. Whereas this allowance had its critics, there is no doubt that many struggling families found the \$50 per student payment of invaluable assistance at the time of the school year when they were struggling to meet the costs of outfitting their children for school. It is also interesting to note that when the Minister announced that the allowance would be reviewed—and that is what he said in March, that the school uniform allowance would be reviewed—he invited P & Cs to indicate whether they would prefer the money to be paid individually to parents, as was the case then, or whether the money should go collectively as a lump sum to schools so that the P & C can make decisions about appropriate resources for each school. Overwhelmingly, I have to say, P & Cs said that they would prefer the money to go directly to the schools rather than to the parents. But this Government has stolen the money from parents and rolled it back into its Budget to cover the shortfalls and to help it meet its other election promises. So the Minister backed away from the commitment that he gave in March that he would make that money available to schools through their P & Cs for additional resources. The P & Cs at the schools that I have visited are not likely to let him forget it.

I also want to talk briefly about the program for airconditioning schools. I acknowledge that this is one area in which there has been an allocation of resources which is basically designed to honour an election commitment which the coalition gave prior to the Mundingburra by-election. But it is still a grave concern to me that the basis on which those resources are allocated is a subsidy of two-for-one Government-to-P & C contribution. I have many schools in my electorate, all of which would be entitled to

benefit from the program. I have no doubt that there are many schools in the electorate of the member for Charters Towers and various other members where the P & Cs simply cannot afford their one-third contribution.

I believe that this is an iniquitous system that disadvantages people in poor areas. It does not matter where they are—whether they are in the small country towns that have suffered drought, or towns that are suffering from poor commodity prices, especially for cattle and that type of thing—if the local school community cannot afford to raise the one-third part of the cost of installing the airconditioning, then they miss out. That is a travesty of justice. While I am not going to be mealy-mouthed about this Government honouring its election promise, I believe that it is debatable whether airconditioning north Queensland schools is the highest priority. However, coming from north Queensland, I know what an important issue it is for those schools in north Queensland, but it is an inequitable way to apply those funds to ask the P & Cs to contribute one-third of the cost.

All in all, the Education budget could best be described as one which is not as bad as it might have been. When the Government put its toe in the water several months ago and suggested that it would slash \$100m from the Education budget, the strength of community and educational organisation reaction obviously forced this Government into a re-think. And why would those people not be upset—when the Treasurer is spending \$200m on the Sunshine Motorway and \$80m on Metway splurges—that the Government was going to cut \$100m from Education?

What we do have is a Budget which is maintaining the status quo. The Government has delivered on a number of its election promises, including the airconditioning of north Queensland schools, but equally undeniably it has failed to live up to the expectations of the community in many areas, including computers in schools, students with disabilities, behaviour management, LOTE and vocational education. What can be said in unequivocal terms is that, during the term of the Labor Government, Education funding was increased by 52.6 per cent. There is no doubt that Queenslanders would have fared better in Education from a Labor Budget in 1996-97 than they have from the coalition Government. On the Howard/Costello Budget rating monitor, I suggest that the Education Minister would achieve about 5 out of 10.

**Mrs GAMIN** (Burleigh) (12.44 p.m.): I am pleased to have the opportunity of

participating in this debate on the 1996-97 Budget.

**Mr HOLLIS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the State of the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr J. N. Goss): The numbers are sufficient.

**Mrs GAMIN:** Other speakers will take more time in detailed Budget analysis, but I want to speak briefly on some aspects of the Budget that are pleasing to my electorate and the southern Gold Coast, as well as on some matters that will be beneficial to my constituents generally.

I take this opportunity to thank the member for Mount Ommaney for allowing me to take his speaking spot rather than my own, which would have been quite late at night, in order that I can comment on some of the really stupid comments that the member for Currumbin made in this House this morning. I do not normally engage in personal debate, but I believe that some of the really silly things she said deserve to be answered.

The member for Currumbin is on public record as saying that Palm Beach does not want or need a police station. All through last year, when the furore was going on, when her Government was in power and her Minister was refusing the police station, the member for Currumbin supported her Minister. She would not fight for the people of Palm Beach.

**Mr Healy:** What did she say?

**Mrs GAMIN:** She said, "Palm Beach does not want a police station. A little shopfront will do." We would have had a little shopfront for a while, then it would have gone away, and there would be no police on the beat at Palm Beach. The then Minister would have done something about that area some time after the turn of the century. That is just not good enough for the people of Palm Beach.

To me, the first and most important matter in this Budget is the approval of the new police station at Palm Beach. It was an election commitment by the Police Minister prior to the July 1995 election. However, the coalition did not gain Government until after the Mundingburra by-election. Although the commitment was reaffirmed, we came in half-way through a Budget year and no funds were available for the purpose. Many people deserve the credit for pushing the Palm Beach police station barrow: the former Liberal candidate for Currumbin, Kerrin Woods, Councillor Daphne McDonald, business people led by Tony Byrne, the newly formed Chamber

of Commerce and, most particularly, local residents themselves.

Over the past few months, I have been absolutely ruthless in my lobbying of Police Minister Russell Cooper and Premier Rob Borbidge. I count as a personal achievement the decision announced this week to allocate funds for a police station at Palm Beach. A sum of \$75,000 has been allocated to commence planning, and Palm Beach is included, with six other projects, in \$7.4m for land acquisition. The Department of Public Works and Housing has been told to investigate suitability of sites from the aspects of council town planning matters and construction requirements. In fact, works officers undertook inspections in Palm Beach on 11 September, within 24 hours of the Budget being brought down. That is not a bad effort.

The member for Currumbin has either deliberately misled this House this morning or she has proved herself incapable of following Budget papers. It is fair to say that the processes of identification of site plus approvals, drawing up of plans and calling of tenders will take some months. In total, \$2m has been allocated to Palm Beach, with the actual works component to come into the 1997-1998 Budget, which will be brought down in May 1997—in six months' time.

Most police stations take three years to complete. In fact, under a Labor Government, the Burleigh Police Station took three years, from 1989 to 1992. I intend that the Palm Beach police station will be completed within two years. I have already held discussions with the Premier and the Police Minister to ensure this. They know that they will be relentlessly pursued, because I want the Palm Beach police station up and running just as quickly as is humanly possible. The Police Minister has also assured me that local stations will not have their staff depleted in order to man the Palm Beach station. I certainly would not put up with staff reductions for the Burleigh or Coolangatta stations. The Palm Beach police station will be self-sufficient.

In concluding this segment on the Palm Beach police station, I should like to place on record my gratitude for the generous and public spirited offer made by Palm Beach builder Max Shearer, who was prepared to construct a station to Police Service specifications on his own land and lease it back to the department. We are very appreciative of his civic-minded concern for our community, and I am only sorry that we were

not able to take him up on it. Queensland Police Service's preferred option is to buy its own land and build, with the cost coming out of the Capital Works Program. If the leasing option were exercised, that would create recurrent costs that would come out of the region's operating budget and, of course, that option is much less attractive when operating budgets are so tight.

I am pleased that the Minister for Transport has agreed to install speed cameras at speed-related traffic accident black spots. They can only be looked upon as revenue raisers by those stupid people who will persist in speeding and getting fined: no speed, no fine, no revenue. I was a member of the parliamentary Travelsafe Committee that investigated, reported and recommended the use of speed cameras in Queensland. I am on the public record as being strongly supportive of this most important road safety measure. Cameras should be fully operational by April 1997 and, if the Victorian experience is anything to go by, initial revenue will decrease as people learn to improve their driving habits, and speed-related accidents will decrease markedly.

The Minister for Transport has also announced \$4.5m for the duplication of Bermuda Street—that is called the Southport-Burleigh Road—between Christine Avenue and Reedy Creek or Burleigh Connection Road. This work is in addition to considerable other roadworks taking place in the Burleigh electorate, including the extension of Bermuda Street to the Pacific Highway, which should be completed between May and July 1997; four-laning on Reedy Creek Road, which will be mostly completed in 1996-97, with the section between Sunlight Drive and Tabilban Street set down for 1998; the duplication of the Pacific Highway through to Tugun, which should be completed late this year or early next year; widening of West Burleigh Road, which should also be carried out in 1996-97 between Tabilban Street and Stephens Street, although a completion date cannot be finalised until negotiations have been sorted out in respect of car parking requirements for businesses fronting Lower West Burleigh Road. The Department of Main Roads has been very cooperative and helpful as we work our way through parking and access problems.

We are receiving a third 60 megavolt amperes transformer to increase electricity supply to developing areas from Miami south to the New South Wales border, and funding of \$200,000 is allocated to that project in the 1996-97 Budget.

Caningeraba State School is receiving one each of Type B and Type D modular buildings, and a music block. The total cost of those three projects, which will be completed in 1996-97, is \$524,842. The sum of \$690,000 has been allocated for the commencement of the Palm Beach Community Health Centre at Fifth Avenue—as the member for Currumbin rightly pointed out—with work to be completed in the next financial year. That is not a bad effort, when one considers the mess that the previous Labor Government made of identifying and sorting out a site for a community health centre at Palm Beach. That will provide a range of community-based services including oral health services.

Further development of the Gold Coast Hospital will commence in 1996-97, with an allocation of \$11.6m to upgrade selected facilities—renal, obstetric and paediatric services—plus addressing engineering services for airconditioning and medical gases. A 30-bed ward at the Gold Coast Hospital will be reopened.

Funding of \$500,000 is provided to meet initial costs associated with the development of preliminary planning for Robina hospital. I know that this will be welcomed greatly by southern Gold Coast residents. I hope that the new Robina hospital will deal with day surgery, which would relieve the pressure on the Gold Coast Hospital. Robina's services will expand to a range of community health facilities, and eventually to a full hospital.

Although there may be some disappointment that funds have not been made available for beach replenishment, \$3.7m has been allocated for the Tweed River bypass at the Tweed River entrance, and the continuation of the initial dredging of the entrance and nourishment of the southern Gold Coast beaches. The estimated cost of this project for the first 25 years is \$35.5m.

Those are just a few of the local Budget items that are of direct interest to my constituents. However, I cannot complete this address without touching on the portfolio of Families, Youth and Community Care. From December 1996, the Seniors Card will be expanded. It will become non-means tested for people 65 years of age and over, dropping from 70 years of age. Seniors Business Discounts have already been expanded to the non-means tested age of 60 years. A few weeks ago, I was guest speaker at a meeting of the Association of Independent Retirees. They particularly asked me to speak on the matter of the Seniors Card, and I told them

that the Minister was certainly keen to reduce the age limit and would be trying very hard to get it into the Budget. I know that independent retirees, not just those in my own electorate but also those throughout the State, will be very pleased at this initiative.

In the time remaining to me, I will speak about Fleay's Wildlife Park in my electorate of Burleigh. I speak as a friend, neighbour and supporter of the late Dr David Fleay and the fauna reserve which he created at West Burleigh, and which he passed over to the State Government before he died. My association goes back more than 30 years. The comments made in Parliament by the member for Everton that the wildlife park would be sold are untrue and mischievous but have succeeded in their design to cause trouble. The Department of Environment will not sell the park, and indeed can never sell the park. There have also been comments that the park should not be commercialised, yet the park is, in fact, a commercial venture like many other tourist attractions. Visitors are charged as they come through the turnstiles, food is sold, and there is an attractive souvenir shop. However, expenses exceeded receipts by about \$400,000 last year, and over the years this mounts up to a considerable sum, which has been subsidised by the Department of Environment. That means that less money is available for other environmental works such as improving and upgrading national parks, such as Burleigh Headland, which is also run from Fleay's.

One thing I have particularly noticed over many years is that Gold Coast residents like to know that Fleay's Wildlife Park is there. They have a warm, fuzzy feeling of goodwill towards the park. They want it to stay there, but most of them do not visit it themselves. "We took the children there when they were little," they say. "We haven't been there for years," they say. I wish Gold Coasters would put some physical support behind the wildlife park. They should visit more often and admire the improvements, take their interstate and overseas visitors there—as I do—and walk along the boardwalk tracks and through the mangroves. But they do not, and that is a pity. The park is losing up to \$400,000 a year and there can be no doubt that management structures must be tightened and visitor numbers improved. Although I would prefer that management was retained by National Parks, the problem is very serious and must be addressed. That is why the proposal has now come forward that the National Trust might take over the management side and run Currumbin Sanctuary and Fleay's Wildlife Park

in tandem. That proposal is causing great consternation. I fully understand and appreciate that concern.

**Mr Bredhauer:** How can the National Trust afford to lose \$400,000 a year?

**Mrs GAMIN:** I do not think that the National Trust is a solution, and I doubt that it will happen anyway, but something has to be done to solve the money drain. I am gravely concerned that matters have reached this stage. The park cannot be allowed to continue to cost so much money, but it can never be closed. The scientific research and work on endangered species must be continued. Fleay's Wildlife Park is internationally renowned, it is a national icon and every effort must be made to improve its financial viability.

Returning to the Budget—I cannot stop smiling. This is the best State Budget since 1989 and it will do a great job for Queensland. I am very glad to be able to express my pleasure at measures that will benefit the people of Burleigh electorate. Yes, the Gold Coast has done well, and so it should: there is a population explosion in southern Queensland and residents—new and old residents—deserve that consideration and need the services that this Government will provide.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

**Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (2.30 p.m.):** As the Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, I cannot allow the comments made by the honourable member for Broadwater to go unchallenged and without some comment from me.

I understand that Mr Clair, the head of the Criminal Justice Commission, is holding a press conference prior to 3 o'clock today to pass on his comments regarding the allegations made by the honourable member for Broadwater. I make no judgment and no comment as to the truth or otherwise of the allegations made by the honourable member for Broadwater. However, I will make comment about the way in which this information has been relayed.

Was this matter, which was raised by the honourable member for Broadwater, discussed with the Premier and the Attorney-General prior to its announcement in the Parliament this afternoon? If the member did have discussions with both the Premier and the Attorney-General, or either of the Honourable Ministers, why did those Ministers not advise Mr Grice that, in terms of section 118 of the Criminal Justice Act, he should refer the matter to the Parliamentary Criminal

Justice Committee? Section 118.1(a) of the Criminal Justice Act states—

"The functions of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee are—

- (a) to monitor and review the discharge of the functions of the Commission as a whole and of the Official Misconduct Division in particular."

The allegations made today by the honourable member for Broadwater were against the Director of the Official Misconduct Division. Quite clearly, in terms of the Criminal Justice Act, it is the role of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee to investigate such allegations.

Indeed, the allegations made against the director are serious ones and, if they are correct, they certainly should be investigated. I ask the question: why was the matter not referred to the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee by the honourable member for Broadwater? That raises serious doubts and serious questions as to the motives behind the honourable member's allegations. Why do we have these allegations being brought forward at this point—when we are waiting on a report from the Carruthers inquiry and when this Government has sustained a continual attack on the Criminal Justice Commission since it came into office? We are seeing another attack by this Government on the Criminal Justice Commission and, indeed, on the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee.

The honourable member for Broadwater asked that the allegations that he raised today be put under the umbrella of the judicial inquiry which the Honourable the Attorney-General wishes to establish into the Criminal Justice Commission. My view about that judicial inquiry has been made public. As the Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, I am bitterly opposed to that judicial inquiry because it undermines the operations of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. In terms of the requirements of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, it subverts the Criminal Justice Act.

Today we have heard allegations made by the honourable member for Broadwater that in some way try to give some legitimacy to this shonky judicial inquiry that the Honourable the Attorney-General wants to conduct into the Criminal Justice Commission. What we have is a muddying of the waters. We have a continuation of the sustained attack by the National/Liberal coalition Government on the Criminal Justice Commission. That begs the question: does this Government not want to

be monitored by the Criminal Justice Commission? The answer is: yes. That is why we have these sustained attacks.

As I have said, I make no comment regarding today's allegations against the Criminal Justice Commission and Mr Mark Le Grand, who is the Director of the Official Misconduct Division. I want to make it very clear that I am not here to defend Mr Le Grand; Mr Le Grand will be able to defend the allegations if they are investigated. However, I want to outline Mr Le Grand's CV. Mr Le Grand has been involved in prosecution works since 1971. From 1977, he was senior solicitor to the Australian Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drugs conducted by Sir Edward Williams. Mr Le Grand was senior solicitor of the first "Mr Asia" royal commissions that Mr Justice Stewart undertook from 1981 to 1982. Later, from 1983 to 1984, Mr Le Grand served as a senior solicitor to the Special Prosecutor, Robert Redlich, QC, in the investigation and prosecution of matters flowing from the Stewart and Costigan royal commissions. From 1984 to 1986 he was Deputy Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, and from 1986 to 1988 he was general counsel to the National Crime Authority in Melbourne. Immediately prior to his appointment to the Criminal Justice Commission, Mr Le Grand was the South Australian member of the National Crime Authority.

Today, Mr Grice has accused Mr Le Grand of serious misconduct and, obviously, on my understanding, breaching the terms of the Criminal Code.

**Mr Ardill:** How about the person who gave it to him? Aren't they guilty of serious misconduct?

**Mr NUTTALL:** The honourable member for Archerfield has made an interesting point about where the honourable member for Broadwater obtained the information that he outlined today. No doubt if there is an inquiry that will come to light.

However, I say that, in terms of the Criminal Justice Act, the proper authority and the proper body to conduct such an inquiry is the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. Today, this Government, the Attorney-General and the Premier should instruct the honourable member for Broadwater to refer that matter to the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. In terms of upholding and believing in the Criminal Justice Commission, as this Government has stated that it does, if it is legitimate and if it is fair dinkum, then the Government should act under the terms of the

Criminal Justice Act and refer this matter to the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. If it does not, this Government is showing that it is out to destroy the Criminal Justice Commission and that it has no faith in the parliamentary committee system, or it has no faith in the Government members on the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee to carry out their duties.

These are serious allegations indeed. As I have said, the question must be asked as to the reason behind raising these allegations at this particular point when we are waiting for a report on the Carruthers inquiry.

**Mr Dollin:** Intimidation.

**Mr NUTTALL:** The honourable member for Maryborough may be correct. Is this about trying to intimidate the Criminal Justice Commission? Is this about trying to destroy the delicate fabric that we have had to weave since the Fitzgerald report was brought down? Is this about destroying all the work that has been done since 1988? The only answer to those questions, if this Government does not refer the matter to the appropriate body, is yes. The Government has a responsibility to the people of Queensland to uphold the law, and the law clearly states that the matter should come before the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. If this Government is legitimate, it will refer the matter to that committee.

**Mr Nunn:** I would have thought that the Chairman of the PCJC would have asked for that.

**Mr NUTTALL:** The deputy chairman certainly has. I am sure that much more will be said in the media about the allegations that Mr Grice has made today. I think it is a shame that the matter has been raised in this manner. As I have said, it is extremely disappointing that the matter has not been handled in the proper way. If Mr Grice had spoken to the Premier prior to making the announcement in the Parliament, the Premier has an obligation to explain to the Parliament and to the people of Queensland why he did not advise Mr Grice to refer the matter to the appropriate body.

One of the matters covered in the Appropriation Bills that I particularly wish to cover is that of youth unemployment. It is a damning indictment on the Government that the issue of youth unemployment has not been addressed as it should have been. When one looks at the Federal Government's drastic cutting of Labor programs for the long-term unemployed and youth, the question has to be asked: why has this Government not

taken up the gauntlet on behalf of the young, unemployed people of this State? In her Budget Speech, the Treasurer said—

"Despite the improvement, reduction in unemployment will be limited by high labour force growth and a relatively high workforce participation rate, underpinned by interstate migration . . ."

If one reads between the lines, the Treasurer did not say what the Government will do about unemployment. The Treasurer stated that an estimated 45,000 new jobs will be created in Queensland, but she did not say how those jobs will be created or where they will be created. All that the Treasurer said about young people was—

"The State's focus will be on providing structured vocational training to enhance the skills of the unemployed—particularly the young.

Our priority is to develop skills and expertise and to create a business environment which supports the creation of genuine long-term jobs."

The Government is saying, "We want to send kids off to TAFE and hopefully small business will pick up the slack and employ some kids." That is not a good enough approach to dealing with the problem of long-term unemployment and particularly, as I have said, youth unemployment.

The situation with youth unemployment depends on what figures one looks at, because the figures vary fairly widely. I have the March 1996 figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The number of young people—that is, persons aged between 15 and 19 years—seeking full time work was 27.8 per cent. That is a national disgrace! As members of Parliament, we cannot accept an unemployment rate of 27.8 per cent. In Queensland, the unemployment rate was 26.3 per cent. The rate by region, rounded off, was: Brisbane, 21 per cent; South and East Moreton, 19 per cent; North and West Moreton, 17 per cent; the Wide Bay/Burnett area, 24 per cent; Darling Downs and the South West, 20 per cent; Mackay, Fitzroy and the Central West, 18 per cent; the Northern and North West, 28 per cent; and the Far North, 15.3 per cent.

What job opportunities exist for the young people who live in the regions and what does the future hold for them? The future holds very little, because we in this country are not lateral enough in our thinking.

**A Government member** interjected.

**Mr NUTTALL:** I said that the figures I quoted are for March, but the figures released recently are no better. It is no use saying "It's your fault" or "It's our fault." We have to ask what we are going to do as a nation and as a State to help these kids.

For an unemployed person who is under 18-years-old the unemployment benefit is \$140.80 a week. A first year apprentice's wage is approximately \$200 a week.

**Mr Pearce:** For the first year, \$190.

**Mr NUTTALL:** These figures may not be 100 per cent accurate, but they are fairly close. I am indicating what we as a nation can do for young unemployed people. Therefore, having a job and not having a job amounts to a difference of between \$50 and \$60 for an 18-year-old. If an apprentice earns approximately \$200 a week, he or she will pay tax so the gap narrows.

Every small town and regional centre in the country has a plumber, an electrician, a mechanic, a carpenter and maybe even a sawmill and other small industries. In the last 20 years, how many of those small businesses employed young apprentices? The answer has to be that none of them have done so, because they cannot afford to. Apprentices spend 12 weeks of the year at college, they have four weeks' holiday and there are about two weeks of public holidays a year. Therefore, for about one-quarter of the year, an apprentice is not available for work and is not very productive. That is why many businesses will not employ apprentices, and one can understand that. Therefore, we should be subsidising those employers. We should be saying to them, "We will send the kids to a prevocational course for the first 12 months. When they come out, they will start on their second-year apprenticeship and we will help with the wages." Once the apprentices have finished the prevocational work, they no longer have to go to college and the kids are available for work for the next three years.

Why are we as a nation not addressing that issue? Why are we as a nation not trying to encourage businesses to employ young apprentices? Not all of our young people have the capacity to go on to tertiary education, and there simply are not enough positions anyway. Do we leave those young people by the wayside? As a State, we have an obligation to look after young unemployed people. We need to take the bull by the horns. We need to be innovative and lateral in our thinking. We need to give young people hope and encouragement. We need to create programs and encourage businesses to employ young



people. We need to encourage young people to take up the challenge and take on those apprenticeships. As a State, we cannot stand back and watch youth unemployment rates continue to grow without making some effort to address the issue. It is up to the Government to start that program, and we will support such a program. The Government must take the issue by the horns and accept the challenge.

**Mr PEARCE** (Fitzroy) (2.50 p.m.): In joining this debate, let me say firstly that, in common with the many previous speakers from the Opposition, I agree that the Budget papers are lacking in detail. This year, I have looked for programs in which the people of my electorate are interested. Such programs are either not in the documents or lack detail. That is unacceptable. Budget papers are public documents and should be reader friendly so that information contained therein can be understood easily.

Before dealing with the Budget papers, I point out that I support the comments of the member for Rockhampton in this place yesterday—and, to be fair, the member for Keppel made similar comments—with respect to the sacking of the five or six Youth Employment Scheme workers in Rockhampton. Today, I am advised that the same thing has happened to employees under that scheme in Emerald. The Minister has a total disregard for those workers and the wonderful job they have done for young people who feel that they have been cast aside by society.

Every member in this House who is fair dinkum about helping the young people of this State to find work should condemn the actions of the Minister in taking away those professionals who offer the young unemployed some hope. I know some of those workers personally. They are more compassionate and understanding than the Minister and the Treasurer. The Minister has not only destroyed those dedicated workers; he has also given the youth of Emerald, Rockhampton and district a real kick in the backside. Those people will not forget the way in which they have been treated.

In addressing the Budget, I wish firstly to touch on the Remote Area Incentives Scheme. It is acknowledged that a recognition of the problems we are experiencing in attracting rural Queensland has meant that the Remote Area Incentives Scheme has gained funding increases. Under the scheme, teachers working in extremely remote schools will get \$20,000 cash in hand as an incentive

payment in addition to more than \$13,000 worth of accommodation and locality benefits. At this stage, I am uncertain as to what strings are attached and how teachers feel about the package, but it would appear that the package for teachers in extremely remote areas is reasonable.

However, regions rated as being the least remote have had only a bandaid applied to make it appear that teachers and schools in those areas have done well. The department has failed to recognise that teachers in the less remote areas live in high-cost towns, such as Dysart, Middlemount, Tieri and Blackwater. Because those towns are cold towns—and a lot of people fail to understand this—the cost of living is in excess of 10 per cent higher than that in the regional centres of Rockhampton and Mackay.

The department has failed to properly maintain accommodation, and many units and homes are in desperate need of cooling mechanisms and a coat of paint. The morale of teachers working in those towns would be greatly enhanced if they had a clean, airconditioned and properly maintained place of residence to go home to. It should be remembered that those teachers are living away from their family and friends. Unlike the decision makers in Brisbane, who go home to their own environment after a day's work, these people have to go home to accommodation that is not being maintained. That affects the way they think and perform their work. The \$2,000 incentive is a step forward. I accept that and congratulate the Government for doing it. However, that falls well short of what I would expect as being a fair deal for the teachers in my area.

I have a couple of questions about this issue. In a press statement dated 9 September, the Minister claimed that there will be \$5.6m for the enhancement of the Remote Area Incentives Scheme. The way I read it—and I may stand to be corrected—the current Budget allocates this scheme \$2.2m. This Budget allocates a further \$2.3m. To me, there is a \$1.1m shortfall. There is no money in the Budget for new teacher accommodation, except for two houses in the Torres Strait. I believe that the funding for those houses was rolled over because of native title concerns. I want to know why the RAIS has been increased at the expense of teacher accommodation, which is an important factor in attracting teachers to remote areas. Certainly, some questions have to be answered and some guidance given to teachers about where the Government is going.

On page 7 of Budget Paper No. 2 reference is made to an environmental franchise fee scheme applying to tyres and oils. That new tax will apply as from 1 January next year. The revenue raised from this new tax is expected to be in excess of \$16m in a full year. New motor vehicles will attract a tax through a \$15 increase in registration at the time of purchase. That is made very clear on page 43 of Budget Paper No. 2. When we look closely at this new tax, we see that rural Queenslanders are again the big losers. Travelling long distances and dealing with the condition of roads in the bush means that country people are more likely to replace tyres more frequently because of wear and tear and the normal blow-outs and punctures experienced on country roads.

In addition, the burden of finding extra dollars to meet the cost will fall, firstly, on local authorities. I do not think that anyone else has mentioned that. Again, that will impact on taxpayers. Ratepayers will be affected. There is no comment from the Treasurer as to how mining companies will be affected. The suggestion by the very "informative" Treasurer that registered vehicles will not attract the tax is wide open to abuse. Because of the uncertainty and the lack of information, the taxpayers of Queensland must be disappointed in the performance of the Treasurer in respect of her announcing new taxes but not being able to tell them how they will be administered.

Rural producers carting grain and livestock are required to pay the new tax on their trucks and other rubber-tyred farm machinery. The amount is not clear. However, for example, an 18-wheeler could attract up to \$120. As I have said, the Budget papers are unclear as to how this tax will be collected. That raises the question of how this tax is to be managed and how the Government will be held accountable to its claim that the monies will be used specifically for the disposal of waste tyres and oils.

Constituents have asked why they should pay a tax to assist with the disposal of tyres and waste oils when no similar tax applies to wastepaper, glass and plastics. People believe the tyre manufacturers should accept the responsibility of disposal, not the consumer. We will certainly need to watch the Government closely for the outcomes of the scheme and to ensure that the revenue raised from the tax goes into the proper disposal of tyres and oils and is not redirected into paying off the tollway or investing in the stock market.

The impact of this new tax will be measured in kilometres travelled, and oil usage determined by the age and maintenance standard of vehicles and machinery. The tyre and oil tax is a slug on every Queenslanders who owns a vehicle or piece of machinery that uses rubber tyres or oil—for example, engines, hydraulics, transmissions and so on. It is a new tax, and the Treasurer should have the courage to admit it.

Page 4 of Budget Paper No. 2 states—

"The Government's core fiscal policy parameters are to:

keep taxes low . . ."

Nothing is mentioned about new taxes, just simply keeping taxes low. I believe that the people of Queensland can expect to be hit with even more new taxes. There is no disputing that that new tax is a new tax, and that in isolation it is a low tax. However, how many new low taxes will be introduced by this Treasurer? I would hope that the intention of the statement is to keep Queensland a low-tax State. If that is the case, Government members should grab hold of the Treasurer and keep her under control, or it will not be long before we become a high-tax State because of the number of taxes imposed.

Page 6 of Budget Paper No. 2 contains the statement—

"The State's low tax regime clearly is evidenced by the absence of a State fuel tax."

However, one could argue that the 10c per litre oil tax is a Clayton's fuel tax. And what about the policies of the coalition with respect to a fuel tax? I ask the Treasurer whether it is her intention not to pursue a fuel tax, given that it is coalition policy to pursue the equalisation of fuel prices. That would mean a fuel tax for the more populous south-east corner.

Members of the National Party should be insisting, as I am, that the Treasurer pursue coalition policy, which would give rural Queenslanders a reduced fuel price. I just wonder whether the Treasurer was testing the water when she flagged a fuel tax on page 54 of the Budget papers, where it is pointed out that such a tax would be worth—get this—\$340m to Queensland. The temptation may be too great for our Treasurer. She should be giving a commitment to the people of Queensland in this Parliament by rejecting any suggestion that she is considering a fuel tax.

I say this in just about every speech I make: as a former coalminer, I appreciate the contribution made to the——

**Mr Lester:** You were a good coalminer.

**Mr PEARCE:** I was a good coalminer. I had a good reputation. I appreciate the contribution made to the Queensland economy by the mining industry. Total mining royalties in the 1996-97 year are estimated to increase by 2.3 per cent on 1995-96 to \$270.8m. Coal is expected to account for 66 per cent of the total royalties. This means that the Queensland coal industry delivers millions of dollars to the State's revenue—close to \$300m in the current financial year. This is why I get really angry when I see Treasury officers finding every excuse not to find funding for the Mining Inspectorate, the Mines Rescue Brigade and other measures to ensure the health and safety of workers within the industry. This lack of funding really is a joke, and it is about time coal industry employers and employees got a better deal from Government in these areas. I am pleased that the Minister is here, because it would help him if he got more money. I will talk further about that during the Estimates hearings, not here.

The safety of mine workers should be a funding priority of Government, not an excuse to hand responsibility to other bodies which far too often fail. On reading the Department of Mines and Energy Program Structure and Overview Statement, I noted a \$1.3m reduction in the Consolidated Fund budget. This reduction causes me great concern given that the department will soon be required to find in excess of \$2m to implement the findings and recommendations of committees working on reviews following the 1994 disaster. There is not one line item in the budget to meet these expected costs. I can only presume that the Treasurer has the money hidden away in a purse somewhere in her office.

As the coalminers' representative in this place, I warn the Treasurer of a major backlash if there are no funds. The Treasurer must understand that the coal industry expects her to move as quickly in providing the necessary dollars for the restructured Mining Inspectorate and other measures arising from the Moura inquiry as she did in finding the money to remove the Sunshine Motorway tolls. I can assure the Treasurer that the industry, and I as its representative in this place, will be looking for the dollars as soon as the Minister for Mines and Energy tables this report. This process has gone on for too long. The frequency and quality of mine inspections

remains as it was prior to Moura. It is time to deliver, and the Treasurer must meet the challenge.

I am aware of the Government's commitment of \$1 billion over 15 years for water infrastructure. I support this initiative and look forward to rhetoric being turned into infrastructure. An amount of \$99.2m has been allocated towards the assessment, planning and construction of water resources. As I represent a large rural electorate, I am very much aware of the need to have a vision for the future demand for water, both for domestic and primary production use. I recently supported in principle a submission for a weir on the Fitzroy River near Gogango which was prepared by prominent and respected landowners in the area who must be congratulated on looking ahead.

I have been vocal in calling for the construction of a pipeline from the Fitzroy River to Mount Morgan to enhance that town's continuity of water supply. When there are extended dry periods like the current drought conditions, the town's water supply is put under extreme pressure. If we had not had a significant rain event in the small catchment area of one of the town's supply dams earlier this year, we could have been in the position now in which the Government would be carting water to the town. I know that the town Mayor, Ritchie Bills, is lobbying the Government for funds to raise the level of the town's No. 7 dam. While this approach has merit, I believe it is a bandaid fix to a long-term problem. There are no long-term benefits from this costly exercise, and if there is no significant rainfall in what is a very small catchment area then the town is no better off. Even if the dam were to be replenished annually, it would only meet current demand. If the Government and the council are fair dinkum, they have to look further than that. Under this proposal, Mount Morgan ratepayers will not get a quality water supply that enhances continuity of the resource. Without an enhanced supply, the town is limited as to its potential growth. There are people in the town who support the bandaid approach because they stand to gain financially through what will be promoted as a significant increase in storage capacity, and they can therefore justify land development.

I urge the Government to look seriously at the benefits to the district which a pipeline would provide. Gracemere, a rapidly growing centre, is under pressure to upgrade its water supply. Bouldercombe is expected to have a population of 3,000 around the turn of the century and will require a reliable supply. Stanwell and Kabra will expand if they have

reliable water delivered to the area. My suggestion of a pipeline is one of vision, and one that should be supported by the local governments of Rockhampton, Fitzroy and Mount Morgan. The \$25m price tag of today will escalate threefold if the Government leaves this pipeline to a later date. I am adamant that the pipeline will be a reality, and I intend to continue to pursue this option so long as I am in a position to do so. I have spoken to the Minister, Howard Hobbs, about the pipeline and have urged him to think carefully about this matter, to spend tax dollars wisely so that the maximum benefit can be achieved for future generations settling in the district. Mr Hobbs must be careful and not make the mistake of letting party politics influence his decision. I expect him to come under plenty of pressure to do so. Outcomes of cost-effective, long-term benefits are essential in determining what is best for the district.

While considering the Education budget, I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Q-Build employees in the Capricornia and Mackay/Whitsunday regions who service the 30-odd State schools in the Fitzroy electorate. Their commitment and quality of work is commendable. Principals are telling me that Q-Build employees are courteous and go out of their way to cooperate with school programs when maintenance and construction works are being carried out at the schools. There are always hiccups in the system but, in the main, schools are most appreciative of the good work undertaken by Q-Build employees. It would be a disgraceful move by the State Government if it were to privatise Q-Build and put the committed tradesman out of work and onto the streets. But given the record of this Government, sacking Q-Build employees will be a simple move lacking in compassion. I therefore call on the Minister to confirm or deny that it is the Government's intention to sack more workers by privatising Q-Build.

I will continue to work with Q-Build to deliver maintenance and repair works to schools within the Fitzroy electorate. Through discussions with school principals, P & Cs and Q-Build, I have identified a wide variety of minor maintenance and upgrade needs, ranging from repaints internally and externally to replacement of floor coverings, replacement of doors and guttering, replacement of furniture, landscaping, concrete paving and repainting of swimming pools. Some of this work has been commenced and completed since the beginning of the Budget year. Works such as the replacement of equipment in manual arts blocks and other works such as

repairs to fencing, walls, seating and port racks are also required in schools within the electorate.

There are other areas in which the State Government has to act. The refurbishment of older schools such as Allenstown should be a priority. Shaded areas and new toilet blocks at schools such as Bouldercombe are works that I will continue to pursue, for I am committed to the principle of the Government supporting school communities as much as possible. If it is reasonable for school P & Cs and local communities to work for and contribute to schools for the benefit of children, it is reasonable to expect the Government to lend a hand. The parents of students attending schools in my electorate know that they have my support in improving the school environment for their children. If they are unhappy with anything at their local school, they know that they can approach me with the problem.

With respect to airconditioning—it is clear from the Budget that the Government has committed \$65m over three years to the airconditioning of schools in north Queensland. The Government must now make a real commitment to expanding the airconditioning program to schools outside the designated area.

**Mr Ardill:** Which are often hotter.

**Mr PEARCE:** They are often hotter. I welcome the initiative, but now insist that the Government look closely at schools throughout central Queensland. Many inland schools are poorly designed and, during summer, are like ovens. There is no way this does not impact on the ability of children to learn. Perhaps the Education Minister would like to tell the students of schools in towns throughout central Queensland why they are not eligible for airconditioning when they are stewing in summer temperatures well over 40 degrees. Now that the Government has kicked off its program of airconditioning, it must continue to expand the program so as to demonstrate its moral position. Airconditioning must be put into schools on a needs basis, not as an election gimmick to win seats for coalition candidates. Again, I support the initiative, but I call on the Government to show just how fair dinkum it is about equality by announcing a time frame for the expansion of the airconditioning in schools program.

Time expired.

**Mr HARPER** (Mount Ommaney) (3.10 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to take part in this debate. In doing so, I first of all compliment the Treasurer and all Ministers

on the excellent job they have done in putting together what is without doubt a very positive and responsible Budget. It will set the scene for Queensland to once again move forward. There are many positives in the Budget for the people I proudly represent in Mount Ommaney, both in direct matters and in overall issues, which will benefit both the residents of Mount Ommaney and Queenslanders as a whole. It clearly shows that this is the work of caring Ministers intent on delivering services to the people. I would also like on this occasion to congratulate the Treasurer on being the first woman to deliver a Queensland Budget.

It is well documented that, after six and a half years of Labor Government, Queensland was asset rich but cash poor. Members opposite had plundered reserves and every fund they could find to try to falsely balance their efforts at Budgets in the past.

**Mr Livingstone:** You don't believe that.

**Mr HARPER:** Despite this, they continue to refuse, as the member's comments show, to recognise and admit to the fact that they left us with an underlying deficit of \$180m which, if not addressed responsibly, would continue to grow and eventually cripple Queensland. This Government has faced up to that responsibility, tackling the need to make cuts and savings. The Government has also had to address Labor's health overruns and its unfunded liability problems in the Workers Compensation Fund. Added to this were the Commonwealth cuts, and still the Treasurer has brought in a balanced Budget. The Budget is strong on delivering essential services and providing much needed infrastructure.

**Mr Livingstone:** You have got more money.

**Mr HARPER:** The member for Ipswich West says that we got more money but, just as his shadow Treasurer did a few days ago, he has refused to recognise the increase in inflation in the last 12 months and the population growth in Queensland. Surely members opposite realise that these matters must be taken into account. Once again, they refuse to admit that.

I turn to a number of specific issues. As I said at the outset, whether these issues directly impact on my electorate of Mount Ommaney or not, they have an overall impact and an overall benefit. The first matter of importance I wish to mention is the Health budget. There is a \$733m boost to the Health budget over the next 10 years. That boost was essential. Before the last election and since,

people have said to me that something needed to be done about the waiting lists that had grown under Labor, the closed wards and the operating theatres no longer used. In the Budget, the Health Minister has continued addressing this problem and we are already seeing the results. I compliment the Minister on that. All Queenslanders will benefit from the better health system. We are getting back to decent waiting lists and getting back to essential operations being undertaken when they are needed.

Another area of much importance to all the community is police. I am very pleased to see within the \$26m Capitals Works Program for Police the funding for the land and planning of the Centenary Station at the new and proper site. The Police budget also includes funding for 800 extra police and 400 civilians over the next three years, which is essential. The Government is addressing the matter of bringing law and order back under control in this State. I know that my constituents will be pleased to see the introduction of these measures that will curb the increase in crime and the breakdown in law and order over the past few years.

Another essential element of any community is education and schools. Within the Mount Ommaney electorate, I am very pleased to see a subsidy of \$75,000 for the activities building at the Jindalee State School and \$350,000 for the visually impaired unit at the Jamboree Heights School. This is a very good program which is very much welcomed by the staff and the school community at Jamboree Heights. Further, the Budget allows for \$150,000 for a construction compound at the Oxley State High School. I welcome those inputs within the Education budget.

The funding given for teachers will impact on schools in my electorate and other places. It is very pleasing to see funding for well over 900 extra teachers. Of course, that funding includes \$6.9m for behavioural management programs and an extra \$12.1m for children with disabilities. From the comments I have received when I have moved around the community in the last year as the member and before that as a candidate, I know that those moves will be very welcomed.

There is record capital works funding within the Education budget of \$333m and there is also funding for programs strengthening numeracy and literacy initiatives. There is \$5.4m in funding for the reading recovery teachers which allows for an additional 120 part-time teachers and seven tutors. It is good to see that these important

issues are being addressed responsibly by this Government. As well as that, given the rate of increase in the reliance on technology in society, the Government's move within the Education budget to allow schools access to the Internet and linking all schools to the Schools Information Management System and providing the necessary computers is certainly welcomed. I am sure it will benefit the students and the staff, all of whom applaud these sorts of moves. Their dedication in those areas will be backed up by this funding.

As a member who represents part of the western area of Brisbane stretching out as far as the electorate of Ipswich West—and we had some interjections from the member for Ipswich West a little while ago—I am pleased to see the \$4.4m funding for the Ipswich university site. That will be welcomed both from the educational and employment points of view. Many of my constituents will make use of that university site once it is constructed.

Another important initiative within the Education budget is the \$4m allocation for the Make Shade Program. Fortunately, over recent years all parties, all Governments and all in the community have recognised the need to protect both young people and older people from the effects of severe sunshine. It is good to see the backing within the schools program to allow the children to be outside but protected from the sun. The Budget is certainly strong on delivering the essential services and providing much needed infrastructure in those areas.

While I am dealing with the Education budget, I would also like to mention the Remote Area Incentive Scheme. I am very pleased to see the boost in funding from the present \$2.2m to \$5.6m next year and to \$8.1m the following year. That will increase the current 500 teachers to 2,500 teachers. As one who is well and truly familiar with life in the country—and in fact I have had relatives who have been teachers in remote areas—I well and truly understand and appreciate the need for those sorts of schemes. I am sorry to have to make the following comment during my speech in regard to that. I refer to an advertisement placed by the Queensland Teachers Union that listed the members who supposedly supported the RAIS scheme, those who were not willing to give support and those who did not respond to the union. I was surprised to find my own name listed amongst those who did not respond.

I understand that this advertisement was posted on notice boards within teachers' rooms, etc., at different schools. It really

puzzles me, because I quite happily made an appointment to see a delegation of three union representatives in my office. I put aside an hour and a half for it. On the appointed hour and day, only one of those people turned up, and I quite happily sat with that person for an extensive time discussing the issues. I canvassed all of the points with that lady and told her that I would carry the issues raised by her through to the Minister, which I did, and I quite happily said that I would see her again or see other representatives on the issue. I was never contacted again, and then I saw that I supposedly did not respond. If that is not responding, I do not know what is.

This advertisement is purely another dirty political trick, obviously backed by the members opposite, trying to make political capital out of something that is entirely false. I received that delegation at my office and I discussed the issue with the lady who turned up, yet this advertisement says that I did not respond to them. What sort of response do they want? It is obvious that they are only after political capital. I think they really ought to address truth in some of the things they say. It rather reminds me of the severe campaign the Labor Party ran in my own electorate, and others, during the election in regard to selling hospitals. Here we go again with a similar campaign.

I move on to another essential sector which this Government firmly backs and supports, that is, families. I am pleased that the Budget includes funding for the establishment of a community-based child-care centre at Oxley. I welcome that. I also welcome other initiatives within this section of the Budget which give strong support to the family unit and those who are within a family situation—be they two parents or one parent—in relation to caring for and looking after their children.

The Budget also addresses an issue in relation to the Seniors Card whereby the means test free age has been brought down from 70 years to 65 years for those not in full-time employment. I know that many senior citizens in my electorate and elsewhere will welcome that move.

This section of the Budget also addresses many issues relating to women's services and maintains strong support for them. It also gives much-needed assistance and backing to people with disabilities. Members have heard the Minister discuss the hotline services, which are already working, the Children's Commissioner, and the upgrade of outside

school hours care services. I certainly welcome those initiatives within the Budget.

As to small business—this Government is committed to assisting small business. This is demonstrated by the inclusion in the Budget of the International Development Program, establishing the Queensland Trade Assistance Scheme and the Investment Attraction Program. I certainly well and truly recognise the need to support small business in our community, as does the Government and the Minister. Small business is an essential part of our everyday life, and it is certainly an essential part of employment. The Government will continue—as it has shown in this Budget—to recognise and support that.

In relation to policies for women—we recognise well and truly their contribution in all facets of life. I congratulate the Treasurer on her Budget statement on women's affairs. Within the area of the arts, the Budget commitments clearly show that this coalition Government is committed to nurturing and supporting the arts to ensure that it reaches its full potential and can then fill a very important place in all our daily lives.

Within the environment and conservation sector, the Budget refocuses on the fundamentals, ensuring that we properly manage and resource national parks, and fosters responsible environmental practices. I am very pleased at that, especially as there are a number of important environmental issues in the Mount Ommaney electorate. These include the Oxley Creek problems. A very dedicated band of people is working to restore that creek to its former condition and make it suitable for people to use for recreation, etc. There is also the No Name Creek at Jindalee, and another which I am sure my neighbour the member for Inala will share with me. He has it, but I have the effects of the Darra cement works. This Government will continue to back those issues which are very important to the everyday life of all people in our electorates.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** The cement works will close down shortly.

**Mr HARPER:** It will indeed. I certainly welcome that. I share that thought well and truly with the member for Inala. It affects both his and my constituents.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Good for both of our electorates. Unfortunately, the two new prisons that are going to be built won't be very good for your electorate.

**Mr HARPER:** I welcome that comment from the member for Inala about the two new

prisons in the electorate bordering mine, that is, the expansion of the men's prison and the women's prison. As to their location and various other aspects—I discussed this issue with the Minister when he was the Opposition spokesman, and I have raised it with him since he has been the relevant Minister. I have his assurance that they will not move any closer to housing within my electorate, and that the various concerns that people rightly have will be responsibly addressed to ensure that there are no problems.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** They won't be using the original site that was chosen back in 1988.

**Mr HARPER:** They certainly will not be using that original site that was planned in the eighties. Despite the deceptive advertising by my predecessor in my electorate, who tried to allude to that during the last two days of the election campaign, I can assure the people of my electorate that that will not be the case.

I move on to ethnic affairs. This is a subject for which I have a lot of feeling. As I have said in this place many times, I am very proud of the background of many of the people whom I represent. In recognition of the importance to all Queenslanders of our ethnic communities, the Bureau of Ethnic Affairs was transferred to the Premier's Department, where it could better coordinate the efforts of all departments. With this Budget the bureau now receives additional funds. I am very pleased with that. I am also pleased about the diversity of people's backgrounds in my electorate, because I firmly believe that it makes our community richer. I will finish on that very important point and simply say "Well done" to the Treasurer and commend the Budget to the House.

**Mr DOLLIN** (Maryborough) (3.27 p.m.): I rise to address this \$13.5 billion State record spending Budget—a \$2 billion increase on the last Goss Labor Government Budget, which was brought down in May 1995. This record expenditure was made possible by the previous Labor Government's good management of the State's finances. Mrs Sheldon started off with \$1.35 billion in kitty, nearly \$700m in dividends from State corporations, such as insurance and building society giant Suncorp, and railway enterprises which this Government is trying very hard to sell off. One wonders why. Apart from that, Mrs Sheldon has been raking out every hollow log in the Treasury.

I am pleased that Education, Health and Police have received additional funding. That should allow those three very important departments to cope with the State's

population growth. They will need every cent to achieve that. It should be clear to all that this Government did not inherit a State in financial ruin, as Premier Borbidge and the Treasurer, Mrs Sheldon, have tried very hard to sell to people over the past six months. The fact is that they inherited the wealthiest State economy in Australia. This record spending Budget proves that.

However, I want to see this funding spread evenly across the State. I hope that we are not going to go back to the bad old days under the Nationals, when Government members got all the loot and Labor electorates got the crumbs. I also do not want to see the great bulk of funding end up in the south-east corner of the State, as I am afraid it might, at the expense of rural and regional Queensland. I believe that having both the Premier and the Treasurer living in the south-east corner of the State does not augur well for the rest of the State.

Whereas I give credit for all I see as good in this Budget, I do not by any means believe that it is a good Budget. I note the assistance to rural communities, which will receive some relief in regard to land tax. That is good. I also note the continuation of the previous Government's drought relief schemes. Small business will gain a little from the increase in the payroll tax threshold to \$800,000 and the reduction of the rate to 5 per cent.

However, I believe that those concessions do little to assist what I call small business in our area, as very few employ 40 employees and only those that employ more than 40 employees or pay in excess of \$800,000 in wages have to pay the tax. It is good to see that this Government is following Keith De Lacy's lead of reducing the payroll tax threshold with each Budget until it is abolished. That tax was introduced many years ago by the Nationals and it will be a good thing for our economy to be without it as it is a deterrent to employment.

The announcement in Parliament yesterday by the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations, Mr Santoro, will not please many small businesses, in view of his promise to them in the run-up to the last election that he was going to assist in changing trading hours. But, of course, he is going to stick with hours as they are now. The small-business operators will not be overjoyed by that decision.

This is my seventh Budget for Maryborough and, without a shadow of doubt, it is absolutely the worst by a mile. In fact, almost everything Maryborough received by

way of funding are recycled programs and funding from the Goss Labor Government Budget brought down in 1995. I will give an example: the \$0.2m to finalise refurbishment of the community health building at the Maryborough Base Hospital. That building was completed in March 1996 and was funded by the Goss Government. Redevelopment of the Maryborough Hospital, which is expected to cost \$15.2m, was a Goss Labor Government program to be completed over three years—\$9m was made available for this year and about \$3m has been expended. Again, that is a case of Labor money being recycled.

As to the funding of \$0.5m to complete the refurbishment of the Maryborough villas for the intellectually disabled—more than \$350,000 has been spent on this project, so again, that is recycled money. An \$800,000 ambulance station was planned and financed by the previous Government. Tenders were in place and the contracts should have been let in June for completion next month. It has not been started because the Minister for Emergency Services has been sitting on the tenders so that the funding could be included in this Budget. That is another \$800,000 recycled. As to education and the funding of \$450,000 for the Mungar State School classroom—that building was finished last June and has been in use since then. Maryborough has received no funding in this Budget; it is just a recycling of the previous Government's funds. What a fraud, what deceit! This Government is treating the people of the Maryborough electorate with contempt.

I will give a very brief overview of the funding that Maryborough received for Education under previous Labor Government Budgets: Albert State School, \$330,000; Aldridge State High School, \$1,967,078; Brooweena State School, \$140,000; Glenwood State School, \$240,000; Granville State School, \$464,000; Gunalda State School, \$404,000; Maryborough Central School, \$530,000; Maryborough West State School, \$558,000; Mungar State School, \$297,000; Theebine State School, \$119,000; Tiaro State School, \$135,000; Tinana State School, \$300,000; grants to the previously neglected P & Cs, \$411,000; Maryborough College of TAFE, \$12m; and St Mary's Primary School, \$166,000. Under this Budget not one cent was allocated for State schools capital assistance. Not one cent!

Does the Government think that the people of Maryborough are gullible and stupid enough to swallow the deceit perpetrated in this Budget? I can tell honourable members that they are not. They are already saying in



Maryborough, "What a fraud!" I ask the Minister: where's my ambulance station, Mick?

To add insult to injury, this deceitful Budget had added to it credit for the Walkers Engineering \$62m tilt train contract, which was signed between the Goss State Government and EDI Walkers in 1994. This coalition Government is trying to cuddle that project into its Budget. The contract for the Brisbane to the Gold Coast train was signed and sealed long before this Government bribed its way into office. In 1989, Walkers of Maryborough was employing 320 workers; today it employs 750 workers—that is more than double. Walkers did well under Labor over the past six years, receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in Government contracts. Let us watch what happens under this Government. I am surprised that the Government has not claimed the \$100m over 10 years Owanyilla chip mill contract that is up and running and earning \$12m a year in exports and employing 80 people. That was an initiative of the Goss Labor Government. Those are the sorts of Budgets that I was used to.

The deceit goes on. After viewing this Budget, it is easy to understand why this Government was able to increase expenditure by \$2 billion. Through its freeze, it held onto the funding of at least that amount from the Goss Labor Government Budget brought down in May 1995 and recycled it into this Budget. It is as simple that. No wonder Queensland has been in a state of suspended animation for the past six months. Maryborough and district businesses have died over that period and they will take some winding up again. Perhaps the citizens of Maryborough and I should be thankful that at least the Borbidge/Sheldon Government is finishing the programs that came out of the Goss Labor Budget in 1995. The Minister for Health has given an undertaking that he will see the health programs through and I thank him for that.

However, I will not thank him if he allows the 140 cottages and units at the Wahroonga public retirement village to be closed. I ask him to allow the citizens of our region to be able to take advantage of that facility that has served the region well for over 30 years. I ask the Minister to inspect those premises personally. If he will do that, I am sure that he will agree with me that they are not falling down and are not unfit for use. I can assure the Minister that many of our elderly pioneers who are climbing two flights of stairs to reach the rooms in hotels and many others living in high-blocked town houses would consider that accommodation five star. It would cost \$4m to

reinstate the 140 units. Why on earth would any Government want to sell off that asset. Surely the citizens of Maryborough should be allowed a voice in that decision before that \$4m complex is lost to them. I ask the Minister to please reconsider the matter carefully before he makes the final decision.

I draw to the attention of the Minister for Police, the Honourable Mr Cooper, that for the first time in over 100 years the Maryborough Police Station has had to close its doors at 4 p.m. every day due to an acute shortage of staff. The citizens of Maryborough who require service after 4 p.m. have to cope with a voice monitor by which they talk through the door. I remind the Honourable Minister that, in the lead-up to the last State election, he came to Maryborough regularly, telling all and sundry how terribly understaffed we were, and how he would increase the staff if he were elected. Things have deteriorated dramatically since he took office. The station is closed at 4 p.m. The criminal element think he is the greatest; they have never had such free rein. It is about time this Minister did something about law and order than just talk. I noticed not one word in the Budget about extra police officers for our region—not one extra police officer! We urgently need 10 additional officers in Maryborough to get anywhere near what the community expects of our police services.

This is the first time in seven Budgets that Maryborough has received no funding for capital works in schools. We just do not get a mention. To put it in a nutshell, we do not get one cent over and above what has been put on hold from the May 1995 Budget. In Housing, Minister Connor has blatantly stolen \$3m in funding from Maryborough—eight units from North Street, units from the corner of Sussex and Tooley Streets and funding for the upgrading of the Jupiter Street pensioner units. He admits that he transferred some of the money to the south-east corner, even some to his own electorate, so we have a misuse of Housing funding of \$3m. This is not a good Budget. It is probably the worst from any Government ever, as we gained nothing new in the funding and lost \$3m in Housing. That leaves Maryborough minus \$3m from this Budget.

Some projects are slow getting started or are not mentioned in the Budget. I will list them quickly for honourable members—a community sporting complex, \$1m—we expected that to be in this Budget because we missed out on it in the last Budget and it was promised to be considered in this Budget; an extra 10 police officers—the Budget offers none; Gunalda Range Road—we received

great promises from Mr Warren Truss, the Federal member for Maryborough, that once the coalition was elected both State and Federally it would be only a matter of his snapping his fingers, yet not a word of that project mentioned in the Budget, so I hope that that does not mean that the project will not go ahead; a high school at Tinana—we purchased land for that, provided further financing and it looked like we would be having a new school there over the next four or five years, but there is nothing in the Budget for that; school shading—there is nothing in the Budget for that; Public Service and Consumer Affairs—Maryborough had an officer and an assistant but the officer was sent to Brisbane and the assistant now works only four hours a day.

The regional office of the Education Department is under the threat of losing 100 jobs through this scheme of putting officers in the schools to do whatever they are going to do. However, probably the most blatant broken promise of all was that, in Maryborough, Mr Borbidge and Mrs Sheldon said that they had held a shadow Cabinet meeting and promised \$3m for the community centre in Maryborough. It is not in the Budget. It cannot get an appointment.

Honourable members may be aware of recent proposal to introduce irrigated cotton farming to the Coopers Creek area in the Channel Country in south-west Queensland. That has caused much concern in that community. The environment movement, the cattle industry, the Coopers Creek Protection Group, which is representing local residents and every cattle property on the Cooper, and the Queensland Conservation Council, which is representing over 60 environmental groups across Queensland, are absolutely opposed to any irrigation development on Coopers Creek.

There are many reasons why the Cooper basin is unsuitable for cotton farming. I would say that those members opposite who have knowledge of the bush would not need to be told of those reasons. The Cooper is one of the most variable and unpredictable river systems in the world. Its arid-zone characteristics make it unsuitable for irrigation. Significant environmental values would be put at risk. There would be health risks associated with the introduction of chemical pesticides and herbicides to the region. Overall, the cotton industry would have a detrimental impact on the cattle industry.

After all this, the Minister for Natural Resources, the Honourable Howard Hobbs, still wants the plough ripped into this fragile

country so that he can look after his big cotton-farming mates. Every bit of information about the effects of cotton farming on the Cooper points to a total disaster not only for environmental reasons but also for the clean, green image of the cattle industry, which would be put in jeopardy. In view of that, I ask this Government and, in particular the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Hobbs, to keep their cotton-picking fingers off the Cooper before they turn it into an environmental disaster, as has occurred with the Murray/Darling system. Under this Government, Queensland's \$500m timber industry is under threat from two directions. One is the Government's policy of selling off the people's forest—forestry—to private enterprise. In other words, it is the Government's policy to privatise our State-owned timber resources. The managing director of the Queensland Timber Board, Mr Rob McInnes, had this to say about the policy—

"Country communities where many of the industry's 22,000 employees live would be the hardest hit. Wholesale privatisation of native forests would mean mills closing and massive dislocation of workers in rural Queensland."

Mr McInnes is right. It is probable that under this policy we will see our forests taken over by foreign multinationals which are profit driven and would not give a damn about timber workers' jobs in the Wide Bay or anywhere else. The cypress belt, which is the heartland of the National Party, would be the hardest hit. Quite often, sawmills are the only secondary industries that keep many small rural towns alive. The member for Gladstone should be concerned about this move because the Boyne Valley is located within her electorate and privatisation would most probably destroy the Builyan mill, which is located in that area.

Privatisation is not the only threat that is facing the timber industry. In this House, both the Minister for Natural Resources, the Honourable Howard Hobbs, and the Minister for Primary Industries, the Honourable Trevor Perrett, have admitted that they will sign Prime Minister Howard's agreement to reserve 15 per cent of all native forests existing prior to 1750.

**A Government member:** They have said no such thing and you know it.

**Mr DOLLIN:** They said that they would sign it if there was a degree of flexibility. A little while ago, they were not going to sign it at all; they were going to throw in the rubbish bin. They wanted nothing to do with it. Warren Truss came up to Maryborough and said, "Don't worry about it, timber boys." He nearly

threw me out of the meeting. He made all these promises. Yet today, this Government is going to sign the agreement. This Government is squirming, wriggling and worming, but it is going to sign the agreement to reserve 15 per cent—with flexibility. Even if the reserve is 7.5 per cent, it will ruin the timber industry. Members opposite are a weak lot. Every time, they collapse before Howard. I bet he pointed a gun at them over the gun issue and they all went weak. Again, he is pointing the gun at them. The other day in this House, Minister Hobbs said, "We are being blackmailed into doing this." Those two Ministers have been telling whoppers in this place—really big whoppers. The timber industry has woken up to what they are on about. The timber workers worked out pretty quickly what those Ministers were on about. They can pick those Ministers a mile away.

The Government will sign Prime Minister Howard's agreement to reserve 15 per cent of the native forests existing prior to the year 1750. Despite all the promises that those Ministers gave to the timber industry that that agreement would not be signed, time and time again they have misled this Parliament. I assure those Ministers that the timber workers will not forgive them for that. The member for Gladstone needs to watch this matter very carefully and not take much notice of some of the assurances that she has been given. Both of those Ministers have said that they will sign that agreement that preserves 15 per cent of the forests. They have said so.

All in all, this has been a horror Budget for Maryborough and the rest of Queensland. I have not one shadow of a doubt that the combined Budgets of the State and Federal Governments will have this State's unemployment rate over 10 per cent by the end of the first quarter next year. How can the unemployment rate be anything else with Budgets such as those? How in the hell can employment improve while State and Federal Governments sack thousands of public servants? Do they not realise that for every 1,000 public servants they sack, they lose another 200 or 300 jobs?

I want to touch on a few other matters that are contained in the Budget. I refer to the 10c a litre oil levy. That is going to belt the workers, and the farmers, probably more than anyone else. I refer also to the \$3 levy on all new tyres. How is that going to be charged? No-one has been able to tell me. Are people going to pay that levy every time they pay their registration? Does anyone know?

**Mr Woolmer:** It's at the wholesale level.

**Mr DOLLIN:** When do people pay it? When they buy their tyres or when they pay their registration?

**Mr Woolmer:** The wholesaler pays it.

**Mr DOLLIN:** I do not know. I have heard the other story. Car registration will be increased by \$3.60, TAFE fees are up \$1 an hour and a \$3 national park admission fee has been imposed. People who take their wives and kids to a park, which has always belonged to the people, are going to have to pay \$3 a head for adults. Crikey, what are we coming to? There has been an increase in child adoption fees. I cannot understand that. Why are adoption fees being increased from \$400 to \$5,000? Is it because the Government does not want to see any kids, who have had their parents blasted to smithereens and who have nowhere to go, boarded out to a decent home to make a woman who cannot have children happy? What is the idea behind that? Is it a racist issue? Did the Government get Ted to work that one out? Cigarettes are set to rise by 80c a packet. If I were a smoker, I would be worried. The bank debits tax will increase. There is not a lot of joy in this Budget. There is very little at all.

**Mr Veivers:** You don't smoke or drink.

**Mr DOLLIN:** Yes, I am pure.

**Mr TANTI (Mundingburra) (3.48 p.m.):** I can tell members that I am one of the happiest people in this Parliament.

**Mr Dollin:** It doesn't take much to make you happy.

**Mr TANTI:** Time will tell. For and on behalf of the residents of Mundingburra, Townsville and Thuringowa, I thank the Deputy Premier—my Liberal Leader—for what was confirmed in the Budget, albeit that some of the projects were already under way. I say to the Treasurer that the electorates of Mundingburra, Townsville and Thuringowa may now have turned the corner and are on the brink of a great future. Those electorates will want a large increase in funding over the next two Budgets because for too long they were forgotten by previous Governments. Those electorates will not rest but continue to lobby for a larger slice of the Budget cake to meet those future needs. It is with pride that I congratulate the Treasurer, as this is the first Queensland Budget to be presented by a woman. As a member of this Parliament, I am proud to be involved and to represent my electorate in the debate on this 1996-97 Budget—the first budget of the Borbidge/Sheldon coalition Government in Queensland.

I refer to the Treasurer's Budget Speech to outline the basis of how the Budget was received in the electorates of Mundingburra, Townsville, and Thuringowa. She stated—

". . . this is the 'back to basics budget'—the basics of ensuring that essential services and infrastructure are provided to all Queenslanders as efficiently and effectively as possible.

It is about repairing the neglect of recent years—neglect of the basic needs of people, and neglect of core issues that affect our health, safety and education.

. . .

To give credit where credit is due, the previous Queensland Government played its part, but simply ran off the rails in its last twelve months in office.

. . .

The coalition Government recognises the need to inject greater confidence into the economy and, in particular, to get the private sector moving again.

. . .

This rapidly expanding population base requires additional basic social and economic infrastructure such as schools."

After taking in the meaning of those quotes, positive articles from the *Townsville Bulletin* show how well the Budget was accepted, but again I say to the Treasurer that we require a large slice of the Budget cake in the next two years. One positive article was headed "Year long campaign pays off", which told of parents of disabled children who celebrated after a 12-month campaign reaped rewards in the State Budget. Included in Health funding was \$227,000 to improve therapy services in the twin cities for 100 children with moderate to severe disabilities. Of the allocation, \$185,000 would be available this shortened financial year. A sum of \$750,000 has been allocated over three years from the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, Kev Lingard, to boost services to maintain and repair aids and equipment for the disabled.

Townsville paediatrician Pat Ryan applauded the Government for keeping its election promise. Dr Ryan and the Townsville Regional Information and Parent Support Group, TRIPS, mounted a campaign in the lead-up to last year's State election to highlight the lack of disability services in the north. During the Mundingburra campaign, the coalition promised that it would meet the group's concerns. TRIPS president, Wendy

Mackay, said that the funds would mean parents no longer had to take children to Brisbane every three months for therapy. "It's good to know all the hard work isn't for nothing," she said.

In another article, headed "Far north wins out says Mooney", Townsville Mayor, Tony Mooney, said that Townsville would enjoy "some wins" from the State Budget. He was quoted as saying—

"Generally, the infrastructure subsidies for local government I feel will be positively received."

The Townsville Labor Mayor welcomed the State Government's commitment to continue to subsidise environmental licences for small businesses, many of which had found the prospect of licence fees difficult to face.

Another article, headed "Subsidies doubled for sewerage plant", stated that north Queensland councils have welcomed the coalition Government's plans to double local government subsidies for new water and sewerage works under the State Budget. Townsville Mayor, Tony Mooney, said the scheme would be particularly helpful as the city is about to launch into a major water and waste water program. Waste water subsidies will certainly be particularly helpful to Townsville as we undertake major reuse schemes, some of which are already under way at Rowes Bay and Pallarenda. Thuringowa Mayor, Les Tyrell, said he was happy with the 40 per cent subsidy, a pre-election promise announced at the recent Local Government Association of Queensland conference in Brisbane.

Townsville Enterprise Chief Executive Officer, Richard Power, described the State Budget overall as "fairly good". Mr Power said that \$11.7m in funding for the Townsville General Hospital over 10 years was welcome. An increase in funding for tourism promotion, including a boost from \$100,000 to \$165,000 for regional tourist authorities such as Townsville Enterprise is extremely welcome.

Queensland Teachers Union representative Ms Duffy has praised the coalition Government's \$65m commitment to aircondition schools in north Queensland. Ms Duffy stated—

"We are pleased to see the Coalition Government honour its political commitment to air-condition schools."

The Remote Area Incentives Scheme received an extra \$2.3m for outback teachers, who will receive up to \$20,000 a year more each. Ms Duffy said that while the incentive scheme funding was less than the union had asked

for, it was a step in the right direction. She said, "There will be quite a few happy teachers and parents."

Townsville Enterprise Economic Development Manager, Barrie Lovett, welcomed the news that the State Government will open a trade and investment office in Townsville to help local businesses maximise their export potential and become involved in major projects. The Government has allocated \$174,000 to set up the office. The initiative will provide direct links to the State Government's secretariats in Japan, Central Java in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Taiwan. Mr Lovett stated—

"It will give access from Townsville to those offices rather than through Brisbane."

The positive reactions continue. In relation to the tyre levy, the North Queensland Conservation Council Coordinator, Jeremy Tager, has stated that it was an appropriate form of environmental tax. Also, Dr Keyes stated—

"The decision to increase funding to public hospitals, improve mental health and address service delivery are the most encouraging elements of the health budget.

It's getting back to the basics, hands-on stuff, and it's very important to see a reversal of the very annoying trend set under the previous administration."

Some negative statements have been made. Townsville's Labor MPs attacked the coalition for failing to reward the city for delivering it Government. Mr McElligott said that there were no new or exciting initiatives for his electorate. The following will point out some items that affect his electorate, and also the electorates of Townsville and Mundingburra. Capital works spending is up to \$12.6m. In the next financial year, the capital works spending on law and order and public safety infrastructure will jump a massive \$12.67m in the Townsville region. Education was the big winner, with funding increasing by \$28.58m on the back of the coalition's \$65m promise to aircondition the north's schools and develop the Willows and Deeragun schools. Total capital works spending in the northern region increased by \$19.2m to \$278.4m. Increased law and order funding in the north was due mainly to the \$1.36m development of the Townsville police academy and the \$7.2m upgrade of the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. A sum of \$1.7m has been set aside for the Townsville General Hospital to continue redevelopment of A block.

Other major capital works include \$510,000 to complete a horticultural facility at the Pimlico TAFE and \$1.5m for the construction of a bus interchange at Stockland, with \$200,000 to be allocated this financial year. Infrastructure upgrading at the Townsville port received a \$4m boost in the State Budget. This amount includes \$1.7m for further work at the eastern port development for an area that has been leased to BHP for onshore facilities. Port protection information technology projects and the replacement of vehicles will absorb the remaining \$2.3m. Those statements really show what is happening in our electorates. I have a large number of further articles and details that I could continue to read.

I remind the Treasurer that Townsville is a can-do city, as stated by Richard Power of Townsville Enterprise. It is on the verge of a turning point and has a huge future. We will continue to lobby very hard for what is required for those electorates. Townsville has received a Premier's office and Clive Wall has been appointed as a District Court judge. Many initiatives have been put in place for education, health, emergency services, sport, public works and housing, and roads. I could go on, but I do not wish to lengthen the Budget debate. I will leave it at that.

**Mr NUNN** (Hervey Bay) (3.58 p.m.): This is a slick and a slippery Budget that has slithered into the House and oozed its way across the floor. Whoever framed the Queensland 1996-97 Budget and forgot to show it to the Honourable Joan Sheldon, DipPhty Qld, MAPA, LTCL, MLA, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts—I do not know what happened to the title of Warden for the Cinque Ports and Defender of the Faith, which must have been forgotten—also forgot something else. They forgot that if they did not explain it to the honourable member, she would not be able to answer questions on her own Budget. If anybody thought that those long silences on television meant that she was communicating with the electorate by mental telepathy, they can think again. She simply did not know what was in the Budget.

As a natural consequence of this, the DipPhty Qld, MAPA, LTCL, MLA, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts—henceforth to be known as "DipPhty Qld", for the purposes of this speech—was able to come to the same conclusion as the rest of us—this is a no nothing, do nothing, no jobs Budget.

**Mr WOOLMER:** I rise to a point of order. For the last few weeks the Speaker has made sure that honourable members of this Chamber are addressed by their appropriate title. I find those remarks offensive. I believe that the Treasurer should be addressed in the proper manner.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Laming): There is no point of order.

**Mr NUNN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I suppose that this is an appropriate time to ask for your protection against the savage assault made upon me by the member, and I ask that you see that he does not do it again. The member has one claim to fame, and that is that he is reputed to have circumnavigated the world in a barrel.

What they did not bargain for is that ordinary Queenslanders—those people who do not worry about the big picture, who do not know about micro-economics and macro-economics or cash surpluses or underlying deficits or economic rationalisation, but who do know about a fair crack of the whip, and who do know about their right to live in dignity, and who do know lies and deceit when they hear them, and who also know when they are being got at, the people of whom the Treasurer is so disdainful and dismissive—actually read the newspapers and listen to the news. Some of these people live in public housing or are waiting to gain occupancy of public housing. They know that in the area of public housing they have been duded. These two tragic coalition Governments—both Queensland and Federal—cooked up a deal. The Queensland Government, through Mrs Sheldon, is to pay back to the Commonwealth \$114m—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I remind honourable members to refer to members of the House by their Ministry or their electorate.

**Mr NUNN:** The Honourable "DipPhy Qld" simply stripped that money out of the Housing budget. What do honourable members think was the result of that? Let us take just one region, the region of Wide Bay, and see what the result is there. The result is a lousy commitment of \$3.3m to provide public housing to one of the lowest socioeconomic and fastest growing regions in Queensland. That will provide the magnificent number of 19 houses and 10 units to look after the needs of a region which contains the cities of Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Bundaberg and Kingaroy, just to name a few. Government members have no shame.

I will admit that this Government is committed to providing \$100,000 to be shared

between Hervey Bay and Bundaberg to build bus shelters, and I welcome that. However, I surely have to protest on behalf of all Queenslanders, but in particular on behalf of the people of Hervey Bay, because, when we desperately need housing, what do they give us? Bus shelters! It is a wonder that they did not give us a sheet of plastic and tell us to use that when it rains. When the people said, "We need houses", the Government gave them bus shelters. Marie Antoinette eat your heart out!

I turn to the area of health. I remind honourable members that the Hervey Bay Hospital, which is within about eight weeks of completion at a cost of \$42m, is an initiative of the former Labor Government and the Wide Bay Regional Health Authority. That project would not have gotten up without the support of the Wide Bay Regional Health Authority. This is the same hospital the building of which was opposed by the Minister for Health and former shadow Health spokesman. He opposed the hospital and now wants to claim credit for it by including in the capital works budget an amount of \$23m for its completion. That hospital is within weeks of being completed, and the Minister wants to claim the credit for it. Clearly, the Government has cheated on health.

**Mr Dollin:** It's called recycled money.

**Mr NUNN:** That is what it is.

The same applies to the police capital works budget for Hervey Bay. An amount of \$0.95m is allocated to complete the extensions to the police station and watch-house at Hervey Bay. The Hervey Bay Police Station extensions are complete, except for maybe a bit of landscaping. So complete is the police station that the police officers occupied the extension about six weeks ago, yet the Government has included those works in its Budget. What grand news for the people of Hervey Bay! The Government is going to give us \$0.95m to complete an extension to a police station that is already built and occupied.

**Mr Hamill:** Another carryover.

**Mr NUNN:** I think it is. Government members would not know the difference between "carryover" and "karioke".

Not content to cheat the people of Hervey Bay of much-needed public housing, and not content with cheating the people of Hervey Bay on health, Government members also found it necessary to cheat the people of Hervey Bay on policing. However, did they stop there? Not on your nelly! This

Government decided to cheat the people of Hervey Bay out of the provision of public services by axing another Labor initiative, that is, the provision of over \$3m to build a State Government office block. This is the fastest growing city in percentage terms in the whole of Australia.

After extensive investigation by staff of the Department of Administrative Services, the site was chosen and the money was allocated in Labor's Accelerated Capital Works Program. Labor recognised the emergence of Hervey Bay as a city of some significance that would eventually become the major population centre of Wide Bay. Labor kept pace with the rapid population growth by supplying the necessary infrastructure. Labor recognised that, if Hervey Bay was to prosper, its growth and development had to be fostered by the injection of public sector capital works. In six years of Government, Labor demonstrated its commitment to the fastest growing city in Australia by providing a stimulus to its economy through the provision of employment opportunities and such infrastructure as three new schools, a new courthouse, a new police station, the first 130-bed stage of a new 300-bed hospital, a community health centre, and an expanded roadworks program, as well as a massive public housing program.

Labor set an example that the private sector was only too willing to follow. In quick time, investors poured money into a reviving economy. They built new shopping centres, tourist accommodation, houses, industrial buildings and so on. However, six months ago the whole shebang closed down; the National/Liberal coalition had come to town. Everything was subjected to the dead hand of review, and the review was used as an excuse to stop growth and development in Hervey Bay. The dead hand of the Borbidge/Sheldon team showed itself in the increased unemployment queues, as Hervey Bay families were thrown on the scrap heap. It took six years of Labor Government to fix the neglect and decadence of the previous National Party Government, but it took Government members only six months to undo Labor's good work.

The felony is compounded by this Budget. This Budget has the capacity to cripple Queensland with its seven new deadly taxes that round up and tie together all the negative aspects of the policies of the coalition. Honourable members may be interested in the editorial from today's *Hervey Bay Independent*, so I will read it into *Hansard*. Headlined "Nothing up their sleeves"—and I

would venture that they have nothing in their heads, either—the article highlights the sleight of hand engaged in by the Treasurer when she conspired with the Minister for Police and the Minister for Health to convince us that Labor's new hospital and police station initiatives were really benefits bestowed by the coalition. Really, these three Ministers have engaged in the old pea and thimble trick, but the Hervey Bay electors did not come down in the last shower. They know that, with respect to the way in which the Hervey Bay electorate is being treated by this Budget, the pea is not under any of the thimbles. It is the old shell game. The editorial states—

"Has the State Government, as our parliamentary representative Bill Nunn claims, been indulging in some prestidigitation in its treatment of Hervey Bay in the Budget?

Unfortunately, it would appear so. The reams and reams of fax paper heralding the Government's Budget 'triumphs' which poured into this newspaper this week contained precious little in truly new initiatives for Hervey Bay and sought instead to convince us that what we already had and what had already been paid for, that is, the hospital and the police station, were new items of expenditure."

Those are not my words; they are from the editorial of the *Hervey Bay Independent*. It goes on to state—

"What the Budget did give us, however, was what a major tourist operator has called a 'kick in the guts' for tourism in Hervey Bay. He was referring to the proposed \$3 National Parks head tax which is due to come into force early next year.

According to the operator, this 'appalling' tax will have a disastrous impact on visitor numbers to Fraser Island both on day tours and long term holidaymakers for whom the cost of a week on the island (for a family of four) will jump by \$84. The tax, he predicts, will lead to a marked decline in visitors not just to the island but in particular to Hervey Bay."

The editorial goes on—

"This is not an appealing prospect to an industry already getting nervous about talk of a new road between Noosa and Tin Can Bay and the effect it would have on the Bay's reputation as the supposed 'gateway' to Fraser Island.

It's no secret that the National Party is working vigorously to snare the seat of Hervey Bay at the next election with visits from Ministers and reinvigorated local branches going a long way to engender voter support.

However, if our treatment in this Budget is what we can expect from this Government then they've got a darn sight more work ahead of them yet."

That editor captures the mood of the people in regional Queensland. They feel neglected, betrayed and cheated by this Budget. It is an indictment of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government's incapacity to govern for the people and it is a pitiful story repeated through every regional electorate in Queensland.

Every one of those seven deadly taxes will impact in a negative way on small business in Queensland. Small business caters mainly for families, so it is the Queensland family unit that will suffer through the increased taxes. These are the tax increases which, according to the "DipPhy Qld", Queenslanders did not need to have. How can we forget the "no new taxes" line? The 35 per cent rise in the bank account debits tax will affect small business because of the high number of transactions that they put through their bank accounts, a cost which will have to be passed on to their customers, mainly families. Families will be hit directly, as will low income earners, the poor, the elderly and the unemployed. Millionaire land-holders in Surfers Paradise and Caboolture will get tax relief while Queensland families will fork out more. It should be remembered that the silvertails of Caloundra, thanks to their member, Mrs Sheldon, have already been given some relief through the scrapping of the tolls on the Sunshine Motorway. On top of this, the Government has now given them a punch beneath the belt.

The 10c per litre oil tax—the forerunner to Queensland's petrol tax—and the infamous wheel tax of \$3 per tyre or \$15 per car is another dip into the pockets of the battlers, who have to pay the same as the Rolls Royce owner. The national parks tax of \$3 per day per person has been criticised by tourist operators. Do members know why? It is because it will hit families the hardest, and families are the lifeblood of tourism. An average family of four will now pay an extra \$84 for a week's stay on Fraser Island. From Monday, the cost of Fraser Island day trips from Kingfisher Bay will increase, and others are sure to follow. It will now cost \$220 for an average family of two adults and two children—if the children are under 14—for a

day out on the battler's paradise, Fraser Island. What about the TAFE tax? The Nationals and Liberals think that an extra \$50 on a TAFE course is a joke. It is not a joke, but it is a cruel attempt at sick humour by the Treasurer. With unemployment rising under these policies, how on earth can the unemployed and those wishing to upgrade their skills be expected to pay when they will already be crippled by the weight of all the other new charges and fees and taxes?

Some of the new taxes raised are not going to be spent in the areas from which they will be collected but will go into consolidated revenue. It is strongly suspected that the money will be there until needed to favour mates of the coalition. These taxes will be collected on unfriendly terms and paid out at mates' rates. The last time a conservative Government was in power, it was charged and convicted by the Queensland electorate of indulging in corruption, cronyism and political patronage. It is becoming evident that the old guard of conservatism is keen to return to pre-1989 ways of running this State. This has become evident with the reduction in the Budget for the funding of the CJC and, more recently, by the vicious attack perpetrated upon some of the CJC people in other places.

The coalition makes no secret of the fact that it would get rid of the Criminal Justice Commission on the grounds that it is in danger of becoming an alternative Government. Let me inform the House that anyone and anything is an alternative to this Government! The CJC is a crime-fighting body. Only crooks would wish to get rid of a crime-fighting body. The coalition wishes to rid itself of the CJC. I will allow honourable members to be their own judges.

**Mr WOOLMER:** I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive and request that it be withdrawn.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Unless you're personally maligned—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I appreciate the assistance of the member for Inala, but in this case I do not need it. The member for Springwood has a point of order.

**Mr WOOLMER:** The insinuation was that coalition members are willing to allow crime to continue in this State. I find that personally offensive and request that it be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr NUNN:** What a pity, because I was prepared to withdraw gently and gracefully, as I am sure many have done before me.



The CJC is a crime-fighting body. Only crooks would wish to get rid of a crime-fighting body. The coalition wishes to rid itself of the CJC. I will allow honourable members to be the judges.

The Budget has failed Queensland, it has failed the Government and indicates more surely than anything that I can say that the Government in general and the Treasurer in particular are not up to the job. Surely the "DipPhy." of Queensland is aptly named! If the Premier is going to go to the people of Queensland on this Budget, I will try to get him Frank Tanti's medal, because he would deserve it.

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydhore) (4.15 p.m.): This is a very good Budget for the Sunshine Coast. We are a very high growth area with a lot of demands on Government services. This Budget recognises that and delivers more police, more doctors and nurses and more teachers for the Sunshine Coast and across Queensland. The coalition's Budget provides more money to promote tourism and to boost jobs. There are also some excellent human services programs recognising the more vulnerable people in our community and seeking to support the family unit. On the environment front, the doubling of the subsidy available to local governments to upgrade their water and sewage treatment plants and to encourage effluent re-use is a major step forward.

I will attempt to outline some of the specific initiatives, but first I want to challenge Mr Beattie and Mr Elder to stop bagging the Sunshine Coast and to rule out absolutely reintroducing the toll on the Sunshine Motorway if they ever return to Government. Until they do rule out that possibility, the Sunshine Coast has a lot to fear from Peter Beattie and Jim Elder. I have heard them verbally dump all over the Sunshine Coast in the past few weeks and, quite frankly, people up there are becoming quite fed up with it. Labor promised to take all the tolls off the Sunshine Motorway. When it won Government in 1989, it went full steam ahead to return the tolls and actually increased the number of tolls on the road. The debt went up under Labor's stewardship. The \$12m plus annual top-up from road funding to pay for the debt that the tolls were not paying was a real cost to Queenslanders. Now there is a program to retire that debt, and the people of the Sunshine Coast, and particularly those in my electorate of Maroochydhore, are no longer being penalised for using their local road network.

I am very pleased to see a boost in the number of TAFE positions for the Sunshine Coast. TAFE is a vital organisation in training the young people of this State for jobs. The Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE will have a total budget of \$18.64m, and capital works are planned to expand the Mooloolaba centre and to establish a new campus at Tewantin. The institute will gain an extra 170 student places in 1997 under the coalition, and that move is very welcome. The Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE is playing a very important part in opening up jobs for our young people.

Also on the work front—I am pleased that the coalition Government recognises that the workers' compensation mess left behind by the Labor Party requires some contribution from Government. That was something that the Labor Party was not willing to do. From January this year, employers faced an average premium increase of about 24 per cent under the additional levy imposed by Labor, but even that was not sufficient to deal with the \$400m blow-out in the Workers Compensation Fund that we are now faced with. This matter will be fully dealt with by this Parliament in another piece of legislation. But the Budget does allow for the fact that every year over the next three years there must be a \$35m contribution from the State Government to return the fund to a balanced state. We acknowledge that employers have already put their hands deeply into their pockets through the large slugs imposed by the previous Labor Government. We are not intending to further increase the burden on employers, but we are saying that some changes have to be made to bring the fund back into the black. We acknowledge that the Government should contribute, because it was the Labor Government that contributed to the problem in the first place. The National/Liberal coalition now has to deal with the problem that the former Government left behind.

When in Government, Labor had quite a record on taxes. The hypocrisy of the Labor Party in its analysis of this Budget is quite stunning. Six years of Labor Government in Queensland saw an annual fee and tax increase of 10.5 per cent compared with the modest 4.8 per cent proposed this year by the coalition Government. No-one wants taxes to rise, but it is time that people were given the facts about the Labor Party's hypocrisy over taxes and fines.

The coalition Government came to power only a few months ago and has faced Labor's underlying deficit of \$240m, Health overruns of \$40m and Commonwealth cutbacks of \$250m. I am disappointed with some of the

Federal Government cutbacks. The reality is that some 38 per cent of our income is not raised by the State but comes from the Federal Government. It is time that we considered the relationship between State and Federal Governments and worked out a more equitable system of tax raising and distribution of the funds which are taken from the people of Australia.

The Government has \$500m worth of its own initiatives which it is committed to delivering, primarily, in the key service areas of supplying more police, teachers, doctors and nurses. We will deliver on these promises. The increases in taxes amount to less than half the average annual increase of 10.5 per cent imposed by stealth by Labor.

I want to refer to education. Almost 1,000 extra teachers will be employed in Queensland in 1996-97, which will clearly put the focus back on classrooms. On top of the increase in teacher numbers, a further 158 teacher aides and public servants will be employed to help keep Queensland in front as the most proficient provider of education in this most diverse State. The areas of behaviour management and literacy and numeracy are the two major beneficiaries of the increase in numbers. Eighty-three more teachers, in tandem with 12 extra counsellors and teacher aides, will assist with behavioural management strategies. A total of 71 new teachers will be employed in the first half of 1997 alone to focus purely on literacy and numeracy.

I also support the measures in the coalition's Budget to boost the Remote Area Incentive Scheme. In 1997, we will more than double the incentives which were available under the previous Government, and 1998 will see a trebling of the benefits. I have never not supported the scheme, contrary to the QTU's deceitful poster campaign. One had to be fortunate enough to walk into a staff room to see the little disclaimer on the bottom of the poster that said if coalition members or anyone had a problem with the details in the poster, they should contact the QTU. That union did not have the decency to send this poster to members. It was most deceitful.

**Mrs Wilson:** Sneaky.

**Miss SIMPSON:** As my colleague says, it was sneaky and disgraceful. We did not appreciate that. I am pleased that we have delivered on this most important scheme, and we will continue to deliver on education.

Students with disabilities will also receive extra attention through spending in the new Budget. This is an area of particular interest to me because moving children with disabilities

into schools is a big issue and one that requires quite a deal of support. Over 100 more teachers, therapists and teacher aides will be made available to special schools and students who are being integrated into mainstream schools. The new Queensland School Curriculum Office will employ 49 seconded teachers whose positions will then be backfilled. So there is a real commitment to education. We have seen that right across-the-board, with new technology going into schools, and the commitment to the first hour of non-contact time for primary, preschool and special school teachers is a real move forward.

In keeping coalition election promises, money has been allocated to police numbers. The Sunshine Coast is set to win a boost in police numbers in this first coalition Budget. I am pleased to see that we are already due to receive, in the next few months, 10 extra police, and the process of civilianisation will further boost this sworn officer capacity. As the full impact of the \$76m allocation to provide an additional 800 police and 400 civilians by August 1999 flows through to the Statewide police force, the Sunshine Coast will continue to benefit.

The new North Queensland Police Academy will also be in operation by about next month, which means a boost to the number of police in training. This academy will be able to train up to 80 recruits each year. I also applaud the additional \$5m in Budget allocation for the development of systems to reduce police time spent collecting information critical to fighting crime such as access to warrants, vehicle registrations and national police databases. The introduction of speed cameras will further help to free up police resources for other duties.

I mentioned before that money has been provided to deal with those people in the community who are perhaps more vulnerable than others, and this is most important. Governments should as much as possible look at getting out of the lives of the people who are doing the right thing but providing a safety net for those who do need assistance. The Sunshine Coast elderly will benefit from a new Statewide service to respond to the abuse of older people. We would like to think that the elderly in our community were all cherished and well looked after in their latter years. While for the majority this may be the case, the sad truth is that interstate and international studies indicate that up to 5 per cent of people over the age of 65 years of age are abused. In Queensland, this means that about 23,700 older people over 60 might be abused by someone with whom they have a personal

relationship. This new service will work with older people, their families and current services to give more support and protection for older people who have suffered abuse. The service will develop a coordinated network which will provide a prompt, practical and effective response to reports or allegations of abuse of older people.

I am also pleased to note that there will be additional funding for disabled people in our community. Some \$8.6m over three years will be targeted to meet some of the specific needs of ageing carers of people with disabilities and parents of young children with disabilities. There is a need, as has been recognised by the Government, for these programs to be more flexible and responsive. This will be achieved by putting grants out to community-based organisations. Obviously, that is a subject which is also dear to my heart—to see ways that we can better help people in the community who need that assistance.

The foster care parents, the mums and dads out there who take needy children into their homes, will also receive additional funding under the State Budget. I know that that will be welcomed by the Sunshine Coast foster parents with whom I have had contact and the many others out there who quietly go about their work. It is not an easy job, but they play such a vital role. To this end, there will be a \$1.442m allocation in 1996-97, to increase to \$3.835m in the following two years. I welcome the Families, Youth and Community Care Minister's stated commitment to work in partnership with foster parents and families to ensure that children return home as soon as possible after an alternative placement is no longer needed.

Our seniors are also winners in this Budget. Sunshine Coast people aged over 60 will all now benefit from one of two types of Seniors Card—the Seniors Card or the Seniors Business Discount Card—and from December this year all retired residents of Queensland who are over 65 years will, for the first time, be eligible for the Queensland Government Seniors Card, giving them access to a range of Government concessions. I know that, as we get the message out to people, they will be very pleased about that initiative.

Mental health services also won funding support. The coalition has committed an additional \$1.64m to commission new acute beds for mental patients at Nambour General Hospital. That extra funding for mental health at Nambour is part of a \$10.424m increase in mental health funding in this 1996-97 State

Budget. I applaud the move of the Health Minister, Mike Horan, to also quarantine mental health dollars to ensure funding is not diverted into other areas, as occurred quite blatantly under the previous Labor Government.

Nambour Hospital will win its fair share of the big Budget boost to hospitals. Nambour Hospital is in one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. It is a hospital that is always under incredible pressure. The extra 540 nurses and 80 doctors funded across the State in this week's State Budget will make a difference to this very important hospital. Queensland hospitals have been given an extra \$278m in the 1996-97 Health budget, bringing total hospital outlays for the next financial year to \$2.05 billion.

I refer back to the area of human services. Today, I was very pleased to announce, together with the Families Minister, the new Government support worker for Maroochydore. This contract has been won by Lifeline Sunshine Coast, which is based at Maroochydore but which covers the Sunshine Coast. That is a very worthy, hard-working organisation that has proven its ability to run community programs and to reach out to people in need in the community. I have confidence that that organisation will make full use of this grant, and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this program. That service is greatly needed in the area. Families need all the help they can get to provide the nurturing and caring to each other, but especially to children. The recurrent grant of \$45,455 will help Lifeline provide information and resources to family members, skilled counselling, practical assistance and referral to specialised services.

In relation to Health—I notice that the coalition is getting back to the basics of dental services. It has made a major commitment to improving public dental health services—one of the areas worst affected by Labor's failed system of regionalisation. I regret to say that the Commonwealth Dental Health Program will continue only until 31 December 1996.

**Mrs Edmond** interjected.

**Miss SIMPSON:** I am very disappointed that the Federal Government has pulled the money out of that particular program. I am sure that this is a matter that members will continue to raise, because it does hurt the Health budget here in Queensland. It means that we have to work just that much harder in how we spend those Health dollars. However, it is to the credit of this coalition Government that the coalition's

Dental Health Program will commence on 1 January 1997 at the same level as the Commonwealth scheme. The provision of approximately \$10m to achieve this is most welcome. At the heart of the future of dentistry, this coalition Budget also allocates \$100,000 in 1996-97 towards the development of the Oral Health Centre, which will see future dentists trained in a world-class facility.

On the subject of dental services—yesterday, the members for Kurwongbah and Nudgee attempted to trot out the sins of Labor on the back of a coalition scapegoat. It did not wash in the 1995 State election, it did not wash in Mundingburra, and it will not wash now. The three-surgery clinic at Strathpine and the four-surgery clinic at Sandgate were run down by Labor to the point at which neither can now meet its patient demand. Overflow patients from some suburbs are directed to the Stafford clinic, which Labor ran down to the point at which, because of funding levels, only eight of its 14 surgeries are used.

I referred earlier to the coalition Dental Health Program, a new initiative of this Government, replacing the Commonwealth Dental Health Program. I understand that Queensland Health is considering using these new funds to open school clinics at Kallangur, Strathpine and Nundah to public use, alleviating pressures on the existing adult clinics. Should this occur, I trust that the members for Kallangur and Nudgee will be amongst the first to congratulate the coalition and Mike Horan. Until it does, the electors of Kallangur and Nudgee should reflect on the poor state of dental health services left to them by Health Ministers Beattie and Elder.

Oral health is also an important public health issue. The coalition's recognition of this is confirmed by the allocation of \$470,000 for public health dental officers. Rural and remote dentistry will also benefit from this additional package. The moneys will be used to fund the Rural Incentive Program targeted at attracting dentists to practise in these areas. Improved salaries and other benefits for oral health staff will provide a major boost to staff recruitment and retention. This allocation is just one small part of \$90m in new initiatives aimed at enhancing or expanding service delivery, particularly for people living outside the south-east corner of the State. The \$90m targets priority areas, such as hospitals, mental health and community health, in addition to public health. I am sure that these measures will have a significant impact in terms of community benefit because of the way that the coalition and Mike Horan have got back to

targeting basic services. Take, for example, the \$10m allocated to open hospital wards which were closed by Labor, the \$1.4m which now guarantees life-saving Factor VIII to Queensland's haemophiliacs and the \$300,000 to employ seven child health nurses, focusing on immunisation—no glossy brochures full of definitions, just getting back to real services for Queenslanders.

**Mrs EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha) (4.33 p.m.): I am sorry that members had to listen to that prepared parroting from the member for Maroochydhore. It is a pity that she has such a short memory and that she knows nothing about what she is talking about. But why am I not surprised that, in this year's Budget papers, enormous efforts have been made to hide spending in the regions and that all expenditure is expressed in global Statewide terms, that is, from a centralised aspect in keeping with the one real coalition Health initiative, that is, to move all spending divisions and planning of service delivery back to Brisbane? Presumably, this is the very aspect that the Minister is trying to hide from the many health workers and residents who live outside the south-east corner of the State.

Over the last couple of years, with the introduction of Estimates committees and portfolio Program Statements, there has been a pleasing change in the presentation of Budget papers. Indeed, last year's was so comprehensive, detailing program by program and region by region, with detailed explanations of any variation between estimated and actual expenditure, that there were few questions left to ask. This year's papers are obtuse in the extreme and appear to be deliberately presented to cover up the Minister's constant bungling, fiddling of activity figures and lack of new initiatives and, of course, the capital works freeze, which has led to the whole rebuilding program now being many months behind schedule.

Why am I not surprised that the very headlines in the Minister's media handouts are based on rubbery figures? The Health budget has not been increased by 11.6 per cent, as the Minister claims, but by 8.1 per cent, as many of the media actually reported—those with a calculator on hand. Whereas I am pleased with that increase, it is well below what is needed to catch up on health needs over and above CPI increases and population growth. Over the last six years, the Labor Government was making a determined effort to reduce the differences between the services provided in this State and those in other States. The Health budget this year is well down on what it would have been if the

coalition had followed Labor's 12 per cent average spending increase in six consecutive State Budgets for hospitals and community health services. Service delivery will suffer as a result, and already patients and staff are feeling the pressure.

I shall just put forward a few examples to honourable members. Almost every major hospital has contacted me telling me that, in real terms, they are worse off than they were last year. For example, according to the most likely estimates, the Cairns Hospital will get an increase of 0.1 per cent; the best estimate is 1 per cent. That hospital needs 7 per cent just to keep level with its growth of 4.4 per cent per year and a CPI increase of 2.5 per cent. So the Cairns Hospital will be significantly worse off. The Health budget this year is a mockery of what it should have been. Based on a comparison of this year's Budget with last year's actual spending, Mr Horan has produced only a \$225m increase, which compares less than favourably with Labor's \$307m increase last financial year. The Health budget is so silent on the detail, one can conclude only that the Minister is, like his Treasurer, hiding and covering up.

One of the major factors that the coalition is hiding in this Health budget relates to the privatisation disease which the Minister has unleashed on our prized public health system. Queensland's free public hospital system was the envy of Australia. Now we are seeing it go up in smoke. Stage 1 of the Horan public hospitals privatisation plan is in the fine print on page 16 of the Program Statement for Health. Once upon a time, other States in Australia followed Queensland's lead. Then came the corrupt National Party Government, which destroyed the fabric of Queensland's hospital system with 32 years of neglect. But at least we still had a free public hospital system. Now we see that all being cast aside in the wake of unfunded election commitments.

The coalition's Budget is filled with so many broken promises and creative accounting procedures that it is hard to know where to begin to unravel the deceit for the purpose of this debate. The introduction of privatisation of our public hospital system is undoubtedly one of the finest examples of the deceit and broken promises which has characterised this Government from day one. The deceit lies in the fact that the privatisation of Noosa and Robina hospitals does not even appear in the Minister's budget as new initiatives. They are just hidden in the fine print like all the other hidden nasties in this Health budget. It is hard to believe that a Health

Minister with such big political ambitions—watch out, Russell—however unrealistic they may be, from the National Party, which has such a shameful record in managing health services in Queensland, wants to go down in history as the man who introduced the spectre of privatisation into Queensland's free public hospital system. The Minister can try to dress it up in whatever way he likes with his assurances that only new hospitals will be sold off, but the beginning of the end for public hospitals in this State under a coalition Government lies in the Budget papers.

The Premier and the Treasurer made a promise during the July State election campaign that privatisation of public hospitals was not coalition policy and would not be contemplated in any shape or form. That promise has been broken, and members of this Parliament have a duty to defend our health system by opposing this measure, which is confirmed in the Budget papers. May I suggest that, before the Minister continues down this privatisation path, he at least reads the scathing report of the New South Wales Auditor-General and his comments regarding the previous New South Wales coalition Government's privatisation deal for Port Macquarie Hospital? For the benefit of members, may I explain briefly that this hospital was a similar election promise to Noosa, Robina, Caloundra and Beaudesert—without planning, without funding, and definitely not meant to be private. But within weeks of winning Government, the coalition announced that it would be a private hospital with some public usage—just the same as this Minister intends to introduce.

The Auditor-General in New South Wales found that New South Wales taxpayers would pay two and a half times over for that hospital and that the cost of providing services would be 30 per cent higher than in public hospitals. I should also refer the Minister to the debate regarding that hospital in the New South Wales Parliament where it was revealed that the prime beneficiaries threw a major fundraising function for the Liberal Party. I warn the Minister that that party was thrown not for the National Party but for the Liberal Party.

The broken promises theme of this Appropriations Bill as they apply to Health go much further than that. The number of new nursing positions is 260 fewer than Labor's commitment to employ 800 new nurses in Queensland's health system and will simply not keep up with growth. With fewer nurses there is no way that this Government is carrying out the waiting list reduction strategy

that it says it is. Simply, wards cannot be opened without a much higher number of nurses in the hospital system, and we see that at Rockhampton, Ipswich, the Royal Children's Hospital, and Mount Olivet. Nurses are speaking out. What has happened to Labor's plans to expand the Graduate Nurse Transition Training Program? I simply have not found it mentioned in this Budget and I challenge the Minister to inform the House exactly where the extra money to train our nursing graduates is to be found.

It is worth noting that page 4 of the Health Program Statements reveals the major real increases in staffing as a result of Labor initiatives such as a reduction in award hours for nurses from 40 to 38 hours and also the retention of doctors in the public system as a result of the incentives packages. Those are in the Government's documents. Only recently nurses were ridiculed by certain coalition members opposite for publicly registering their concerns about the Premier's flawed Public Service Bill. Perhaps they are being punished for speaking out. In common with the consumer voice in health who have had their funding withdrawn, the nurses have had their numbers slashed. On waiting lists in particular, the Health Minister has been exposed as nothing more than a lead pencil accountant. The only surgery that is going on at the moment is that performed by the Minister's pencil, not the doctor's scalpel. That is the word from disillusioned doctors and hospital staff at some of our leading metropolitan hospitals.

I will explain further. The initiatives announced by the Minister relating to waiting lists were announced by the previous Labor Minister in November after a number of management trials, including one that was reported in the current Minister's propaganda paper "Health Matters" at the Gold Coast where it reported on the success of a two-year management trial. The funding provided is exactly the same \$25m per year for 3 years as announced by Mr Beattie, then Minister for Health. The initiatives are identical and I welcome the improved efficiencies.

I have no problem with culling the waiting lists, as is happening now: sending out letters to patients asking if they have died, no longer require the operation, have already had the operation and, if they do not reply by a certain date, removing them from the waiting list. That is sensible, and, with the pre-admission management also introduced by the Labor Government, that should minimise the "don't shows" and wasted theatre time. I applaud those measures, but coalition members

should not come into this place and bag the former Government which initiated the procedures when their own figures show that, except for when those letters culled patients, more patients went off the lists due to having their operations in the comparative months under the Labor Government. As I said, I welcome increased efficiencies in surgical throughput to relieve the waiting time for elective surgery, but Government members should not insult my intelligence or that of the people of Queensland who are waiting for surgery by playing games with them as they wait.

In the capital works area we see clear evidence of the freeze that this Government has denied. I refer specifically to the Health Program Statements on page 21 in the Total Capital Outlays column. The Budget allocation for 1995-96 compared with the actual expenditure figure in that section of the Budget papers illustrates this point, and indeed, reveals that less will be spent in total—even when the Government adds it on for next year. If it were not for the freeze, Stage 1 of the Royal Brisbane Hospital Redevelopment would be nearly completed, work at the PA Hospital would be progressing well and a whole host of other projects in Labor's 10-year rebuilding program could have moved forward. Instead of which, the program has been pushed back further into the never-never.

I also draw members' attention to page 49, Appendix 1 of the Treasurer's Annual Statement, which clearly lists the \$43.075m of capital works projects that were frozen. That does not include other projects that have been dropped off the list altogether. Sadly, it looks like the Mater Hospital is one of those that has been dropped off the Capital Works Building Program in this Budget. I happen to believe that it is a great shame that that wonderful institution is being treated so callously. Under Labor, the Hospital Rebuilding Program would have been in full flight by now; instead we see reviews of works already commenced and the infamous Horan reprioritisation of infrastructure projects. Patients on waiting lists for surgery certainly know what the Horan reprioritisation of waiting lists means. It means that miraculously no-one is waiting extended periods for surgery according to the Minister, regardless of the number of people coming forward to tell us otherwise.

An increased Health budget is all well and good, but the fruits of this increase will unfortunately be lost on poorly planned hospitals in Noosa, Robina, Beaudesert and, of course, Caloundra. The 8.1 per cent

increase in this Health budget will be lost totally if service delivery is continually forced to play second fiddle to party political considerations. Health facilities are far too expensive to be used as mere political bribes.

Under Labor, more beds would be planned using proper health needs analysis projections and located where people live. Bed numbers and hospital locations under this Government have been determined by party political considerations, just as they were in the bad old days prior to 1989. In fact, the Minister has actually removed any independent health planning function from his department. This will no doubt form part of the \$31m cut mentioned in the departmental overview for the Budget.

In this Budget there is no evidence of any planned and equitable distribution of resources, simply new hospitals—two of them to be privatised—in coalition electorates and more money for the powerful vested interests. So despite the Budget increase for Health, the vast bulk of this money will be funnelled into unplanned and politically motivated election promises on health services. That is a great pity for all Queenslanders, particularly those north of Noosa.

The Health budget papers this year are dangerously low on important detail for the simple reason that the Government does not want to open up the books in the interests of open and accountable government. It does not want to open up the books because it is not delivering the services that it says it is. That was the case prior to 1989, and it would seem that we are in for much of the same shameful treatment by another National Party Health Minister in sheep's clothing.

The policy vacuum that has stricken Queensland Health since Mr Horan came on board has been graphically illustrated by the absence of any new initiatives belonging to the coalition. The coalition's first Health budget in six years attempts to take ownership of a large number of Labor-initiated health policies, programs and rebuilding projects. The question that remains unanswered is: how can the Government increase the Health budget by only 8 per cent instead of 12 per cent this financial year but it can afford to remove the toll on the Sunshine Motorway in Mrs Sheldon's backyard at a cost to the taxpayer of \$200m?

Indeed, if the increased tobacco tax is so necessary at this time, why has the Health Minister suddenly gone so silent on the issue? Why did he support it one minute and then rule it out prematurely when he realised that

the Treasurer was going to include it in her inaugural Budget? The reason is that he wanted to pretend that he was not personally a party to yet another broken promise. He bought into the increased tobacco tax issue when he tried very hard to discredit Labor's Hospital Rebuilding Program with his fictitious \$1.2 billion black hole slander. For the record, there is no mention, no sign, of a \$1.2 billion debt in the Health budget papers. The only outstanding debt in the Health budget is the \$700m debt left behind by the previous National Party Government, which the Health Department has been paying back to Treasury since 1990 when Labor embarked on the task of fixing up that mess. The sum of \$513.8m remains to be paid off year in, year out. If honourable members read page 2, Appendix 2 of the Treasurer's Annual Statement, they will see that that amount is still to be paid.

The Minister has taken exception over the past seven months to complaints from community health service providers and the Opposition for failing to live up to his promises to deliver services to local communities. Let us consider the priority applied to community health funding in the Budget papers to set the record straight. We find a 16 per cent increase in funding for hospitals compared with a 3.5 per cent increase for community health. The numbers speak for themselves. The development of Queensland's community health infrastructure for future generations will not be delivered without a genuine retention of Labor's primary health care approach. The Government cannot expect to seriously take the pressure off our tertiary hospital facilities if primary health care services are not available to people in the communities where they live.

**Mr Hollis:** He refuses to answer questions on community health, also.

**Mrs EDMOND:** Absolutely.

Right throughout the Health budget papers one will see plenty of rhetoric about Labor's primary health care initiatives and community health but also an alarming number of poorly disguised references to cutbacks to non-Government organisations and community health service providers. Those are the very groups who provide services that help to keep people with common colds and non-acute health problems out of the outpatients in our public hospitals. Those are also the groups who have been calling on the Minister for months to at least guarantee their existing funding levels, and to come clean with his intentions.

This is at a time when the community health needs are increasing due to changing

medical practice and structures and indeed when the coalition Governments at both levels keep insisting that more services need to be provided by and in the community.

Increasing throughput of hospitals and early discharges has a lot of positive outcomes, but it means more than putting an elderly person into a cab and sending her or him home alone just to reduce the staffing needs at night at the hospital. Many community-based service providers and non-Government organisations will be closing up shop as a result of this Health budget. This is where Mrs Sheldon's half a billion dollars in savings have come from in Health—by cutting the most vulnerable out of the picture. There has been no protest from Mr Horan for hitting the most vulnerable and needy. One needs only to look at the current ward closures at Mt Olivet to identify the deceit behind the Health budget.

I would be interested to hear from the Minister about Queensland Health's contribution to the Treasurer's mysterious \$500m cuts across all portfolios. While he is at it, he might also like to explain how much has been taken out of the Health budget as a result of the coalition's efficiency dividend.

Mr Horan's \$10m allocation for dental health in this Budget also shows that the Minister knew full well about the Federal cuts to this program prior to Mr Costello's Federal Budget Statement in August, despite previously denying and feigning horror about it. It is simply unbelievable for this to have come as a total surprise. Mr Horan has not come up with one new idea in his long-awaited Health budget but rather modelled himself on programs initiated under the previous Labor Health Ministers by claiming them as his own. Many have been introduced into Parliament with all his usual anti-Labor diatribe without his even realising that the previous Minister, Mr Beattie, had signed the foreword.

As I said, Labor is pleased to see the retention of at least some Labor-initiated programs to reform the dreadful mess left behind in health by the Nationals in 1989. However, the incompetence played out by this Government on a daily basis, the Budget process being the most embarrassing example thus far, does not augur well for the proper implementation of important Labor initiatives. And by this, I refer to the coalition's decision to rename as its own Labor's 10-year Mental Health Plan and Labor's 10-year Hospital Rebuilding Plan. In light of the Government's ineptitude generally, it is

probably a good thing for Labor that these programs have been stolen and renamed.

Let us look at the hidden cuts: \$31m from the annual Health budget—actually an \$11m cut in the corporate services budget for Health and an additional \$15m cut in 1996-97—and the Health Promotion Council cut. I would just like to add that this cut is particularly ironic in light of the Minister's ministerial statement yesterday that emphasised the need for increasing health promotion work and in view of the way the Minister has leapt to take credit for its achievements. One would think that this sort of dedicated activity would have merited more than a dismissive, cursory note of this council's abolition and, instead, been defended.

Two hundred net staff positions are to go; 60 VERs, which are actually an expenditure, not a saving; district health service residential care—grants and subsidies cut due to reduction in grants to non-Government organisations, service providers, Meals on Wheels, Domicare, PACT—all gone and all cut.

I hope the Minister takes up the audit commission's recommendation to review the boundaries and geographical placement of his district health councils and to review the location and size of hospitals.

Time expired.

**Mr HOLLIS** (Redcliffe) (4.53 p.m.) I rise to speak in this Budget debate with a sense of outrage. Last night, I arrived home and picked up my local paper and saw a wonderful, full-page advertisement stating—

"What the 'Back to Basics Budgets' means to Queensland. Increased services, NO increase in average tax per person."

Firstly, in this place, the Treasurer has never explained what an average tax per person is. Secondly, she has not explained all the increases in tax. Today, we have heard so much about the "seven deadly taxes". Of course, those seven deadly taxes will affect an electorate such as mine, one in which there are people on low incomes. When Governments put an extra \$3 on each tyre that people will buy, an extra 10c on each litre of oil that people will buy, and when it charges them to go into national parks with their families—and these are low-income families—it affects people very deeply. As the Leader of the Opposition said earlier this week, the increases in this Budget could cost an extra \$800 per family a year. When people are on an income that is lower than the average—in



fact, in some cases, it is almost on the poverty line—those increases mean that they will be deprived of the basic necessities of life.

I wonder what is going to happen to my constituents who live on Moreton Island in relation to the environment tax, or the national park tax and the ludicrous way in which it is going to be imposed. How is the Government going to tell those people who live in Bulwer and Cowan Cowan and at the squatters camp up in the north area how they have to pay their fees to enter the national park as, each morning, they step across the line into that national park? Firstly, one wonders why the Government would impose such a tax. Why would it want to tax people to enter what is rightfully theirs? Secondly, why would the Government want to tax people because of where they live?

I guarantee that farmers in the bush who live near a stretch of national park will not be too worried about paying that three bucks every time they go into the national park. The same should apply to those people who live in the areas close to the more populated areas of Brisbane. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition also made that smart comment about the beach at Alexandria Bay at Noosa. He is quite right when he says that, in relation to that area, imposing that tax is ludicrous.

However, that tax is another revenue-raising method of this Government. But for what? When I find out what has happened in my area over the last six months and what will possibly happen in the next six months to a year—if the coalition remains in power for that long—I wonder about the Sheldon freeze, about which I have asked questions in this House. Day in, day out, I wonder how members opposite could state in this House that there is no freeze. I refer to public housing in my electorate. Over the last six months or seven months, nothing has happened. Not one building has commenced.

**Mr Palaszczuk** interjected.

**Mr HOLLIS:** I say to Mr Palaszczuk that I will come to maintenance in a moment. When I have asked the Housing Minister a question, he answers, "Everything will be revealed after the Budget. We will tell you what you are going to get in 1996-97." Of course, the Budget papers are so fudged that it would be impossible to know exactly what we are going to get.

Mr Palaszczuk, the member for Inala, referred to maintenance. Over the last six months, maintenance on public housing has come to a complete halt. We have pensioners

living in those pathetic dogboxes that members opposite built before 1989—the little two-roomed areas with no separation between the bedroom and the lounge.

**Mr Fouras:** Which we have been fixing for the last seven years.

**Mr HOLLIS:** Which the Labor Government had fixed during that time. When a person moves into one of those units and asks for a concertina screen to separate the living area from the bedroom area, and that person is told, "There is no money in the maintenance fund", one wonders what has happened to the money during that time. I think that we all know what has happened; it has all been revealed in that Budget. The Government has been salting away the dollars. It has been putting the dollars in a big bin and saying, "We can say to the people, 'We are going to give you all the services. We are going to look after you now because we are now the Government.' " The coalition is really spending the money that the Labor Party had by which it could give people decent living conditions in public housing and more of those people who are on the waiting lists an opportunity to be housed in a decent manner. However, over the last six months, all the Government has done is deny those people those opportunities so that today it could put out an advertisement which states—

"NO increase in average tax per person."

Government members should be absolutely ashamed and horrified to read that advertisement in their local papers, which refers to what the Government is doing for Queensland. For seven months, the Government has deprived decent Queenslanders of what they should be entitled to.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** The Government has flicked the hospital pass.

**Mr HOLLIS:** The hospital pass is a good one. I now turn to the health needs of my electorate.

**Mr Carroll:** What a team!

**Mr HOLLIS:** What a team! I refer to the redevelopment of the Redcliffe Hospital which, had the Labor Party still been in Government, would have commenced. The tenders would have been let and work would have commenced at that hospital. Instead, what do we get from this Government? We get a \$1.5m promise. This Government does not do too badly—instead of the \$11m that the former Government promised, it is saying that we will have \$30m.

It is easy to win Government from a shaky position by saying, "We promise the world. We won't give you \$11m; we'll give you \$30m so perhaps you will vote for us next time." That stands out like the beacon on Moreton Island. The Government is promising the world in a big-spending Budget and it is hoping that people will forget the nasty things it has done. The Government is hoping that people will forget the last seven months, the MOU, the Carruthers inquiry and so on. That is as plain as night and day.

When in Government, we allocated \$3m for a TAFE to be built at Klinger Road in Redcliffe. Prior to the 1995 election, the Treasurer visited Redcliffe to support the Liberal candidate. She said, "We will give \$3m for the same college on the same site." Of course, I was quite taken with that, because all parties—National, Liberal and Labor—were guaranteeing a \$3m TAFE for Redcliffe. If we had stayed in Government, a \$3m TAFE would have been built on that site. However, in the Budget papers only \$1.7m has been allocated. We have received half a TAFE. Just as the Government builds half a road, it builds half TAFEs. When Labor returns to Government, we will rectify that.

The Government fought hard on the issue of police, not only in the July election of 1995 but also in the Mundingburra by-election. I saw the trailers going around Mundingburra and heard all the hoo-ha about crime. As we all know, regardless of which side of the House we may be on, once an election has been called everybody gets onto crime. It is amazing how crime increases in the two months leading up to an election!

**Mr Palaszczuk:** And it sends the wrong signals.

**Mr HOLLIS:** It sends the wrong signals, that is quite right. Unfortunately, we end up with a police auction. I am not talking about the auctioning of cars, but the auctioning of police numbers. I have been in this House day after day, year after year, and I have heard members on both sides of this House auctioning police numbers. Sometimes it sounds like a kindergarten—"I am going to put 130 in"; "I'll put 150 in"; "But you haven't kept your promise"; "And you haven't kept yours." And on it goes. As I have said in the Address in Reply debate, we never talk about the effectiveness and the management of police. As legislators and managers, we are falling down in our responsibility to the State of Queensland. That is where I believe any future Minister should direct his attention.

A few weeks ago during the juvenile justice debate, I was intrigued at the speech of the honourable member for Thuringowa. Members might recall that in that speech the member said that there is now a lack of community confidence about whether the police can provide the services that they are employed to provide. I thought that that speech was one of the best speeches ever made in this House, because the member said exactly what all members' constituents are saying to us every day of the week—there is a lack of confidence that the police can provide the services that we need. I have thought about that statement for some time and today I wish to talk about why that is the case. From memory, Mr McElligott said that the community perceives policemen to be people who drive past in cars and do not take any notice of what is going on in the community.

Over the past few years, two Redcliffe officers, Inspector Behm and Inspector Griggs, have started to take the idea of community policing very seriously. They were limited only by their own ability to get out into the community and do things. When they first started to look at community policing, they attended every function held in the community, they visited schools and they ensured that they were a part of the community rather than just spending their time sitting in an office at police headquarters. People have said to me, "I've never really met a senior policeman before and I've never really had the time to talk to one but, gee, it is good to talk to these guys. Now I feel like I can go to them and talk about my problems."

A few weeks ago, the member for Keppel, Vince Lester, and I went to Toowoomba to look at the Police Beat Program. That program has been running for three and a half years. That was one of the most enlightening days that I have spent, because we were able to talk to the police, including senior police officers, residents and shopkeepers. That trip confirmed my opinion that what we have been doing for many years is going wrong. When we say that we need more police on the streets, we are really asking for more policemen to drive around in cars. We should be ensuring that the Police Service is a part of the community. If there is an example of how things can work, Toowoomba is that example.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Mr Hollis, could I offer an invitation to yourself and the honourable member for Keppel, and any other members who would like to, to visit Inala. We have the first community police network established in the State.

**Mr HOLLIS:** We will most certainly take up that offer. The other interesting fact about the situation in Toowoomba is that the police officer is known in the community by his first name, Henry. In three and a half years, Henry has had to call for backup only once. That destroys the Police Union's claim that police should not be on their own. In three and a half years he has never worn a gun or carried a set of handcuffs.

**Mr FitzGerald:** How many thugs has he caught?

**Mr HOLLIS:** I will come to that point. As I think the honourable member for Toowoomba would agree, the interesting thing is that part of Henry's beat is one the roughest parts of Toowoomba. It is not the most salubrious area. This man patrols the area and he has got to know all the people—all the young offenders, all the older offenders, all the drunks. He knows when people move into the area. He knows the shopkeepers.

**Mr Healy:** He spends a lot of time in the schools.

**Mr HOLLIS:** That was my next point. Henry has become part of the community. Henry and his family attend the local church, so they are known among the church group, his wife attends the women's groups and his children attend the local schools. He attends the local schools also, because he feels that that is a part of being involved in the community. In the past three and a half years, Henry has not made a lot of arrests because he does not need to. He can walk into a driveway and see a car that is in need of repair and is unroadworthy. He will knock on the owner's door and say, "I'm Henry. I don't think you should take your car out onto the road." That is pro-active policing and I think that that is where we are missing the point.

**Mr FitzGerald:** Does he give warnings to speeding motorists?

**Mr HOLLIS:** He does. I am glad to see that the Minister for Police is in the House. I know that the Police Minister is a great supporter of the Police Beat Program and that he is listening to me.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** And taking notes.

**Mr HOLLIS:** And taking notes. I say, very sincerely, that we should not continue with the police auction. At some point we have to do something about police, about crime and about social behaviour. The only way we are going to do anything about any of those matters is to have a Police Service which is responsive to the community, which is known to the community, and which is pro-active in its

role so that it prevents crime rather than chases criminals after the crime is committed. Therefore, I am pleased that the Minister is here today. I know he is a great supporter of the program. I have also lobbied Dr Brereton of the CJC to initiate a whole-of-city operation in Redcliffe. I thought it would be a wonderful chance for the Police Minister to see whether, instead of trialling it in two or three areas, it could work for the whole city. A self-contained city such as Redcliffe—I am sure the Minister agrees; he is nodding his head—would be a perfect trial area for a Police Beat Program. I thank the Minister very much for his support. I appreciate that. At this stage, I know there is not much money in the Budget for community policing, but I am sure the Minister could divert money for the Police Beat Program from some of the not so vital areas.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Sir Max Bingham in his report recommended community policing.

**Mr HOLLIS:** Yes, he did. I was just going to refer to that.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** And single police officer patrols as well.

**Mr HOLLIS:** I was going to refer to that in the couple of minutes I have left. I have in front of me the Bingham report—the bible of members opposite. Recommendation 138 states that the committee recommends that the commissioner allocate funds specifically for appropriately sited beat policing projects. I commend that wonderful recommendation.

Still on the subject of police—I wish to raise the issue of having two officers per car attending cold crime scenes, for example, burglary scenes. Over the past two years, I have been the unfortunate victim of two burglaries. I have arrived home to find my doors open and everything gone. Generally, the police take about 40 minutes to an hour to respond. That is fair enough, because in such cases there is nobody around for them to catch. On both occasions, two officers have turned up in a car and spent 40 or 50 minutes at the scene taking particulars. That really is ludicrous. The recommendation for single-officer investigation units makes sense. In many cases, the particulars of robberies could be taken even by a civilian. There is not much that the police can do after such a crime has been committed.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Besides interviewing the victim, there should always be follow-up, because that is the best public relations the police can do.

**Mr HOLLIS:** I thank the honourable member for reminding me of something I left

out of my comments with respect to the Police Beat Program. Importantly, every time there is an offence and anything happens to people, the Toowoomba Police Beat officers follow it up within a reasonable time to let victims know what has happened. In respect of both burglaries of my property—one 18 months ago and the other four months ago—I have not heard any more from the police about, for example, whether they have caught anybody, whether they expect to catch anybody, or whether the case is closed. There is a great case for follow-ups. That may be a part of the service that is missing. We changed the name "Police Force" to "Police Service". The police have a duty to serve the public, just as we as parliamentarians do.

**Mr Lester:** They did appreciate the fact that we went up and had a look as well.

**Mr HOLLIS:** The honourable member made the point that those officers appreciated the fact that we took the time to look at their project, to see that it was working effectively, and that we took an interest in what they are doing. I am sure that, if each member of this House did so, the service would improve.

**Mr MITCHELL** (Charters Towers) (5.13 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak to Appropriation Bill (No. 2) and to congratulate the Treasurer on bringing down a back to basics Budget which will benefit all Queenslanders. The Budget provides for more efficient delivery of essential services, infrastructure for economic and population growth, reduction in excessive bureaucracy, a huge focus on outcomes, not processes, with the savings going back into core services.

By spreading the taxpayers' dollar further, the coalition's first Budget enhances the preservation of the State's assets and improves the standard of living and quality of life for all Queenslanders. In doing so, it will repair most of the damage inflicted by the former Labor Government over the past six years. My theme for the Budget is "back to the bush". This Budget is just another example of this Government's commitment to rural, remote and regional Queensland.

I wish to outline some of the funding initiatives contained in the Budget for the electorate of Charters Towers. Education has been high on the list, with the Charters Towers electorate being allocated \$1.53m for capital works from the record \$333m capital works allocation. The schools that will benefit are as follows: Charters Towers State High School, \$640,000; Clermont State High School, \$110,000; Moranbah State High School, \$150,000 for the construction of the long-

awaited—over four years—manual arts construction court; Hughenden State High School, \$170,000; Millchester State School, \$25,000; Charters Towers Central School, \$106,198 for completion of the school oval; Richmond Hill State School, \$185,000; and Prairie State School, \$150,000. I am very grateful for that funding. It has been a good many years since any capital works have been done on a lot of our schools. At least this Government is now moving to bring them up to scratch.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Is that right?

**Mr MITCHELL:** Yes, it is right. Over the past four years, no money has been spent on any of those schools. Opposition members cannot tell us anything about the bush. It took them three years to wake up to the fact that there was a drought. Industries were more or less destroyed before members opposite did anything about it. They cannot tell me anything about what they did in rural areas.

The Government recognises the importance of education, and the Minister, Bob Quinn, has responded in this Budget to our local requests for the much-needed improvement of facilities. Students in our communities will be the big winners in this record Budget allocation. Our students will benefit from the additional literacy and numeracy initiatives, the program to upgrade computers in schools, the additional staff being allocated to assist students with disabilities, the new behaviour management program, which is a great plus for schools, and the additional funds going towards higher education. The incentives for teachers will be tripled over the next two years. The previous Labor Government did nothing to assist the teachers transferred to rural and remote Queensland. It has been left to this Government to fix up that area. No final details will be announced until after the Queensland Teachers Union has been fully consulted.

**Mr McGrady:** What you just said is not true, and you know it's not true.

**Mr MITCHELL:** Not enough has been done for them. They are asking for a lot more. We are starting to put those improved incentives in place. Some 2,500 teachers will benefit once this scheme is implemented.

I turn to the appropriations for Queensland Health. I commend the Government, and its Health Minister, Mike Horan, for returning the Health budget to the basics, in particular, back to sound, solid hospital services. Tuesday's \$312m increase brought total health outlays to \$3.02 billion, an increase which has confirmed the coalition's

commitment to getting the Queensland health system right. The additional \$312m will be allocated entirely to basic priority services, including hospitals, mental health, community and public health. The failure of regionalisation, with its burgeoning administrative budgets, endless committees and jet-setting bureaucrats, has gone. In fact, patients are back in the air, with initiatives such as the new \$1.5m Royal Flying Doctor Service based in Townsville. Clinicians are back in the air, with funding boosts such as \$15,000 for the Flying Surgeon Program. Both of those initiatives will bring real benefits to many of the electors of Charters Towers. Queensland hospitals have been given the lion's share of these increases. An extra \$278m will bring total hospital outlays to \$2.05 billion this year. This will provide new jobs for 540 nurses and some 80 doctors.

Rural cities such as Charters Towers and rural communities have emerged from six years of neglect by Labor Ministers, including the new Leaders of the Opposition, Messrs Beattie and Elder. The Charters Towers district will receive an additional \$1,118,599 this financial year, in spite of Commonwealth cuts of \$286,354. In particular, the coalition should be commended for its decision to make good a cut of \$53,042, thus saving the former Commonwealth Dental Health Program from the axe. This means that the coalition Dental Health Program will deliver its full \$90,000 Charters Towers district service in 1996-97.

Funding dentists was not the only oral health issue left unresolved when Messrs Beattie and Elder scurried for the doors of 147 Charlotte Street back in February. An additional package of \$470,000 per annum had also been provided in the Health budget to instigate a Rural Incentive Program. That program will aim to attract dentists to practise in rural and remote areas. It will improve salary and other benefits, including motor vehicle, accommodation and additional leave benefits. It will provide a major boost to staff recruitment and retention, particularly in rural and remote Queensland.

At the last State election, we promised to get back to basics. This Health budget repays the confidence of the majority of Queenslanders who, at that time, demanded a massive improvement in the public hospital system. In addition, the new Clermont Hospital has been allocated \$105,000 to complete the planning and calling of contracts. That is part of a \$6m project over the next six years.

Transport is another area about which I must commend the Minister, the Honourable

Vaughan Johnson, for recognising the need for increased infrastructure funding in rural Queensland. Local councils and the Railway Department are the main work force bases in rural towns, and the boost in funding for roadworks and railway upgrading will enhance the level of employment and may increase employment in some areas. The much-discussed Hughenden-Winton road has received an allocation of \$2.7m out of a \$27m program. There is a further \$4.2m to upgrade and widen the Flinders Highway. The Clermont-Charter Towers section of the Gregory Development Road will see the remaining bitumen and bridges completed with the \$6m allocated in the Budget. The Peak Downs Highway receives \$2.76m for widening and overlay. An extra \$40m has been earmarked for further work on regional and rural roads. The Mount Isa-Townsville rail line has had a major injection of funds to the tune of \$24.6m. There will be a \$7.7m upgrade from Hughenden to Maxwellton, and ongoing work on Stage 3 of the upgrade will be possible through a \$16.2m injection. Funding of \$25.4m is also provided for railway minerals projects.

The Minister for Emergency Services and Sport has thrown his weight behind the plight of people and his officers who work and live in rural and remote Queensland. I have spoken this week on his achievements with regard to people in these areas. These include incentive schemes for QAS officers, wage increases for QFS officers, increased training across the State and new four-wheel-drive ambulances for Capella, Clermont, Hughenden and Julia Creek.

The Queensland coalition Government's Budget represents a tremendous show of support for this State's valuable beef industry. The Queensland beef industry has endured up to five and six years of drought in some areas and a significant drop in returns as a result of low beef prices. Despite this, the industry still managed to contribute \$1.221 billion to the Queensland economy in 1995-96, not to mention the flow-on benefits in nearly all of regional Queensland.

The coalition Government recognises the value of Queensland's great beef industry and has acknowledged its support in the 1996-97 Budget. With the industry still in the grip of drought in many areas and prices only steadily recovering, we consider it essential that the level of service to beef producers all over the State be increased. The DPI's beef budget for 1996-97 has been increased from the previous year by almost \$1m to just over \$31m. This represents a real turnaround on

the continual and savage erosion of the DPI budget under Labor. As part of this year's budget, the Minister for Primary Industries, the Honourable Trevor Perrett, has announced the creation of three new extension officer positions with an investment of \$163,000 to boost frontline service to the beef industry. These officers are being appointed to Mount Isa, Bowen and Rockhampton—locations which we believe will increase the level of service to areas where the need is greatest and there is the greatest opportunity for benefit.

Industry endorses our view that it is crucial that there are sufficient frontline staff to ensure that the results of research and development are widely distributed and adopted by producers as soon as possible. This research and development must be relevant to the needs of industry, and the Minister for Primary Industries is ensuring this through the creation of a partnership with industry. A key component of this is the development of the Beef Industry Institute, which has significant producer involvement and will ensure that the DPI's research and extension is tailored to industry needs.

Additionally, Minister Perrett has formed the Beef Industry Development Advisory Council to advise both the industry and himself on ways to enhance industry development and remove impediments to development. This council will be supported by the Live Cattle Export Advisory Committee, which will allow Government and industry to work together to further develop and promote Queensland's booming live cattle export trade. The creation of new jobs, the Beef Industry Institute, the Beef Industry Development Advisory Council and the Live Cattle Export Advisory Committee are just some examples of how the coalition Government is working with industry for the benefit of Queensland. I must remind members that this is in stark contrast to Labor's style of government, which sought to cripple industries like the beef industry with regulation, red tape and rebuff.

I could go on for ages and go right across the departments—

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Keep going.

**Mr MITCHELL:** We want to get out of here some time tonight! There are many more initiatives across-the-board, including the water infrastructure programs that are coming on board over the coming year and a program set down for the next 10 years to provide funding for water and sewerage infrastructure to all local councils. This all means a boost to staffing levels in rural areas. I want to thank all

Ministers for their commitment to and their understanding of the plight of rural Queensland, especially the electorate of Charters Towers.

In conclusion—I look forward to hosting Cabinet in Charters Towers on Monday, 16 September. I welcome that visit by the Ministers and their staff to my electorate. On that note, I support the Government's Budget.

**Hon. T. McGRADY** (Mount Isa) (5.26 p.m.): I have been a member of this Parliament for seven years. I venture to suggest that there would not be a nicer person on the Government side of the Chamber than the member for Charters Towers. He is one of the decent blokes. The sad thing is that when the Minister's office writes a speech for him, there is an awful lot in it which is totally and utterly untrue. That goes right against his character, because he does not normally tell lies and he does not normally speak ill of people. When he delivers a prepared speech, we are not seeing the real member for Charters Towers.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** He was more nasty this evening than he ever has been.

**Mr McGRADY:** That is right.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** And it's not his style.

**Mr McGRADY:** It is not his style; it is not his speech.

I am delighted to participate in this Budget debate, both in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Mines and Energy and Regional Development and also as the member for Mount Isa—an electorate which covers 240,000 square kilometres and which takes in the City of Mount Isa, goes up north to Mornington Island, down south to Boulia and across to Cloncurry and takes in all of the small communities in that district.

At the outset, I express my disappointment at the Budget, for I believed that there was a golden opportunity here for the Government to show some vision, to show some initiative and to show some decent spirit. Yet this Budget can only be described as one of broken promises, hidden cutbacks, extra taxes, but saddest of all, a Budget of lost opportunities. For six years, I sat on the Government side of this Chamber, and year after year I heard criticism from the then Opposition about the lack of incentives for the mining and energy industries.

All jokes aside, our Government had a proud record in the field of mining. In our few short years, we set up a fair royalty regime. Under the old National and Liberal Party Governments, the mining industry was the

milking cow for the Treasury in this State. We had rail freights which everybody admitted were simply a de facto form of taxation, a de facto royalty system. We brought in a fair royalty regime. We introduced fair and competitive rail freights, particularly for the coal mining industry. We opened up huge tracts of land, resulting in 12 new coal mines. That provided many, many jobs and facilitated investment in our State. We set up the plans for gas pipelines across the State. One of the most important initiatives we introduced was the rebate in royalties for those mining companies which value-added. Those are just some of the initiatives which our Government introduced. In the Budget we are discussing today, there are no incentives and no initiatives for the mining industry.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** No vision.

**Mr McGRADY:** There is no vision. It reminds me of the old quotation of Mr Menzies about a passing glance: "I did but see her passing by, and I will love her till I die."

Government members do not mind standing up and making fine speeches and they do not mind going out to the mining towns and taking credit, but this Government bleeds the industry, bleeds the people who work in it and gives nothing at all back. This Government does not mind riding on the back of the mining industry, and it does not mind going to Japan and other places and talking about the importance of the industry, but it offers it no incentives and it has no vision at all. That is the sad thing.

As I have said before many times, the mining industry and the energy industry are the veins which run through this State, carrying the wealth and the prosperity, yet in this Budget they get nothing at all. The member for Charters Towers talked about the money being spent on the Mount Isa to Townsville railway line. That was already in the pipeline. The Government should be investing in this railway line because it is carrying the wealth from the Carpentaria/Mount Isa mineral province out to the coast and overseas. It is one of the most important rail lines in this State.

One of the last decisions the Labor Cabinet made was that the proceeds of the sale of the State owned gas pipeline would go towards upgrading the Mount Isa to Townsville railway. On two occasions in this Parliament, I asked the Treasurer to confirm that those moneys would still be allocated there and on two occasions she refused to answer me. I see nothing in the Budget to say that those

proceeds, after the paying back of the debt, will go towards that rail line. Government members have the hide to stand up in this place and say that they are spending \$24m. For heaven's sake, that is a mere pittance compared with the value of the freights which that line covers.

I spoke a few moments ago about the initiatives and the vision which this Government does not have but which the Labor Government had. One of the greatest success stories in this State was the Carpentaria/Mount Isa mineral province. I will keep on talking about this because it was our initiative. We called together the various Governments—the Northern Territory Government, the Federal Government, the Queensland Government—and those companies which had an interest in the area. This province covers an area the size of France. We set up these workshops and the task forces, and today we have an area in north-west Queensland where there is going to be an investment of some \$2.5 billion. There is the prospect of some 6,000 new jobs and there are exports to the value of \$30 billion. That is all part of the vision that the Goss Labor Government had for this State and it is coming to fruition.

There is no vision in this Budget. This Government is riding on the back of the policies that the Labor Party put in place and on the visions that we had. At a time when we are calling out for vision, we see the Treasurer of this State almost steal \$200m for the road in her backyard. It is a pity that the member for Maroochydore is not here, because she would be on her feet. The Government just abolished the toll on that road. I am talking about a rail line which is carrying the wealth from the north-west province right across to the coast. I see that the member for Maroochydore is here after all; she was asleep. I am sorry I woke her up.

**Mrs Gamin:** No, our conversation was more interesting.

**Mr McGRADY:** Even the member for Burleigh, a lady who was raised in the mining industry, has forgotten her roots. She has forgotten the mining industry. Her father would have a fit if he saw her talking to her neighbour instead of participating in the debate about the mining industry.

**Mrs Gamin:** I think he would be more upset to hear some of the things the member for Mount Isa says in this Chamber.

**Mr Hegarty:** No vision.

**Mr Harper:** Clouded vision.

**Mr McGRADY:** At least I have some vision; those opposite have none.

I have already mentioned Mornington Island, which is in the north of my electorate. The Labor Government set aside \$6m for a new hospital there. That funding has vanished. This Budget allocates a couple of hundred thousand dollars to start some work on it. As I said recently in this place, out of sight, out of mind. This Government simply does not care about the rest of the State. All it concentrates on is the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, the areas that the Premier and the Deputy Premier represent. I have said before, and I will keep on saying it as long as I have breath in my body, that it is the mining industry which produces and provides the revenue which this Treasurer and this Premier receive to enable them to have one of the highest spending Budgets of all time, yet precious little is returned to the industry or to the people who make up that industry.

I get most concerned about the lack of knowledge and the lack of action from the Government in relation to the energy side of this portfolio. As I said recently, I do not waste my time in this place criticising individuals, but the sad facts of life are that neither the director-general of the department nor the Minister really understand the energy issues facing Queensland today. We all remember the way that Government members, when in Opposition, attended public meetings and how they gave a commitment that when they were returned to office they would abolish the Eastlink plans. We all remember that when they came into office one of the first things they were going to do was abandon Eastlink. The crowds cheered and the backbenchers cheered. What happened? They said that they were going to pull out of Eastlink. Lo and behold, all the learned columnists, all the learned journalists, all the learned business people and all the learned Premiers from the other States cried in unison, "You're mad, you don't know what you are talking about."

Then those opposite attended all the business conferences, and the Premier attended a conference at the Sheraton and he told all the business people from all around the world that Queensland was in dire straits, that the lights were going to go out and that we did not have enough power to fuel industry. A few days later, what did the members opposite do? Like mongrel dogs, they said, "We were badly advised. We made a mistake. The lights will not go out. The lights will still burn in Queensland", but the damage had been done. What excuse did they give? They said that they had been badly advised.

They did not tell us the full story. The job of an adviser is to advise a Minister. It is up to the Minister and the Premier whether or not they accept that advice. Of course, the sad thing was that these two gentlemen accepted the advice and acted upon it, and it was wrong advice.

One of the sad things is that this Government is searching around—it does not know what to do—when it comes to energy. It just abolished the Office of Energy Management. What did the Minister say? He said that the electricity industry would take care of that. As he knows—or as he should know—and as we all know, the electricity industry's charter is to generate electricity and sell it. It is not in the business of trying to look for alternative forms of energy. It is in the business of generating power and selling it. The scheme and the policies which the Labor Party brought in were hailed right around this nation, right around the world. Queensland was leading the way. The day those 10 people were sacked and that office was closed down was a very sad day for Queensland.

Last night, members were discussing the privatisation of Telstra. A few weeks ago, we were discussing the privatisation of the electricity industry in this State. This Parliament made the decision, after a lengthy debate, that we did not believe that that industry should be privatised. Yet I ask honourable members to listen to what is said in a magazine's newsletter called *Electricity Week*. It states—

"AUSTA Electric will eventually be privatised, according to company CEO Mr Alan Gillespie. 'That's the way the market is developing', he told *Electricity Week*. 'Our job really is to increase the value of the organisation as much as we can'."

I have news for Mr Gillespie and I have news for this Government. This Opposition will fight, fight and fight again against any plans to privatise the electricity industry in this State. This industry has served Queensland well in the past and it will continue to serve Queensland well in the years to come. We are not going to stand by and allow these people to sell off the Crown jewels. Members sat here and listened to Government backbenchers—one after the other—saying, "It won't be privatised." Yet the chief executive officer of AUSTA Electric is saying, "We are building up the industry so we can sell it off." I give a warning: we will fight that tooth and nail, because we are not going to let this Government sell off an industry which has served Queensland well for many years.



When I was the relevant Minister, Keith De Lacy and I used to face criticism day in and day out about the way we were milking the electricity industry by way of dividends and moneys in lieu of tax. In this Budget, which was handed down on Tuesday, one would have expected the Treasurer to have reduced the amount of money taken from Government owned enterprises. But did she? Of course not! What did we find? The figure has increased from \$300m to \$699m. The Government is now using the electricity industry as a milking cow. Government members have the hide to sit there silently when, 12 months earlier, they were denouncing us for taking dividends. There is nothing at all wrong with Government owned enterprises paying dividends. The Government and the shareholders are entitled to dividends. But the hypocrisy of this Government is clear when, in one clean sweep, it doubles the amount of revenue that it is extracting from the electricity industry.

The Labor Party in Opposition has had time to sit back and observe where this Government has gone wrong. The Labor Party in Queensland recognises that the regional economies play a far greater role in Queensland than they do in any other State because Queensland is the most decentralised State. I would expect support from those members who represent regional areas. In this Cabinet we do not even have a Minister for Regional Development. When the Labor Party regains office, we will ensure that there is somebody in the Cabinet whose responsibility is to ensure that the regions develop. That is an important part of Government in this State. For everything that happens on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast or in the City of Brisbane, we have the regions out there that are playing a very valuable role. Under Labor we will give them the incentive and the initiative and allow them to use vision to make sure that Queensland starts to develop.

**Mrs Wilson:** Mining was dead when you were there.

**Mr McGRADY:** No. What happens when people become members of Parliament is that all the wisdom goes out the door.

**Mrs Wilson:** And Cloncurry's coming alive in the last two months.

**Mr McGRADY:** If the honourable member had listened before, she would know that I gave examples of some of the things we did to build up the mining industry in this State. People in the industry will tell her that the National and Liberal Parties used the

mining industry as a milking cow. If the honourable member has any fairness in her she would admit that, under six years of a Labor Government, more things happened in the mining industry than happened in the previous 30 years.

**Mrs Wilson:** I was listening.

**Mr McGRADY:** What is the member saying?

**Mrs Wilson:** I said like the Moura mine disaster.

**Mr McGRADY:** The member is a disgusting creature.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Laming):** Order! That term is unparliamentary.

**Mr McGRADY:** I withdraw it.

How dare the member refer to the disaster at Moura. She ought to be ashamed of herself. Queenslanders lost their lives at the Moura mine. That should not be a debating point. The member ought to be ashamed of herself.

**Mrs Wilson:** I talked to your ministerial adviser. You didn't stop that happening. You're a disgrace.

**Mr McGRADY:** The member is an absolute disgrace for raising that issue in the debate, trying to score cheap political points off the widows of decent Queenslanders.

Time expired.

**Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga)** (5.45 p.m.): In this contribution to the Budget debate, I shall deal with matters concerning the portfolios for which I have Opposition responsibility and then deal with some matters of direct concern to my electorate of Yeronga. The Budget with respect to the portfolio of Justice and Attorney-General indicates a theme whereby independent commissions are an endangered species under this Government.

If one examines the Justice budget, one sees a cut to the funds of the Criminal Justice Commission to the point at which that commission had indicated that there will have to be a cutback in the undertaking of its core responsibilities. Secondly, the Budget foreshadows the abolition of the Litigation Reform Commission. That body, which is concerned with the reform of court rules and procedures, has made a very valuable contribution towards the task of making justice speedier, more efficient and, hence, more accessible to ordinary Queenslanders.

The third commission which faces dangerous times ahead as a result of

budgetary considerations is the Anti-Discrimination Commission. It is true that, in the Budget, the allocation for that commission has had a modest increase in numerical terms. However, the savage reduction in support from the Commonwealth Government has put a question mark over the future of the commission. The Attorney-General and Minister for Justice has failed to give any assurance as to the long-term role and operation of the commission. Indeed, it has been mooted that that commission's functions may be required to be discharged through the registries of Magistrates Courts throughout the State. That would have the effect of dismantling the work of the Anti-Discrimination Commission and its important contribution to ensuring equality before the law in Queensland.

Fourthly, in the Justice budget we see the provision for the Office of the Local Government Commissioner, which operates in connection with the Electoral Commission. Again, we see the writing on the wall. An independent commission is being wound up because this Government's policy is not to tolerate the work of independent commissions. So if one looks at those four independent commissions, the Criminal Justice Commission, the Litigation Reform Commission, the Anti-Discrimination Commission and the Local Government Commissioner, and one looks at the budgetary provisions made for them, one sees a common pattern, namely, that their funds are being reduced or stopped altogether. That represents a dangerous trend in the administration of justice. It represents an intolerance on the part of this Government towards the proper functioning of independent commissions.

With respect to combating crime and corruption, the Criminal Justice Commission plays a vital role, and its independence is central to that role. With respect to the reform of court procedures, the Litigation Reform Commission plays a vital role. The abolition of that commission, which has been foreshadowed, will work to the detriment of all Queenslanders who seek cheaper and speedier access to justice. Those who believe in equality under the law will be profoundly saddened by the threats to the Anti-Discrimination Commission that loom on the horizon. Those who believe that we need a rational system of local government boundaries, a system that reflects the needs for planning in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries rather than the needs of the days of the gold rushes when many of the boundaries

were drawn up, will be profoundly disappointed with the Government's intentions with respect to the Local Government Commissioner. It is all part of a pattern, namely, a pattern whereby this Government has no understanding of and certainly no respect for the work to be done by independent commissions discharging their statutory responsibilities according to law.

I turn now to the area of the Arts portfolio. I join with the Minister for The Arts in commending the organisers of the Brisbane Festival. It has been a great success and I repeat my earlier commendation of the Arts Minister for continuing the support initiated by the Labor Government for the establishment of that Brisbane Festival. The organisers of the festival deserve the congratulations of all members of this House for helping to make such a great contribution to the cultural and artistic life of this State.

It has been disappointing, though, that throughout regional Queensland artists and cultural groups have found yet again that this Government has failed to show the commitment needed to regional arts. Under the Labor Government, the capital base of that fund was committed at \$15m, having been raised from \$10m following a review in 1994-95. However, the current Government froze payments that were to be notified in May and June of this year, and has now established a capital base in the order of \$12m. It has sought to peddle the argument throughout regional Queensland that this is an increase over the previous sum of \$10m. In so doing, it blithely ignores the commitment of the Labor Government to an increased capital base of \$15m, and it blithely ignores the basis upon which negotiations were undertaken with the many local government councils that worked hard and long to plan for regional arts initiatives in their local areas, confident in the belief that the capital base would be \$15m for the round of grants to be distributed several months ago.

Those regional artists and local government councils have been disappointed by the actions of this Government. One can only hope that, in due course, the Government will see sense and increase the capital base of the fund at least to the level to which the Labor Government was committed. It has been disturbing also to note the cuts in the Arts budget to the Queensland Art Gallery, the Queensland Museum and the Queensland Performing Arts Trust.

I turn to aspects affecting the electorate of Yeronga and, in particular, to provisions in

the Budget for transport infrastructure. The citizens of the Yeronga electorate already bear a heavy burden of rail and road traffic through their suburbs. That brings with it attendant problems of noise, loss of amenity and the division of local communities by transport corridors. It has therefore been doubly disturbing to note the proposal set out in the current newsletter of the South-West Brisbane Chamber of Commerce, which I table, which indicates the views expressed by Councillor Bob Mills, Leader of the Liberal Opposition in the Brisbane City Council, when talking to the Chamber in August. The newsletter recounts a number of points made by Councillor Mills in his address to the Chamber. Included in the points that are reported as having been made by Councillor Mills is this point, which will be very disturbing to many Brisbane residents—

"More bridges across the Brisbane River are needed."

That proposal from Councillor Mills, the person who would be the Lord Mayor of this city, the Leader of the Liberal Opposition in the Brisbane City Council, is one that causes me a great deal of concern. I call on Councillor Mills to clarify his remarks with respect to the need for more bridges across the Brisbane River. In particular, I call on Councillor Mills to make it perfectly clear that no bridges should be built in the areas of Fairfield, Yeronga, Tennyson or neighbouring suburbs. There is already a very heavy burden of traffic and consequent disruption upon the residents of those riverside suburbs, and the suggestion has been mooted in years past that there be a bridge across the Brisbane River between the University of Queensland and the area of Fairfield or Yeronga.

I had hoped that that proposal was well and truly in the dustbin of history. However, it is of the utmost importance to my constituents that Councillor Mills, having put on the political agenda in this way the need for more bridges across the Brisbane River, come forth immediately and rule out any bridges in that area of the Brisbane River. The inner suburbs of Brisbane are not merely conduits through which road and rail traffic passes. The inner suburbs of Brisbane are home to many thousands of Queenslanders. They want a livable environment in which to go about their family life and a livable environment in which to raise children.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.

**Mr HEGARTY** (Redlands) (7.30 p.m.): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to take part in this Budget debate. I would like to place on record my congratulations and

admiration to the Treasurer on fulfilling a very difficult task in bringing down this Budget. Indeed, she is to be commended for overcoming the difficulties that this Government experienced in facing an unexpected shortfall in revenue as a result of the inheritance that it received from the now Opposition and the shortfall in Federal Government funding which, as everyone knows, was short of expectations. It is common knowledge that Queensland derives just under 40 per cent of its total income by way of Federal assistance grants.

After listening to the debate so far, I know that members opposite have made a number of points. Although some of those points were very interesting and illuminating, I cannot help seizing upon a couple of them, particularly those made by the Opposition Leader. Basically, he said that no Government could have inherited a better financial position than was inherited by this Government from the Labor Party. That is fine if one sets the bar low and the Opposition wants to compare its Government with the cot-case Governments of Victoria and South Australia. In those States, the conservative Governments inherited a huge financial disaster. However, we in this State have never been in that position through 30 years of coalition Government prior to the Labor Party taking over. Perhaps the Opposition Leader should reflect on the State's financial position that the Labor Party inherited in 1989. Just in case the Opposition Leader has a short or selective memory, I will remind him that at that time when the Labor Party took over Treasury had almost \$1 billion. Of course, that is not counting the fully funded superannuation schemes that the conservative Government put in place which, as has been pointed out, are still in good in order.

Nevertheless, the shadow Treasurer highlighted the fact that, during the term of the Labor Government, there was no raiding of trust funds or selling off of the family silver. Those comments started to alarm me because, being a trusting sort of person, I thought that I may have been getting the wrong impression. So I made a couple of inquiries and, lo and behold, I found out that things were not quite the way the Opposition has projected them to be. Apparently in 1991 the then Government, which is now in Opposition, raided \$101m from the Auctioneers and Land Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund. During 1991-92, the then Government extracted a \$43.6m grab from that fund. Then during 1992-93, the then Government took another \$16.4m from that

fund. Perhaps by that time there was little left in the fund. However, undaunted, in 1994-95 the then Government managed to extract another projected \$15.1m. So we are assuming that there is not very much left in that fund.

**Mr Rowell:** It was a milch cow.

**Mr HEGARTY:** I take that interjection from the member for Hinchinbrook. At the time, he was a member of this place and he would have seen the rorting that went on.

I have not even mentioned the ambulance boards. For many years, those boards very earnestly put together funds but when the then Government restructured those boards, those funds were extracted. Of course, the Nominal Defendant Fund was another one. So when members opposite start talking about raiding funds, accountability and the great financial position that this Government inherited, perhaps they should reflect on their own history over the past six and a half years.

**Mr Santoro** interjected.

**Mr HEGARTY:** As the member for Clayfield, the Honourable Minister for Training and Industrial Relations, just reminded me, members opposite did not even mention the Workers Compensation Fund. Of course, they failed to recognise the need to address the fiscal imbalance of that fund. They left it in a potential deficit situation of \$400m. That is a difficult matter for any Treasurer or any Minister coming into that respective portfolio to address.

It is always hard for a party to come into Government and have to raise taxes. With the best of intentions, this Government, when in Opposition, believed that the financial position of Queensland was other than what it actually is. In Government, it now realises the true situation. Like any good housekeeper—and I relate this to a basic housekeeping budget or being in business—when suddenly one finds that things are not the way one planned, one has to take action. One can choose to take a couple of options. One can borrow against one's assets. This is where the net debt situation comes in. I will relate this situation to the simplistic situation of a net debt free household. Generally speaking, we all start off in life with little by way of assets. Usually, we accumulate assets by borrowing and, by borrowing at the right time and paying off the interest on our debts, we eventually achieve a net gain. I draw the simple analogy of paying off the mortgage on one's house. That is what the former Treasurer, the member for Cairns, did: he used the net asset base of the

State—and we recognise that we have a good asset—but he offset the borrowings against that. If one does that, eventually one's borrowings will exceed the net worth of one's assets.

**Mrs Bird:** Rubbish!

**Mr HEGARTY:** Of course it will. The member should see what happens if she keeps refinancing the borrowings on her house. Soon she will owe more than her house is worth. Basically, that is the situation that the coalition had to face when it came to Government.

Today, many Opposition members have raised the issue of the carryover of funds. That was rather curious. I thought, "Maybe they did not do that. Maybe they just got all their accounting right, spent the money that they allocated in each Budget and then reintroduced new funds as each year went on." However, near my electorate we had the saga of the Cleveland Court House. I will touch on that matter shortly. However, in my research I found that in the 1992-93 Budget \$600,000 was allocated for the Bundaberg Court House—another similar situation. The then Government promised that construction would commence in 1993-94 and that the project would be completed in 1994-95. Surprise, surprise, here we are in September 1996—only six months in Government—and when the coalition took over earlier this year not a sod of soil had been turned. Of course, the saga is similar in relation to a number of projects throughout the State. Another project that I came across in my research was the Cunnamulla Aboriginal Health Centre. Five years ago, it was allocated \$718m. Of course, that is just another vision, too.

Having addressed some of the misconceptions put forward by members opposite, I would now like to highlight the positive sides to the Budget, that is, the Government's fiscal plans to keep taxes low, fully fund contingent liabilities such as the workers' compensation scheme and the superannuation fund for public servants, which I have touched upon already, and also not to borrow for recurrent expenditure. Those are the things that we have to bear in mind because, as I said before, in our daily lives we can all borrow against assets as long as those assets are funding the debt and we have the capacity to repay. Another aspect of this matter is to restrict borrowings on infrastructure projects that are not able to service that debt.

A few positives came out of the Budget that I would like to touch upon: the \$733m boost to the 10-year Hospital Rebuilding Plan,

which I will touch on a bit more shortly; the \$400m upgrade of the Pacific Highway; \$105m to Corrective Services; \$70m as part of the \$100 billion investment in water infrastructure; \$40.8m in water infrastructure to support the development of the sugar industry on the Atherton Tableland—a very important industry for this State; \$40m for regional road development; \$38.1m for new rail infrastructure; and a further \$26m for police capital works, including major works to the Brisbane City Watch-house.

One area of interest highlighted by the Opposition today, which I found a little bit curious, was unemployment. Everyone abhors the prospect of anybody being unemployed, especially the young. I have reflected upon the subject, and I can remember an unemployment figure of over 11 per cent during the Labor Party's tenure of Government between 1989 and earlier in 1996. In the Budget Estimates we have highlighted the fact that, because of this very positive Budget in which money will be allocated to infrastructure development and job creation, a potential 44,072 jobs could be created because of the money that will be spent on various projects in areas such as law and order, education, health, social welfare, housing and transport, just to name a few of the larger ones, and not forgetting the mining, energy and electricity areas.

The Government has been very pro-active on the law and order issue. Earlier this year, a new police station was opened in the Redlands electorate. I pay credit to the Opposition, because it allocated the money in last year's Budget—a little belatedly, but it came good. I would not want to be cynical and say that it was an election year! The land had been allocated by the National Party Government in the eighties, and eventually the rest of the money came through. The people of Redlands are very pleased about the opening of the new police station, because the area is growing. In addition, the Police Minister has allocated \$20,000 to tidy up certain things the station was deficient in.

I turn now to justice, and I have mentioned the Cleveland Court House which is in an electorate that adjoins mine. The services in the Redland Shire are generally centralised in the electorates of Cleveland and Capalaba. The Redlands electorate does not have a central business district or much in the way of industry. Therefore, I am pleased that in this year's Budget \$4m has been allocated for the completion of the Cleveland Court House.

Unfortunately, the Cleveland Court House and the Cleveland Police Station have had rather chequered careers. In the 1989 and the 1992 election campaigns, the Labor Party promised new facilities for the area, but, of course, we do not have anything at all. In fact, the Redland Shire Council has asked me for assistance in the matter. I have endeavoured to do what I can to fast-track the development. Unfortunately, because of the tardy response of the Labor Party, the best site for the police station and the courthouse was missed, as the then Government would not allocate the money. Eventually, last year \$600,000 was allocated to acquire land for the courthouse, but by that time the site identified by the shire council as the best had been sold. The land that has been bought is further down the hill where there are construction problems owing to the fact that the site had been a dump. A lot of extra structural work will have to be done before the project can get off the ground. Some problems are being experienced, but I am sure that the Government will address them as quickly as possible.

In the area of emergency services, I am very pleased that money has been allocated for the relocation of the Cleveland Ambulance Station, which also services my electorate. As the Redlands electorate grows, obviously I look forward to having an ambulance station within the electorate. Of course, that will not happen this year, but hopefully it will be forthcoming in next year's Budget. Certainly it will happen as soon as possible.

The building of the Victoria Point State High School was, again, an initiative of the previous National Party Government. The land was allocated in the eighties, the money was allocated in the financial year 1994-95 and work has commenced on the site. The Government has allocated another \$5m for the completion of the school to enable it to open in 1997. There has been a big call for the completion of that school in my electorate. Children have to travel from the bay islands and other areas to the high schools at Cleveland, Alexandra Hills and Capalaba. Therefore, the Victoria Point State High School will be very well received when it opens next year. The Bayside TAFE which my constituents attend is also a beneficiary under the Budget. A sum of \$0.06m has been allocated to provide a new covered workshop, a hairdressing and beauty centre and a resource centre.

The Government has given a commitment to purchase some environmentally sensitive land which was discussed by the Labor Government in its

Koala Coast plan. Nothing ever came of Labor's commitments in relation to that land because it did not have anywhere near enough the money in the account to meet any of its commitments. However, this year we have allocated \$500,000 for a program covering a number of years to acquire some of the land. I am very pleased about that because my constituents are very environmentally aware. In fact, about 18 months ago when the council engaged in public consultation on its strategic plan, which has just come out, it asked the people what they wanted. The people said that they would rather keep the bushland and forgo some of the farm land that is now becoming a little fragmented. That was the people's choice. Therefore, we are very pleased that the money has been allocated to fulfil that commitment and preserve some of the land that would otherwise have been taken up for housing.

The issue of health is very important. Earlier tonight, the member for Mount Coot-tha said a number of things about the health situation which I have been reflecting upon. It was a shame that the Minister for Health was not present at the time. The member for Mount Coot-tha said that all the money allocated to Health was being spent in Brisbane. Certainly we are spending money in Brisbane, because nothing much has been spent here before. However, the honourable member has obviously forgotten about all the money that has been spent in Townsville and Cairns. Maybe a trip north would not only educate the member but also clear her mind so that she is a little more perceptive.

The Government is fast-tracking the development of the Redlands Hospital. That will result in an increase in bed numbers, which is great to see. That will be under way next year.

**Mr Horan:** Twenty-four more than Labor was going to give.

**Mr HEGARTY:** We will have 24 more beds than we would have had under Labor. There will be an increase from the 40 beds that we currently have to 120 beds, with an additional 24 beds for mental health patients. That is a real boost. In the Health budget, the Minister has allocated \$2.1 billion over a 10-year period under the Hospital and Health Services Building Plan. That will be the biggest Capital Works Program in Australia. The coalition has scheduled \$295m for capital works expenditure on hospitals and associated facilities. That is very well received by people in the Redlands. I also commend the increase in

funding to the Logan Hospital. My electorate is quite large and the western part of my electorate covers the eastern part of Logan City. Therefore, many of my constituents have their medical needs attended to by the Logan Hospital. They will be very pleased about the upgrade of the Logan Hospital.

The other area I would like to touch upon in the short time available is that of business and industry. The Cleveland industrial estate is being expanded, which I am very pleased about. The population of the Redlands electorate is growing, and we need work opportunities for people. My constituents also welcome the energy initiatives under which \$1.8m will be allocated for solar hot water system rebates. The rebate is \$300 for a single panel and \$500 for a double panel for both new and replacement systems.

We have heard a lot about the upgrading of the Pacific Highway. That road touches the western part of my electorate and I am very pleased that the upgrade of the road is forging ahead, because we need a decent road to the Gold Coast. The Government is going to complete that road through allocations in this Budget, which provides a record \$400m for roads.

Time expired.

**Hon. D. M. WELLS** (Murrumba) (7.50 p.m.): It is a pleasure to contribute to the debate tonight, in spite of the tedious filibuster being run by the honourable member for Redlands. As he was speaking, I noted a number of points on which he could reasonably be refuted. I was going to refute him point by point, but I thought the House found his speech so tedious that my repetition of it would only make things worse and so I have decided to talk about something different instead.

I wish to speak to the House concerning the overall economic philosophy which inspires this Budget. Political commentators have been somewhat less than unanimous in their estimates of what has been going on in the Budget. Some of them have described it as a high-taxing, big-spending Budget. Some have even hinted that this is a return to Keynesian economic philosophy. Others have noted the downsizing of the Public Service which preceded it, the savage cuts to the operating expenses of departments and, of course, the privatisation of Suncorp as instances that this Government was running on the basis of an economic rationalist philosophy.

The truth is that what we are dealing with is a hybrid beast consisting of an economic rationalist Budget with a thin veneer of political

opportunism placed above it. The true analysis is that this Government actually had the money to spend because Queensland was left net debt free by the previous Government. Queensland was in the same situation as a householder who has paid off his or her mortgage and, therefore, has more cash flow available to spend on those things which sustain daily life. Political advantage dictated spending it.

**Mr Horan:** If you got 4th prize in the casket one year, would you budget on winning it next year? Those one-off payments are like 4th prize. It only comes once in a blue moon. You wouldn't budget for that every year, would you? That is what one-off payments are.

**Mr WELLS:** I am not talking about one-off payments; I am talking about the fact that we left the Government a Budget that was net debt free. That puts the—

**Mr Littleproud:** It's a very simplistic approach.

**Mr WELLS:** The honourable member can say it is a simplistic approach, but the world is not as complex as some of the Government's economic advisers would make it seem to them. The Government has gone off the rails in this Budget simply by virtue of the fact that it has been confused by a whole lot of economic hocus-pocus coming from people who are peddling stuff to the Government which is nothing better than snake oil. A whole lot of voodoo economics are activating the Government's Budget. It is getting voodoo economic advice from Treasury and Liberal members are acting on that advice to the long-term detriment of the agrarian socialist philosophy that National Party members subscribe to.

**Dr Watson:** The Budget has nothing to do with net debt free. That is nonsense.

**A Government member:** We thought you were more intelligent.

**Mr WELLS:** I am keen to take all of these interjections, because I want honourable members to have the opportunity to have their words immortalised. I am interested to hear from the honourable member for Moggill.

**Dr Watson:** The net debt is talking about the financial assets and the financial liabilities. It is about the flows this year. This is about the flows this year.

**Mr WELLS:** That is exactly right. I am talking assets and liabilities. By virtue of the fact that this State is now, as a result of the economic management of the previous Government, free of those types of liabilities, the Government is in a better position to

spend money on things such as education and health. It has the money to spend because we were net debt free. Political advantage dictated spending it. If we look at what the money is being spent on, we see that the spending is not actually inconsistent with the particular brand of economic rationalism prescribed by the Under Treasurer. Economic rationalism—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr WELLS:** I am sorry. I hate to interrupt honourable members opposite.

**Mr Woolmer:** Are you saying the State wouldn't be carrying a debt over?

**Mr WELLS:** No, I did not say that.

Economic rationalism is the philosophy that the market should dictate what is to be done and when it is to be done in the economy. That means small government and minimal government intervention in the economy. It means downsizing, outsourcing and defunding. It means that one does not use the Government as a means of stimulating the economy.

However, there are variants on this philosophy, and one variant is provided by the present Under Treasurer. If honourable members look at the writings of our present Under Treasurer, Dr Doug McTaggart, they will see that, despite his mainstream economic rationalist approach, there is one area in which he thinks that Government spending might boost private investment. He thinks that Government spending is desirable for the purposes of boosting private investment, not for the purposes of providing jobs or for improving the quality of life of the people. He believes spending should be specifically targeted to boosting private investment. He says that this will be so if the Government expenditure is on "public capital, on social infrastructure, such as roads, communications, education and so on, that enhances the productivity of private capital". He wrote that in *Fiscal Policy in Budget Deficits* in the journal *Policy* in the summer of 1993-94. What we see from this Government is an infrastructure spending program. This infrastructure spending program is of precisely the type that this economic rationalist Under Treasurer dictated and, moreover, so are privatisations, such as the privatisation of Suncorp. They are exactly in accordance with his philosophy.

The infrastructure program, of course, was not one that resounded loudly in the electorate of Murrumba. The people of the electorate of Murrumba did not have great expectations of this Government and, as a

result, they were not disappointed. It was kind of the Government to continue the funding which we had already provided for the four-laning of Deception Bay Road. I am glad that the Government did not stop that. As to any initiatives for the benefit of the people of my area—that was something which was beyond the Government's power to add to or detract from. Nevertheless, the main point I am making is that we have a Budget which is exactly in conformity with what we might have predicted if we had read the writings of the Under Treasurer a long time ago.

The detail in this Budget is all economic rationalist detail. The detail is outsourcing, downsizing and defunding. I would like to speak firstly about outsourcing. I can take only one example of each of these exercises in political and social vandalism. The example that I will take of outsourcing is the example drawn from the slashing of funds to Crown law. We heard the Honourable the Attorney-General on the radio this morning saying that there had been increases to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. That may very well be so. What he did not say was that he had cut funding to the Crown law office by \$900,000. That will mean the sacking of 15 lawyers, 10 clerks, five administrative officers and five secretaries—35 staff in all. Those people are going to be laid off.

What is going to be the consequence of that? Obviously, the consequence to those people and their families will be negative. What about the consequence to the exercise of government? The first thing that they will have to do is to do a lot more outsourcing. It will mean that they will have a great deal more cargo that they can spread around by distributing briefs to their mates in Right Wing legal firms. That has a significant disadvantage, because the more—

**Mr Rowell:** You're away with the fairies.

**Mr WELLS:** I am sorry?

**Mr Rowell:** I think you're away with the fairies. You are presuming that the Government is going to go to Right Wing legal firms.

**Mr WELLS:** I do not know how much the honourable member knows about fairies, but he does not know a lot about law. The consequence of outsourcing this type of work will be that it is going to be in the hands of a legal firm which one day may very well be representing the Government but another day is going to be opposing the Government. Obviously, those firms will do their level best—

**Mr Rowell:** Did that ever happen under the Labor Government?

**Mr WELLS:** Mr Speaker, I need some protection from you, or else they will.

**Mr Rowell:** Like a warm lettuce.

**Mr WELLS:** I am sorry?

**Mr Rowell:** I am only interjecting because I want to extract some information from you.

**Mr WELLS:** What did the honourable member say about warm lettuce leaves?

**Mr Rowell:** I wouldn't take that.

**Mr WELLS:** I am taking it; the honourable member should tell me about warm lettuce leaves.

**Mr Rowell:** I was saying did you ever have firms that then referred on to the Labor Party at all working out in private enterprise, or not?

**Mr WELLS:** What I am pointing out is that this Government is going to be doing the outsourcing. We kept a strong Crown law so that we could get internal legal advice. I am trying to talk about the economic philosophy which actuates this Government's Budget, and the honourable member opposite is talking about warm lettuce leaves. I do not know what the National Party has come to or what the Liberal Party has come to. There was a day when the National Party stood for the broad acres, for the wide brown land, and the Liberal Party stood for the boardrooms of Brisbane. What do they stand for now? They stand for the swizzle sticks of Surfers Paradise and the jacuzzis of Caloundra. That is what those people on the other side of the House now stand for, and those who cannot aspire to either of those quality-of-life ambitions sit here in the House talking during other people's speeches about warm lettuce leaves. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you: what calibre of person do we have here on the other side of the House?

The point that I was making about outsourcing of legal work is that we lose the benefit of the memory of decades. If the Government keeps the work with Crown law, then it has its in-house legal advice, legal advice which is based on memory which goes back for as long as Queensland has had a Crown law office. But if the Government puts it out, then it puts it out to a firm which one day will be for the Government and another day will be against it. Though those firms will operate with goodwill, they will neither have the information base nor will they have the degree of commitment which one would attain



by having a law firm handling the case which served the interests of the Government only. This is what comes of the \$900,000 cut that the Government is introducing—but not publicising—to the office of Crown law.

So that is what happens with outsourcing. The next economic rationalist program which is being cultivated in this Budget is downsizing. I refer by way of one example—as I said to honourable members, I will be providing only one example of each—to the Community Justice Program. That program was established with the intention of assisting with neighbourhood dispute resolutions. But it had a broader agenda. That broader agenda was to ensure that the people of this State had access to the resolution of disputes in all circumstances. As a result of careful cultivation, that program had been built up. The mediators were extraordinarily motivated and were prepared to travel long distances. At the time of the last report, we had a Community Justice Program, a system of community mediation, which would ensure that in any part of the State of Queensland a person who had a dispute which they wanted resolved would be able to call on the mediators of the program to do so.

**Mr Pearce:** It was an excellent program for disadvantaged persons.

**Mr WELLS:** I thank the honourable member. That is exactly right. It was an excellent program from the point of view of building social capital, because the diminution of disharmony in the community which was always attendant on the intervention of the Community Justice Program is one which has frequently prevented people from having to go to court, but more often has prevented people from taking the law into their own hands.

What is the reaction of this Government to this program? It is axing it. It is axing the Dispute Resolution Division of the Attorney-General's Department. I do not hear honourable members opposite talking about warm lettuce leaves now, because they know that they are doing it. They know that what they are doing is something dictated by some mean-spirited, miserable stinginess—some economic rationalist claptrap about downsizing Government services and, consequently, downsizing the quality of life of people. This Government is destroying social harmony, it is destroying social capital by downsizing this program.

**Dr Watson** interjected.

**Mr WELLS:** I will take the honourable member's interjection.

**Dr Watson:** Why is the Public Service in the Budget papers shown as going to grow by 1.1 per cent?

**Mr WELLS:** The devil is in the detail. We get these broad-brush statements in the Budget papers, but when one looks at the specific program, one sees that it is cut, cut, cut.

Let me cite another example since the honourable members opposite are a bit touchy about that. Let us talk about defunding. On 23 April this year, the Attorney-General's Department wrote a letter to the development director at training and employment in Queensland in the department of the relevant Minister pointing out that the JP training program was well under way and that it could be completed with sufficient Justices of the Peace (Qualified) available to serve all areas provided that a bit more work was done in the following electorates: Western Downs, Crows Nest, Callide, Barambah, Cunningham, Lockyer, Warwick and Tablelands. Those are electorates that some honourable members opposite might possibly be interested in.

What was proposed was a program involving training programs in a number of country centres: Dalby, Roma, Chinchilla, Miles, Injune, Crows Nest, Esk, Oakey, Gayndah, Monto, Biloela, Theodore, Rolleston, Kingaroy, Murgon, Pittsworth, Goondiwindi, Gatton, Boonah, Laidley, Inglewood, Texas, Stanthorpe, Warwick, Mareeba, Atherton, Mount Molloy, Ravenshoe and Chillagoe. Honourable members opposite might possibly have been interested in such a program. The money for the program was available and it was going to come from Commonwealth funds, which only needed the imprimatur of the relevant Minister to be sent on. What happened? Before this could come to the attention of the Minister, a phone call came from the Attorney-General's Department saying, "We are downsizing. We do not want the money any more." Hundreds of thousands of dollars which would have provided that training, which would have provided that benefit to the electorates of members opposite, was kissed goodbye simply on the basis of rancid economic rationalist ideology—a penchant for defunding programs, for saving money for saving money's sake—when the money that would have been spent would have been an investment in the quality of life of people.

What was the JP reform program all about—the program which this Government is cancelling with another Bill that it is bringing

forward in the near future? It was all about involving people in the delivery of justice. It was about the democratisation of the justice system. It was about the democratisation of power in this State. What is the Government doing with it? It is killing it because of some economic, ideological, absurd presumptions.

The honourable members opposite have at least parted company with their colleagues in Canberra, to the extent that the savagery of the cuts to education and health which we have seen at the Federal level have not been duplicated here.

**Mr Santoro** interjected.

**Mr WELLS:** I take the honourable member's interjection.

**Mr Santoro:** I wasn't talking to you.

**Mr WELLS:** Well then, Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member should not have been talking, and I invite you to tell him so.

**Mr Santoro:** You're just shitty I am not talking to you.

**Mr WELLS:** I take the honourable member's interjection so as to get into *Hansard* a true depiction of the type of person that the honourable member opposite is when he has his back to the wall. I noticed that he did not interject when I was talking about his department and about the fact that it was duded by the Attorney-General's Department. We did not hear any interjections then.

In my own generous way, I have not been able to complete my material because I wanted to give honourable members opposite the opportunity to contribute their ideas during my speech. I have always found that people learn best by the Socratic dialectic, and if there is any chance of these people learning anything at all, it has to be based on a response to the things that they say. What they have said so far betrays no understanding at all of the hidden agenda of the Budget which they are here to support. They are merely lobby fodder, here to support a Budget which does not have any merit. It does not address the erosion of our human capital or of our social capital or of our natural capital. It is just a superficial veneer of political expediency over economic hocus-pocus.

Time expired.

**Ms BLIGH** (South Brisbane) (8.10 p.m.): The 1996-97 Queensland State Budget will no doubt go down as one of the most appalling attempts to mislead the public and distort the truth in the living memory of this State. This

Budget is a confidence trick on the people of Queensland. This Government has the arrogance and the hide to present a Budget that breaks fundamental election promises, a Budget that introduces a raft of new taxes and charges, a Budget that raids the investment stockpiles of the State and a Budget that steals from last year's Budget to fund its Capital Works Program. This is a Budget of sectional interests that threatens the underlying financial integrity of public finance in this State.

**Mr Horan:** Ask your leader about the \$34m he tried to steal from capital works to cover up some of his recurrent debt.

**Ms BLIGH:** The member should show us his proof. I ask the member to table the documents. He has never been able to table those documents. Tonight, I will table documents that show him who steals money.

The sheer hypocrisy of the glib media releases issued by Ministers on Tuesday which blatantly manipulate Budget information cannot be allowed to go unchallenged and unexposed.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** You're caught out.

**Ms BLIGH:** He will be caught out. In this regard, I will have some particularly sobering comments for the Minister for Housing and Public Works in due course.

It is my intention this evening to focus primarily on the effects of this Budget on public works. However, I would like to turn briefly in the first instance to the effects of this Budget on public sector employees. I note with some concern that there does not appear to be any provision made for wage increases for public sector employees in the coming financial year. It would appear that, on the face of it, public sector workers can expect nothing by way of wage increases from this Budget. Honourable members may recall that the enterprise bargaining agreements covering public sector employees are about to expire. These agreements contain requirements for the parties to begin further rounds of negotiations three months prior to the expiration of each agreement. Assuming that relevant Ministers are fulfilling the requirements of these binding industrial agreements, departmental representatives and unions should be currently engaged in preliminary wage discussions, and I know that in a number of departments that is the case. It would seem, however, that these negotiations are occurring in a financial vacuum.

Again, members may recall that in the 1993-94 Budget, the then Treasurer, Keith De

Lacy, made specific reference in his second-reading speech to an allocation being put aside to ensure payment of any wage increases which may arise out of the enterprise bargaining negotiations which had begun prior to that Budget being brought down. No such reference was made in the second-reading speech that we heard in this House on Tuesday.

**Mr Littleproud:** What about the \$6m for my rangers?

**Ms BLIGH:** Exactly—there is no provision at all for wage increases for the Minister's rangers. What expectations can public sector workers have of a wage increase being paid any time in the next 12 months when the Treasurer has not even recognised their claims in her Budget or her commentary on the Budget?

Effective public spending and targeted public sector activity are critical to the balanced, efficient and equitable functioning of our State economy and the economic, social and environmental services provided by the Government, yet this Budget plunders State Government agencies and exposes the seven months of contemptible neglect that this Government has wrought on Queensland business during the go-slow, the freeze on capital works expenditure, since February. The unemployment figures presented in this House this week are a clear demonstration of the effect of this freeze—the freeze which the Treasurer and the Minister opposite have consistently denied. They have denied the freeze at every opportunity. They have even gone to the extent of getting dorothy dixers asked from their back bench to give them an opportunity to stand up here and deny it.

The exposure of this contemptible fraud began with the tabling of the Treasurer's Annual Statement on Tuesday. This document reveals the full extent of her freeze—a total of \$406m unspent because of the Treasurer's decree that capital works projects be frozen. The Public Works and Housing portfolio alone records a lapsed appropriation, that is, money allocated but unspent, of \$342m—\$342m worth of projects that were lapsed and jobs forgone. This compares with a lapsed appropriation of only \$62m in this area in the last financial year. That is a staggering difference of \$280m. The major component of this massive lapsed appropriation is \$252m of unspent moneys in the Building Trust Fund. What reasons are given for the reduction in the spending in this fund? I am afraid we have to face a lot more

deception here because the notes in the Budget papers state—

"Expenditure was lower than anticipated mainly due to a decrease in the client capital works program totalling \$226.75 million caused by client delays in formulating their program."

Have members ever heard such double-speak in their life? In other words, the clients are to blame. Clients, of course, are Government departments and agencies.

**Mr Pearce:** A poor excuse, that.

**Ms BLIGH:** That is a great excuse! I have no doubt at all that those departmental managers and planners who had to put their projects on hold to satisfy the demands of the Treasurer will all be choking on their Wheaties when they see the blame being laid at their feet for the stalling of these projects. Just as everybody but the Premier is responsible for the disasters in the Public Service Bill, it seems that everybody but the Treasurer is responsible for the decline in capital works under her stewardship.

The next step in the expose of this Government's deceit came with the presentation of the Budget papers. There are so many falsehoods in these documents that it is difficult to identify the most outrageous claims, but I have to say that Budget Paper No. 3 takes a lot of beating in the fraud stakes. Budget Paper No. 3, the capital outlays document, seeks to perpetrate the fraud on the people of this State that this Government has made a significant injection of funds into capital projects. What a joke! In fact, the opposite is true. Let there be no mistake: the so-called record expenditure on capital works is nothing but a fraud. The \$4 billion in outlays planned for 1996-97 has been achieved by cuts to the Labor capital works budget for the last financial year—the Sheldon freeze. In fact, the alleged increases are actually less than the amounts saved from Labor's allocations—moneys saved for the Treasurer's pocket.

**Dr Watson:** You just copied Peter Beattie's speech. You didn't write this at all.

**Ms BLIGH:** The member has it the wrong way round. The coalition's capital works freeze between February and September this year robbed \$406m from planned capital outlays. Let me repeat this, because it is quite important to understand. The coalition's capital works freeze between February and September this year robbed \$406m from planned capital outlays, yet the Treasurer has returned only \$383m of this to the capital

works for 1996-97. The alleged increase is merely adding some of this stolen money from the 1995-96 Labor Budget to the base allocation for capital works. Government members ought to be ashamed of themselves. In fact, the coalition will have spent less over the 1996-97 and 1995-96 financial years on capital works than the Labor Budget allocated. It is less than would have been spent if Labor had not increased its 1996-97 capital works budget at all. That is a conservative assumption, given the commitment of the previous Government to accelerated capital works.

The coalition has effectively cut \$23m from capital works over these two years without even allowing for the effects of inflation. I would like to table for the benefit of the House a table which is derived from page 5 of Budget Paper No. 3 and which illustrates the two-year comparison between Labor and the coalition for total capital works expenditures and for designated policy areas under the program budgeting format. It demonstrates—and I will give an example in the area of social welfare and housing—that in 1995-96, \$412m was allocated for capital works and that under the Treasurer's freeze only \$298m was spent. The total cost of the freeze then was \$114m. Under the coalition Budget this year, there is an allocation of \$238m. On a two-year basis of the previous Labor Party allocation, there would have been a Budget of \$825m and under the two-year allocation of this Government, we see an allocation of \$536m. That is a total decrease in capital works in the portfolio of the Minister for Public Works and Housing of \$288m, yet he has the unmitigated gall to put out glib press releases claiming record spending. He must think the people of this State are stupid.

There are significant increases demonstrated in this table in education, health and police capital works over the two years. But these have all been funded by savage cuts to housing, welfare, the environment and transport. The alleged increases are nothing more than reallocations among policy areas. There is no overall increase in capital works allocations in this Budget. It is a fraud. Yet the Minister has made some staggering claims about funding of capital works in this Budget. He has produced press releases which present the most fraudulent and specious claims about massive and record increases.

**Mr CONNOR:** I rise to a point of order. I find the words offensive and ask for them to be withdrawn.

**Ms BLIGH:** I referred to the Minister's press releases, not to him.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Laming): Order! Is the Minister saying that he was personally—

**Mr CONNOR:** I was personally maligned.

**Ms BLIGH:** I will table the press releases. I withdraw.

This is the Minister who has presided over a freeze that has cost the construction industry \$400m worth of projects and cost the building workers of this State \$400m worth of jobs. His inactivity has run down the economy of this State. He has stood idly by while Treasury stole the funds allocated for major works and projects. He has colluded with the Treasurer to bring industry in this State to a grinding halt. His preposterous claims of massive annual rises—

**Mr CONNOR:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask for your indulgence. All of this is quite untrue. I find it offensive. I ask that it be withdrawn.

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

**Mr CONNOR:** With respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, the member is speaking about me personally. She is saying that I have colluded with the Treasurer.

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

**Ms BLIGH:** The Minister's claims of massive annual rises are calculated from comparisons of this year's allocation with the coalition's freeze outlays. As I said before, does the Minister think the people of this State are stupid? Does the Minister really think that the construction industry will not notice that the levels of Government activity have not increased in real terms? Does he really think the Master Builders Association is not going to notice this fraud?

The 24 per cent rise claimed in Budget Paper No. 3 essentially double counts the 12 per cent cuts that the coalition made to the 1995-96 Budget, that is, it appears twice. Not satisfied with stealing it in the first place, they count it twice. First it appears as a reduction in the 1995-96 Budget and then again as an increase in the 1996-97 Budget, when it is nothing more than money withheld from the people of Queensland—stolen by the Treasurer and her henchman "Connor the Con Man" to pay for the excesses of the coalition's promises—

**Mr CONNOR:** I rise to a point of order. What can I say?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member finds that remark offensive.

**Ms BLIGH:** I withdraw.

It is money that is now being recycled as a false rise in this financial year. The Minister claims huge percentage increases in spending by comparing his 1996-97 allocation with the actual amounts spent under his freeze.

I draw the attention of honourable members to the fact that, on Monday morning, the Minister was greeted on his way into Cabinet by protesters bearing placards saying, "Connor—the Minister for Doing Nothing". How right those protesters were. For the last seven months the Minister has presided over \$406m worth of nothing. And then he has the unmitigated gall—the shamelessness—to claim huge increases. In one respect he is right. Any kind of capital works activity out of his Government would be a huge percentage increase.

What has the Treasurer had to say about capital outlay allocations? The member for Caloundra spoke of this as a one-off rise when she raised it in her Budget Speech. What then can we expect capital works outlays to return to? If this is a one-off rise, will they return to the \$3.2 billion of the coalition freeze? Will we never again see in this State the level of building activity under the base that was allocated by a Labor Government?

**Dr Watson:** You never spent what you proposed in the Budget—not one of six years.

**Ms BLIGH:** I remind the member that the lapsed appropriation for 1994-95 was \$62m. The lapsed appropriation for 1995-96 under this Government is \$343m—a staggering difference of \$280m. I ask the member to explain it.

**Dr Watson:** Not in one year—'90, '91, '92, '93, '94—did you spend it.

**Ms BLIGH:** Nobody ever does. That is why there is a column for lapsed appropriation. I am talking about extent.

It is curious to note that Mrs Sheldon asserts in her Budget Speech that these alleged increases in capital works are to be funded from QIFF balances and asset sales. Not only does she fail to outline in any detail which assets she intends to sell, but she completely avoids any mention of the funds that were grabbed through her freeze—a deceitful and dishonest omission. There are many questions left unanswered by the

Treasurer and her Budget, but some of the central questions are these. I ask the Treasurer: where is the \$406m that her Government and her Public Works Minister failed to spend during the freeze? What happened to the \$406m worth of lapsed appropriations? How much of this money finds its way into the Treasurer's personal slush fund, the Treasurer's advance?

The full effect of the freeze, especially in regional Queensland, may never be known. Comparisons of the regional allocations can be made only between the two sets of Budget papers, so we cannot tell at this stage where the effects of the coalition freeze fell. Of course, it does not want us to know where they fell; it wants that covered up. Therefore, we cannot specifically document which regions may have real or fake increases. We must be provided with actual expenditure on a regional basis for 1995-96 to clearly see where the double counting has occurred. I challenge the Minister to provide the actual capital outlay expenditure for Public Works for 1995-96 broken down on a regional basis.

**Mr Connor:** I already have. It has already gone out.

**Ms BLIGH:** Where?

**Mr Connor:** I sent it out to all the media.

**Ms BLIGH:** I challenge the Minister to table it in this House in the Budget papers.

**Mr Connor:** It has already gone.

**Ms BLIGH:** I am sorry, but it is not on a regional basis. It is not there. The Minister does not know what he has tabled. I am telling him that it is not there. The effects of the freeze are clear enough.

**Mr Connor:** I sent it out. It was in the packages.

**Ms BLIGH:** We have already had a serious case of the Premier not knowing what he tabled. I suggest that the Minister not fall into the same trap.

The effects of the freeze are clear enough—a deflationary impact across all industries and regions. The August unemployment figures indicate an unacceptable rise in the jobless rate. Queensland's figure has risen from 9 per cent to 9.8 per cent, to become the highest in mainland Australia, compared with a national average of 8.5 per cent rising to 8.8 per cent. I notice that the Minister for Employment is laughing about that. It is no laughing matter. He ought to be ashamed of himself.

**Mr Santoro:** Training and Industrial Relations. Get it right.

**Ms BLIGH:** The Minister has no responsibility for employment creation in this State. He ought to be ashamed of himself.

As I noted earlier, the Treasurer's Annual Statement actually tries to blame some departmental agencies for failing to spend their 1995-96 capital works allocations. This is an outrageous slur on those departments that were forced by the freeze to cease projects. However, if the Treasurer or the Minister believes it to be true, how can they have any confidence that these very same departments will ever be able to effectively plan and execute the projects to be delivered under this year's alleged increases? The capital works allocations in this Budget are clearly an attempt to rectify the grave damage done by the Treasurer's freeze.

**Mr Woolmer** interjected.

**Ms BLIGH:** It is coming. I ask the member to hang on.

If it is capable of rectifying the grave damage that has been done, that is to be applauded. The package is called an Infrastructure Rejuvenation Package. How telling. That is clearly an admission that rejuvenation is necessary, that something went terribly wrong at the beginning of this Government's term in office. However, serious question marks hang over this Government's ability to deliver any of the programs outlined. I welcome the size of the overall allocation and look forward to seeing it being spent. But I am left puzzled that such an ambitious program is left in the hands of the member for Nerang.

How can industry or the people of Queensland have any confidence that the Minister for Public Works and Housing—the Minister who has so far excelled only at making sure that nothing happens—can deliver any of the ambitious programs outlined in these Budget papers? It is a huge undertaking. The Minister's early attempts to distort the figures leave me with very serious doubts.

Members should make no mistake: the capital works outlays have been fudged and the alleged increases do not even restore what was stolen by the Treasurer and her Minister over the past seven months. When it comes to major capital works projects and the jobs and growth that come with them, the people of this State have been robbed by Borbidge, conned by Connor and are still shell-shocked by Sheldon. This is the fudge-it Budget. It is indeed a Budget of deceit, and the Minister for Public Works and Housing stands condemned for his disgraceful part in it.

**Mr CONNOR:** I rise to a point of order. I congratulate the member on reading her speech better than Peter Beattie read his speech.

**Mr J. N. GOSS** (Aspley) (8.31 p.m.): Trust me to have to follow either the most humorous or the most incompetent—we are not sure which—speech so far. Almost every Opposition member who has spoken in this debate has said that the Government has cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of the Capital Works Program. They have rattled off numerous projects in their electorates. When one adds up the value, the uncompleted projects total hundreds of millions of dollars—\$500m—in Labor electorates alone. No wonder the former Government was getting into trouble.

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Laming): Order! The member for South Brisbane must be seated in her correct seat to make an interjection.

**Mr J. N. GOSS:** It was the beginning of a typical Labor Government's third-term spending spree. We have seen the debacle of the unfunded capital works promises in the Health sector, where the current Opposition Leader had made wonderful promises with no money to back them up. We have seen the state of the Workers Compensation Fund and the compulsory third-party insurance scheme. That was typical of Labor Governments.

However, when the Government imposes a levy of \$3 on tyres, what happens? Apparently we are going to break everybody in the State. For an average motorist, over two years—and tyres will last two years—that should add up to about \$24. As for oil, over a year it would be \$1.60. If members opposite are saying that the cost of the oil levy will have a serious effect on families, perhaps some cars need mechanical inspections because, if they are consuming that much oil, they should not be on the road.

Tonight I wish to raise an issue that I believe contributes to great hardship for small businesses in the retail area, that is, the proliferation of shopping centres. Over recent years, we have seen local governments approve one shopping centre after another—not just local shopping centres but also large community and regional shopping centres. The existing, struggling shopping centres are still under attack from new shopping centres being proposed almost weekly around south-east Queensland. Queensland has become the shopping centre of Australia. Planners from interstate are amazed at our lack of

serious planning when it comes to shopping centres. In fact, a planner from the southern States has said that there will soon be one shop for every house in the south-east corner of Queensland. People who have been successful in business for many years have been wiped out, all because the council has allowed another shopping centre, maybe a bit larger, to be built down the road.

The economic impact statement that has to be supplied by the developer of a shopping centre is an absolute joke. We can all go around south-east Queensland and see dozens and dozens of shopping centres that are not a going concern, and yet they have economic impact statements saying that they are viable. A recent show on TV showed a large number of shopping centres, all in the vicinity of one another, that were half tenanted. That was an absolute crying shame for those people who had gone into business in good faith and had lost their homes. The developers of shopping centres can obtain a statement saying that a shopping centre is economically viable because they pay for the statement. They can obtain even two or three statements because they go to a consultant and, because they are paying that consultant, the consultant will give them what they want. Some of them produce two or three statements, which enables the shopping centre to go ahead.

I believe that to stop the farce of obtaining economic impact statements the Department of Local Government and Planning should have a list of reputable companies that can make an unbiased and fair assessment of a shopping centre's viability. The developer of a shopping centre would have to apply to the Government to have the economic impact statement produced by a company from the Government's list. That company would be chosen at random so that the developer would not know who would be conducting that assessment. The list would be held by the Government. The developer would then pay the Government a fee for the study, which would probably be levied based on a rate per square metre of the shopping centre. The economic impact assessment would be received by the Government, and the consultant would be paid directly by the Government. No direct contact would occur between the developer and the consultant. I believe that that is the only honest way that we can obtain accurate economic impact statements.

If small businesses are to survive in this State, we must take that action immediately.

On numerous occasions, we have seen small businesses struggling. Currently proposals are being put forward to build a number of shopping centres across the north side. One proposal is for McDowall, which is already surrounded by Flockton Village, Rode Shopping Centre, Brookside and shopping centres at Everton Park, Albany Creek, Chermide, the Hypermarket, and smaller shopping centres. Now two new shopping centres are proposed on Old Northern Road. The Brisbane City Council is spending the ratepayers' money trying to upgrade the Stafford Shopping Centre to attract people back to the old strip shopping centre. At Moorooka, it is doing the same. For the upgrade of those two shopping centres, the ratepayers will fork out \$1.1m.

The Queensland Small Business Council must meet soon. I have asked the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry to request that that council investigate urgently the proliferation of shopping centres, particularly on the north side, and its effect on small business. I call on the Government to place a two or three-month moratorium on shopping centre approvals until the Queensland Small Business Council has time to review and report on the problem of new shopping centres.

I turn now to the Health budget. A major election commitment, if not the major commitment, of the coalition Government was to get our public hospitals right. I am proud to say that the Prince Charles Hospital staff have already made a major contribution to this through the Minister's Surgery on Time Program. I congratulate the staff at the Prince Charles Hospital. Under that program, the waiting time for surgery has been reduced to nil. For that the staff of Prince Charles have worked hard and they certainly have my support. That shows what can be done with extra resources, and extra resources keep coming. To meet the commitment, the coalition has increased funding for Queensland's public hospitals by almost 16 per cent, from \$1.768 billion to over \$2 billion in 1996-97. That will provide for 700 new positions across the Queensland public hospital system, including 540 new nurses and 80 doctors.

In the past, I was honoured to be a board member of the Prince Charles Hospital. The 1996-97 Budget has seen an allocation of \$1.6m towards construction of a new ward block and extensions to theatres and refurbishment of existing areas. The mental health area at the Winston Noble Unit at the Prince Charles Hospital will receive further

funding towards the development of a new 60-bed ward. Under the residential care Vote for the Prince Charles Hospital, \$1m has been allocated towards the \$6.5m redevelopment of the Jacaranda Village.

The increase in funding will provide local jobs and I am very pleased that, on a number of occasions, the Minister has seen fit to visit that hospital. He appreciates the problems that Labor created for that hospital. While I am on the subject, it would be of interest to people of my electorate to know that the Royal Brisbane Hospital has been given a boost of \$6.5m and the Royal Children's Hospital—a very, very important hospital—has been given a boost of \$2.4m. While I am also on the subject of the Royal Brisbane Hospital—last Wednesday the Leader of the Opposition made the incredible statement that, by now, tenders for the Royal Brisbane Hospital would have been let were he still the Minister for Health. Look who is talking. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to lift his head on these issues. When he was Minister for Health, all he did was run the Capital Works Program into a huge debt. Certainly, he needs to be reminded that he removed \$34m from the already overcommitted fund to bail out his out-of-control hospital budgets.

I wish to make the House aware of the significant benefits that the State Budget has delivered to public housing. Tonight, we have heard some criticism of the Minister for Public Works and Housing. However, those claims are certainly not true. It is a fact that Opposition members cannot really understand the Budget. We understand that it takes new members a few years to understand the Budget. We accept that. Despite Opposition scaremongering, in relation to public housing the north side of Brisbane has done quite well. The reality is that the Budget delivers significant benefits to those people who are waiting to get into public housing and those people who are tenants already. This Budget will deliver 2,272 houses to the public housing rental stock, and that is 566 more than last year.

Community housing in particular is a big winner. It will receive over \$110m. The money is made available to community groups and local governments for specific housing projects. To ensure that those extra funds are distributed to the people who really need them, the State Government has created the Community Housing Grants Board. That board will act independently to ensure funding for community housing projects is above politics and above reproach.

The other big winner in this Budget is indigenous housing, which is receiving \$50.3m in direct funding. In addition, \$10m of the community housing funds have been earmarked for programs that help indigenous people. That is a \$60m commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing compared with Labor's commitment last year of \$35.3m.

My own area on the north side of Brisbane has done well out of this Budget, particularly in regard to housing. The Budget has earmarked \$5.2m for the construction of new public housing projects on Brisbane's north side. An additional \$1.4m has been set aside to purchase existing dwellings for public housing stock. Among the suburbs that will benefit the most is Chermside, which will receive an extra 19 units of accommodation; Boondall, which will receive 13 units of accommodation; and Wavell Heights, which will receive eight units of accommodation. That expenditure will greatly assist those people in those areas who are waiting for public housing. The Budget has provided \$1.36m for the upgrading of existing public housing stock on the north side of Brisbane. I am pleased to say that almost \$112,000 has been provided to help address the indigenous housing needs within the area.

We inherited from Labor a public housing system under which waiting lists had grown significantly but little had been done to address the problems. I had people out there in my electorate in absolute dire straits and there was no way that they could get help. I am pleased to see that this Budget is now making a reasonable contribution towards getting those people into housing. That funding is needed desperately. In fact, one chap, who was in a wheelchair, was waiting for housing. Because there was no wheelchair-accessible housing available at the time, he had to live underneath a house on a bit of carpet that was thrown on the ground. That is why earlier this year this Government introduced its Spot Purchase Program to address immediately housing needs as well as the long waiting lists.

I congratulate the Minister for Education on his Capital Works Program. An approximate total of \$518,000 will be spent on school buildings in 1996-97. The Aspley East State School will receive an upgrade of \$100,000 and the Aspley State High School will receive an amenities block to replace one which was demolished owing to the cracking and subsidence of the existing building. That is another \$90,000. An amount of \$80,000 has been allocated to the Bald Hills State



School for the upgrading of that school. Discussions are continuing on the development of a new oval in that area.

Following the disastrous spending spree of Labor and the uncertainty it created, it has not been made easy for the coalition to take Government. However, I can tell members that the people accept that this Budget is a good Budget. It has fulfilled many of the requests of the community and it has addressed the concerns of the community. I congratulate the Treasurer on presenting such a fine Budget.

**Mrs BIRD** (Whitsunday) (8.47 p.m.): I used to sit opposite and listen to those members talking about how great they would be, if they were in Government, as entrepreneurs and promoters and how great that would be for the tourist industry. I thought to myself, "I wonder if they will do a better job than we have." Since the coalition has come to Government, I have sat back and watched what has occurred. It seems to me that—

**Mr Santoro:** You're obviously impressed.

**Mrs BIRD:** Perhaps the member for Clayfield should pop outside and have two or three black coffees and a cold shower. Then he might be able to pay more attention.

During the election campaign, a lot of commitments and a lot of promises were made. Many of the tourism entrepreneurs, particularly those in the Whitsunday region, looked at what they were being offered by the coalition and thought that they had an opportunity to gain a little more. Instead, they have had a great deal of disappointment, particularly over the past four months, during which they have had delays, sackings and there have been no promotions. Indeed, they are starting to worry.

**Mr Santoro:** That's not what they tell us, though.

**Mrs BIRD:** Perhaps the Minister needs half a dozen cups of coffee.

**Ms Bligh:** Perhaps intravenously.

**Mrs BIRD:** Yes, black coffee intravenously. In recent days, tourism entrepreneurs have been further disturbed. This Budget was the greatest disappointment for them. There is not a lot to say about the Budget because it was nothing, nothing, nothing. There was nothing in it but disappointment for anybody within the tourist industry. It was disappointing not only for its lack of initiative and its lack of incentive but also for its lack of detail. Whether by accident or design, at best the papers are curious and

at worst, vague, broad and probably a little bit deceitful.

As the member for Kurwongbah said yesterday, Queenslanders have a right to know all the details, particularly the hidden-away facts in these Budget papers. During the Estimates hearings, the people will get to know about them. Although recently a lot of information has been released through the media—be that factual or not; we do not know—perhaps the Minister could be convinced to produce some more user friendly, more free-flowing information which people can understand. If it is intended to gloss over the facts, be sure—

**Mr Davidson:** Just ask us.

**Mrs BIRD:** No, that would be a waste of time. If it is intended to gloss over the facts, be sure that sooner or later, probably through the Estimates committees, the facts will come out.

The disappointment is that when this Government came to power, Mr Borbidge made a commitment to lead a Government for all Queensland. He has not delivered on that promise. In fact, he boasts that, in only seven months of his Government, he has promised spending of \$2,000m for the Gold Coast where he lives and, of course, the member for Caloundra has done the same. The Premier then fuels the fire by saying, "It is only right that the Gold Coast receives this level of funding because of the city's importance to the State." Clearly, he believes the rest of the State does not matter. Of course the Gold Coast is significant, but so is the remainder of the State. The Minister for Tourism had better have a talk to him and tell him about the outback, far-north Queensland, the Whitsundays and Hervey Bay. The rest of Queensland knows that the Premier does not care. Perhaps that is why the Minister broke his election promise to increase funding to the regional tourism authorities by \$70,000. There is a shortfall there—a broken promise.

**Mr DAVIDSON:** I rise to a point of order. The coalition's policy for the increase in funding to RTAs before the last election was \$65,000 and we delivered \$65,000.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Laming): There is no point of order.

**Mrs BIRD:** On top of that, coastal tourism will suffer severely because of the impost of a \$3 entry fee to national parks and the Federal Government's reef tax of \$6. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out what the cost will be for an ordinary family wishing to have what was once an affordable holiday or wishing to go camping on an island. That

family will miss out because they simply will not be able to afford it, nor will the many school children whose school camping weekends are often to the islands in the Whitsundays. Explain to them that the cost is too high because of the Premier's obsession with his own electorate and the Treasurer's obsession with her tollway. There is no doubt that the reef tax will affect my electorate, but it is complicated further by the national park impost and, of course, the camping fees.

The Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association has called a crisis meeting for Thursday night. I extend an invitation to the Minister for Tourism, the Treasurer and the Minister for Environment to attend that meeting at seven o'clock on Thursday, 19 September, at the conference room at Whitsunday Wanderer's Resort, Airlie Beach. Members of the public are urged to come along and present a united front to fight both the reef tax and the national park tax.

Whilst the Opposition supports the increase in funding to the Queensland Events Corporation, I find it a bit of a curiosity, given that the corporation has no CEO and no 2IC. The Minister has gutted the board and senior managers have resigned. The Goss Government's initiative, the Queensland Events Corporation, was a positive, promotional facility for Queensland events. However, the Minister needs to decide what he is going to do with the corporation. The industry wants to know whether he is going to amalgamate it with the QTTC, get rid of it or leave it as it is. Rumours abound. If the Premier is going to leave the QEC as it is, he urgently needs a good, permanent chairman and a good board. The QEC has a large role to play in the bid for the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

As an aside, at this time, with the Olympic and Commonwealth Games on the agenda, I find it difficult to comprehend why there is a drop in funding for the Major Sporting Facilities Program from \$20m to \$7m. Regions are expressing concern about the delays in updated promotional activities. It is understood that the new promotions will commence early in 1997. However, operators deserve an explanation, and it is suggested that the message to the industry might be warranted. I hope that the Minister is forthcoming in that respect.

There was no joy in the Budget for the people of Whitsunday. Hard hit, of course, are the ordinary mums and dads—the average family that owns a car; a family that spends school holidays fishing and camping on the

islands of the Great Barrier Reef. The situation is worse for farmers and the sugar industry will suffer greatly. The Treasurer obviously does not recognise the sugar industry as an exemption from her tyre tax. It is important for the Treasurer to understand that farm vehicles used in the sugar industry are mostly registered vehicles. Tractors used for bin haul-outs travel on roads and pay heavy registration fees. The same applies with oil.

Earlier this year I collected several thousand petitions from my electorate, which were tabled by the Leader of the Opposition, to oppose increases in car registration. The Treasurer did not listen to those hundreds of people from my electorate and other electorates throughout this State. She imposed a hike in car registration—a further impost on single and disadvantaged families, on average families and on farming communities where more than one on-road vehicle is necessary.

I was disappointed that after the debate over the papaya fruit fly and the condemnation by Government members when in Opposition over what they saw as insufficient funding, the Government did not increase funding to this program. Given the Federal Government's cuts in AQIS—

**Mr Rowell:** You've got to be joking! You are away with the pixies!

**Mrs BIRD:** It is exactly the same funding.

**Mr Rowell:** What about the \$600,000 that was provided by Treasury for the inspection over the next three months?

**Mrs BIRD:** That is exactly the same. Given the Federal Government's cuts to AQIS, the north of the State is in a very vulnerable position from infestation. In addition, the Federal Government Budget decision to remove the option for cooperatives—particularly in the sugar industry—to claim tax relief on principal repayments in certain capital borrowings would mean an extra cost of \$3.6m for every \$10m outlaid. Millions of dollars which would have remained in my region will now go to Canberra. The money previously distributed to shareholders or retained for future expansion will be lost from my region. The State and Federal coalitions have certainly deserted the sugar and horticultural industries.

Worst of all, on her own admission the Treasurer has done nothing towards reducing unemployment. In fact, the long-term unemployed now have fewer opportunities for training and employment because of the

\$8.2m cut in program funding, in addition to the \$200,000 lost due to Federal Government cuts.

**Mr Santoro:** Your heart's really in this, isn't it?

**Mrs BIRD:** How many coffees has the Minister had?

By passing the responsibility to private sectors, Mrs Sheldon has played Pontius Pilate with the lives of the young, long-term unemployed. Already the unemployed have lost much-needed employment because of the Sheldon freeze and now the Budget papers show that another \$400m has gone. A 35 per cent increase in bank debits means that more of a burden is placed on the people who can afford to withdraw only small amounts as opposed to those who can afford regular, large withdrawals. Battlers will be worse off, especially those who smoke.

Most of my constituents are disappointed at the loss of two police stations and the watch-house—a commitment of the Labor Government. I remind the Government that Proserpine and Cannonvale Police Stations were grossly neglected under the Bjelke-Petersen Government. Proserpine had one manual typewriter and in tropical Queensland the station had no airconditioning, only two fans. The most distasteful aspect of the Proserpine station was that female officers had no toilets. Female officers were forced to pass urinals on their way to the toilets and had to cough very loudly on the way out. The people of Proserpine will not tolerate being ignored by the coalition Government again. Whitsunday is a fast-growing area with a large itinerant population.

I wonder if the Minister for Police is aware that recent rosters show the station without an officer for two hours every second Friday, with only one administrative staff member in the office. Whitsunday is pleased that the Government has endorsed the previous Government's refurbishment of the Proserpine Hospital by proceeding with the foreshadowed capital works. The previous Government, through the Mackay Regional Health Authority, should be congratulated for its tremendous work in the ordered and subsequent negotiations, design and planning of the hospital. The staff, and especially the medical supervisor, Evan Ackermann, have worked under difficult circumstances for some time while the plans and audits were being done. They deserve congratulations for their patience.

I had hoped that the Minister for Transport would be in the House. Recently

some buildings have been knocked down in Brisbane and we are about to see our railway station in Bowen knocked down. It is a heritage station and we believe that it should be restored and kept for future generations. In addition, I want to congratulate the teachers and the cleaners at the schools who have worked hard over the past few weeks for their area rebate incentives. I hope that the Minister sticks to his decision not to sack the cleaners and bring in contract cleaners.

**Mr PALASZCZUK (Inala) (9 p.m.):** One of the most important commodities which is indispensable for life and for the progress of society is water. Its management, or lack thereof, will become one of the great issues confronting us in the twenty-first century. Overseas, water has become one of the main issues confronting society today. Where water is not in short supply, pollution, waste and other management shortcomings are common.

If we look at Europe, we can see that many multinational companies have taken control of the provision of water. Actually, they have spread their tentacles over to America as well. Seven of the top 20 companies in the American water distribution market are European owned. In South Australia, with the privatisation of Adelaide City's water supply, multinational companies based in France and England gained the ownership of that water supply. The South Australian Government has admitted that foreign multinationals now have a monopoly on its private water market. Some 1,500 people have lost their jobs as a result of South Australia's water policy. In the next year, another 700 people will also lose their jobs.

In Queensland, the Minister for Natural Resources is planning to go down exactly the same path as South Australia, namely, the privatisation of our water supply. Because of the decentralised nature of Queensland, it is my contention that with privatisation user pays will become the operative term, with remote area residents and families paying much more for that basic commodity than they do now. The Minister for Natural Resources must guarantee that remote communities will not be hit hardest by privatisation, that no jobs will be lost and that water quality will be maintained. The Minister for Natural Resources also must guarantee that, if he intends to go down this path, Queensland's water supply must remain in the hands of Queensland companies.

There are many nations with private water suppliers which simply do not measure up to our standards. I believe that, once the profit motive becomes the major influence on the

water supply, quality will ultimately suffer. With future corporate belt tightening, quality again will be the first to suffer. The Minister knows how unpopular privatisation will be and has tried to pass it off as commercialisation. The Minister is attempting to pass the move off as commercialisation despite his claims that water rights will be sold and private firms will be permitted to build, own and operate water infrastructure.

Since the announcement of the Minister's Water Infrastructure Task Force, whose members I believe are doing a good job, much has been boasted by the Minister of new projects being promoted. In the Budget, \$1 billion has been set aside for the provision of infrastructure for water resources over the next 15 years. It is my contention that this scheme is a continuation of the previous Government's \$600m water infrastructure package. The principal items comprised a Fitzroy Basin strategy, which included major dams on the Dawson and Comet Rivers, a pipeline from the Eungella Dam to the Bowen Basin coalfields, and the raising of the Bedford and Bingegan Weirs. Other projects included an off-stream storage at St George, new work in the upper and central Burnett, a water supply scheme on the Granite Belt and a pipeline in north-west Queensland from the Julius Dam to serve the Ernest Henry mine and others.

I intend to make a much longer contribution in this House at a later time in response to the ministerial statements made by the Minister for Natural Resources over the past four weeks. However, it is probably in the all-important area of broadscale tree clearing that the natural resources budget fails the people of Queensland, both rural and city people alike. With the exception of the Government opposite and a few of its redneck friends, it is now widely accepted that our past rate of tree clearing, particularly of our western leasehold lands, was totally unsustainable and that the policy is in need of immediate redress. Labor in Government had done just that. A Statewide tree-clearing policy has been extensively consulted on and a preliminary tree-clearing policy put in place with widespread agreement from producers right through to the environmentalists.

However, could this Government accept that? No way. It went out of its way to discredit the policy, pull it apart, go back to scratch and start all over again on some flimsy premise of its science being better than ours. This Budget continues this dilly-dallying approach. We are not going to see the collection of so-called baseline data on Statewide tree clearing

before June 1997. This is the data from which the new tree-clearing policies and guidelines are going to be devised. It is anybody's guess when we will see the controls in place. One would not have to be an Einstein to work out what will happen in the meantime. Bulldozers will be working overtime. More of our virgin scrub from one end of the State to the other will end up lying horizontal courtesy of a pulling chain. The only hope we have will be in those areas that are still drought-stricken, with the property owners unable to afford to contract scrub clearers.

If Labor were still in Government, these urgently needed controls would be in place. Landowners would know exactly where they stood, what they could and could not clear and in what configuration. For the first time in the State, we would see grazing, agriculture and nature co-existing side by side, rather than the scorched-earth policy Government members made an art form in the sixties, seventies and eighties and which it is obviously hell-bent continuing with in the nineties. While the rest of Australia is madly replanting the overcleared, degraded lands of southern Australia, this Government is hell-bent on repeating past mistakes. History will record this Government as having committed a wide range of sins but, without doubt, the travesty that is the devastation of western Queensland rangelands will stand out as a shining beacon of political poverty, petty parochialism and environmental madness.

At this point, I wish to raise an issue which I consider to be of grave concern to our communities unless it is met front on by a whole-of-Government approach. Honourable members opposite would have heard of late of home invasions whereby thieves enter the homes of innocent people and attack them until they hand over money or possessions. Many of these victims are elderly and cannot defend themselves. In other cases, victims have their purses snatched and are knocked to the ground and savagely beaten even when walking home from church on a Sunday. All honourable members would be aware of these incidents, as they see them almost every night on the television news.

The question that begs for an answer is why criminals have become so brazen. Many robberies are committed by youths, some as young as six years old, while others are committed by well-organised criminals. It is my considered opinion that many of these crimes could be prevented if the right signals were sent out into the community. However, the wrong signals have been sent out into the community by politicians in this State. As an

example, over the past two years, we heard nothing other than the former Opposition talking tough on crime and highlighting the issue of crime. The now Police Minister and the now Attorney-General waxed lyrical almost nightly on the evening news about what they were going to do when they achieved Government. They talked tough. Now they are in Government, no action is being taken. Absolutely nothing has changed. The thieves and the would-be thieves have now received the signal that tough talk means nothing at all, because they are still not being apprehended. So they continue their criminal activities and become even more brazen because they know they can get away with it.

That leads me to introduce to honourable members the latest crime becoming more prevalent in my electorate, and I presume in other electorates, and that is the crime of school invasions. Most of the Inala schools have been subjected to a school invasion. What happens is that, at any time during school hours, gangs of juveniles, some as young as six years old, enter the school grounds and disrupt the school routine.

Examples of school invasions include the following: juveniles invading the parade of a primary school and throwing stones at teachers, students and parents, using obscenities and then claiming that no-one can touch them. When asked to leave, they refuse or move along to vacant classrooms and proceed to smash windows. When the hardworking police arrive, they of course can do nothing because their hands are tied. Other examples are waves of juveniles smashing the windows of teachers' cars, throwing stones through classrooms, attacking students, robbing teachers' belongings and even burning toilet rolls. At least one school has considered hiring security guards to patrol the school grounds to protect teachers, cars, belongings and school property. Where is all this going to end? Teachers are terrified to go to work. Stress leave and sick leave is on the increase, and in the long run it is the education of the innocent young children at those schools that suffers.

Three weeks ago, the principals of the area held a crisis meeting to attempt to devise a strategy to overcome this problem. The police are willing to assist, but their resources are already stretched to the limit in patrolling the district, and long response times to calls mean that they are sometimes of no assistance. During the election campaign, the Minister for Police promised a police officer for every high school. But in my area, the situation of school invasions has escalated to

such a degree that primary schools have become a greater risk. I understand that the Minister's promise is now down to five police officers throughout Queensland. Five is not enough just for the schools in my electorate.

It is with great reluctance that I have raised this issue in the House tonight, because I do not want to see my electorate portrayed in a bad light in the media. However, as this situation is so critical, I implore the Government to do something. I believe that the Minister for Police, the Minister for Families, the Minister for Education and the Attorney-General should convene an extraordinary meeting with the Inala school community as a matter of urgency to tackle the immediate crisis before someone is badly injured. "School invasions" is an emotive term, but to teachers who are not used to coping with intruders, it is the only term they can use.

**Mr Grice:** Mr Palaszczuk—

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I would take interjections from the honourable member for Broadwater, but unfortunately I have so much to deal with this evening that I do not think I will be able to respond to him. I have two more issues that I want to raise. They are of grave importance to the area of natural resources and to my electorate.

All honourable members would have heard me talk at length in this House about the problems being confronted by the cattle producers of Windorah with the proposal to bring in cotton growing at a property called Currareva.

**Mr Santoro:** When did you last speak about this?

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** The Honourable the Minister is absent from this House so often that he is unable to hear the proceedings of the House. If he attended this Chamber more often, he might know what is going on.

**Mr Veivers** interjected.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** As for the Honourable the Minister for Sport—I had better be nice to him, because I think there are some goodies in the Budget for one of my high schools, so I will leave him go.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Laming): Order! The member for Redlands!

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your protection.

I believe that we should congratulate the cattle producers who live around the Windorah area—which, of course, is along the Cooper Creek area—on being able to convene one of

the most important events to occur in western Queensland this century. I refer to a meeting of scientists from all over Australia to discuss the problems in relation to the proposal to grow cotton in the Windorah area. For the record, I intend to read to the House an open letter to the Minister for Natural Resources, the Honourable Howard Hobbs, from the cattle producers of Windorah—members of his own electorate. It states—

"Based on the outcomes of the Workshop, we recommend that the Queensland Government:

- (i) rejects the application by the Currareva Partnership for the proposed Currareva Agricultural Development . . .
- (ii) rejects all future applications for intensive agriculture projects involving cultivation and/or irrigation on the Lake Eyre Basin rivers in Queensland;
- (iii) legislates to improve the process of dealing with water allocation and other natural resource management issues of this nature; and
- (iv) takes a lead role in the development of an interstate Lake Eyre Basin catchment management structure with appropriate resources and powers to ensure the long term protection of the ecological integrity of the Basin.

These recommendations are made in recognition of the following facts:"—

and it should be remembered that these are recommendations from 14 of the most eminent scientists in Australia—

- the Cooper Creek is a highly complex, highly productive and environmentally sensitive system of great importance to the ecology of the Lake Eyre Basin and to its people
- the Cooper system is also of national and international ecological importance, and protection of the system is essential . . ."

For the benefit of honourable members opposite, I point out that the Lake Eyre Basin occupies one-sixth of the land mass of Australia, whereas the Murray-Darling Basin is a smaller basin. That puts into perspective for honourable members opposite the extent of the problem that we are facing here.

**Mr Veivers** interjected.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I am trying to be nice to the Honourable the Minister for Sport because he has some goodies in the Budget for my electorate. The letter continues—

- the Channel Country is an area of naturally very high wind erosion activity. The cultivation of soils and removal of natural vegetation in the Cooper will greatly accelerate wind erosion rates
- pesticide transport in dust picked up by dust storms and mechanical means may contribute to pollution of Cooper Creek and other water bodies
- the aquatic and terrestrial ecology of the Cooper is intimately dependent on its flow regime"—

and the list of facts continues. In conclusion, the letter states—

"On taking all of these issues into account, we believe that implementation of the proposed irrigation project would involve unacceptable risks to the environment and to the established communities of the area. These views have received the full support of over 70 additional participants at the Cooper Creek workshop"—

most of whom were cattle producers of the area—

"including representatives from the local and wider national community, environmental groups, and other scientists."

For the information of honourable members, I have here a list of all the participating scientists. Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that I have not done the right thing, but I seek approval to have this list of scientists tabled and incorporated in *Hansard*.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Has the member checked with the Speaker?

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I have not checked, but as you can see, it is just a list of eminent scientists.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Is leave granted?

**Mr Veivers:** No.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I accept that. Thank you.

**Mr Veivers:** No. I wasn't allowed to table two documents by the former Speaker.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** That will go all over the Cooper when I get out there in two weeks' time.

I turn now to the important area of the Bureau of Ethnic Affairs, which has been transferred to the Premier's portfolio. I want to quote from the Ministerial Program Statements for the Premier. The program goal is stated to be—

"To increase harmony, cohesion and participation in Queensland's culturally diverse society—with particular focus on the needs and endeavours of ethnic community members—for the benefit of all Queenslanders."

It is my hope that all members opposite take note of that statement. After an investigation of the program outlays and given that \$2.76m was spent on this area in 1995-96, I am at a loss to explain why only \$2.552m has been set aside for the 1996-97 period. That represents a reduction of about \$200,000. Yet in her Budget Speech the Treasurer claimed that additional funds have been provided. I find this a little difficult to understand, but it is in keeping with similar statements by the Treasurer in other sections of her Budget Speech.

At a time when ethnic communities are facing increased pressures with racial attacks on certain sections of their communities, I would have thought that the Treasurer would have increased rather than reduced the funding in this area. We on the Opposition side support ethnic communities and the Bureau of Ethnic Affairs in a bipartisan way. However, our bipartisanship is sorely tested when we read in the *Courier-Mail* this morning the Director of the Bureau of Ethnic Affairs waxing lyrical in his praise of the Premier. Why the director of a bureau whose funding has been cut would applaud his Premier's commitment to multiculturalism escapes me. I might just leave it at that.

**Mr BRISKEY** (Cleveland) (9.20 p.m.): Queensland has the highest unemployment figure of all the mainland States—9.8 per cent, up from 9 per cent. That is a full percentage point higher than the national average. With a 9.8 per cent unemployment rate in Queensland, this Government should be ashamed of itself.

**Mr Mulherin** interjected.

**Mr BRISKEY:** Exactly. This Government's freeze on Government spending, which it denied, has been a contributing factor to this increase in unemployment in Queensland. What has this

Government done since it has been in power to address the problem? Nothing! It has merely made it worse. If it had been able to sack 6,500 school cleaners, the unemployment figure in December would have been even higher. This Government has no concern for the unemployed; it has no interest in helping them with skills, development or training. This Government is following in the footsteps of its Federal colleagues, who in their Budget scrapped funding for job training. The Liberals and Nationals in Canberra do not care about those without jobs, nor do their colleagues in Queensland. If they did, they would have as their first priority policies and programs to create jobs and provide training for those in our community who cannot get work. When the Federal Labor Government was in power, training in labour market programs was in place to help the unemployed, most especially the long-term unemployed. Indeed, under the Queensland Labor Government, training schemes and job programs were expanded in an endeavour to provide valuable training to those without jobs and to provide work for people through labour market programs.

This Government has failed every Queensland family because every Queensland family is affected by unemployment. With an increasing unemployment rate, the Government should have continued with our Government's programs and expanded them rather than abolish them. By abolishing them, this Government shows that it has no regard for those in our community who are without work. Liberal and National Party Governments have an interesting approach to high unemployment. They sack public servants and increase unemployment. Indeed, instead of implementing strategies to help unemployed people find work and implementing programs to give them the required skills, they sack public servants and thereby make the problem worse.

In the August Federal Budget, the National and Liberal Party Government threw another 3,200 people out of their jobs in the Department of Administrative Services. What about their families? Liberal and National Party people simply do not care. As long as they follow their philosophical line of small government, people do not matter. The minority National/Liberal Government in Queensland is simply following the lead of its Federal counterparts. Unemployment is something in which it is not interested. To this Government, it is simply a word—a percentage. The unemployed are real people,

they have families, they have aspirations, and this Government's solution to their problems is to sack more public servants and to do away with important initiatives that Labor Governments have put in place to assist the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed.

Liberal/National Party Governments are Governments without soul. They are Governments that do not see the plight of those without jobs; they simply do not care. In the light of high and increasing unemployment, what does the Federal Liberal/National Party Government do? On top of the 3,200 public servants already going, another 10,500 will be sacked. Those 13,700 sacked Federal public servants and their families fail to see how losing their jobs will help the unemployment problem. I, too, fail to see how increasing the number of unemployed helps to solve the problem of high unemployment. Indeed, this Government is following the Federal Government in endeavouring to solve the high unemployment problem by sacking more public servants. It tried it with 6,500 school cleaners, but it was forced to back down. It is, however, getting rid of 150 public servants involved in programs to help the unemployed.

That is good logic! Some bright spark in the Minister's office says, "Unemployment in Queensland is 9.8 per cent, let's fix that by sacking 150 public servants and abolishing the public sector Subsidies and Trainees Program, the Job Training and Placement Program and the Youth Employment Service." What does this Government do? It takes that advice and abolishes those programs and sacks those public servants. After all, it is only the unemployed who will suffer! That is the attitude of this Government. Unemployment is not a problem that it wants to know about. It is someone else's problem. This Government is here to make the Public Service smaller. It is not here to worry about people or their futures. That is this Government's attitude regarding those who cannot find work.

What of the Minister for Training's attitude. He said, "This Government does not believe in creating mickey mouse training opportunities." On Wednesday in this House, Mr Santoro called those training schemes developed by professional Queensland public servants "mickey mouse training opportunities". I am sure that those who put their heart and soul into helping the unemployed in this State to get on their feet and find work would have been delighted with Mr Santoro's comments about their efforts. I have met people who have been helped

through State Government programs and who have found work or gone on to other training or study and I have spoken to the dedicated public servants who have helped them. They are not mickey mouse training opportunities, they are programs that are believed in by those who run them and they give more to those programs than just their paid work time. They put in a lot of unpaid time and effort because they are trying to help others in our community, especially those who have never had a job and who feel that they have no future.

I thank the 150 public servants who have worked so hard and who have now lost their jobs because of this Government—a Government without a soul. I can guarantee those people that the Labor Opposition in this place appreciated their efforts. What they were endeavouring to achieve through the programs and training schemes was worthwhile and it was appreciated by all those who were helped. Their jobs may be gone, but they will be back as soon as this loony tunes Government is thrown out by the people of Queensland. This Government has no soul. It does not care about those who are without jobs. Instead of increasing the number of training opportunities following the Federal Government's cuts, it has slashed them further.

The Federal Government has decided to cut \$1.8 billion from training programs over the next four years. These cuts will mean that 200,000 people will miss out on assistance. The State Government was aware of this, but instead of helping some of these people by expanding the existing programs, what did it do? It brought down a Budget that cuts funding and sacks public servants so that a further 21,000 people will not receive assistance. That is a further 21,000 people this Government does not care about.

This is an uncaring Government that makes promises to the people of Queensland and then breaks those promises without any concern for honesty or integrity in Government. We saw evidence of this with the school cleaners and the changes to workers' compensation, and now we see further evidence of it in this Budget. Promises were made regarding no new taxes, and those promises were simply ignored. This Government made a commitment to every Queenslanders; indeed it had a contract with Queenslanders. The Premier said, "We will not attempt to buy Government with promises that ultimately prove empty. If we fail, then throw us out. This is our contract with Queensland." Further, on 3 April this year, the Treasurer



made a promise when she said, "The Premier and I have made a firm commitment that there are no plans for new taxes in the Budget and we stand by that commitment." They are saying to every Queenslander, "Trust us, we won't deceive you", and they have let us all down.

**Mr Mulherin:** "Trust us. We're from the Government."

**Mr BRISKEY:** Exactly.

Every Queensland family will now have to pay more to live in Queensland—in some cases, up to \$787 a year more. That is not bad when the Government made a firm commitment that no family would pay any new tax or any increase in taxes and charges. What do those who live in my electorate within the Redland Shire get for the increases in taxes and charges forced on them? Not much at all. Almost everything in the Budget for the Redland Shire was an initiative of the former Labor Government and was previously funded without the need to hit Redlands families with new and increased taxes and charges. All that this Government has done is reannouce projects that were announced in last year's Budget.

The Cleveland Court House is a prime example. That courthouse was announced in last year's Budget papers. Budget Paper No. 3 announced that a new \$4m courthouse would be built in Cleveland. What do we get in this Budget? The reannouncement of a project that the Labor Government had announced already—a courthouse that should already be started. But this Government has been unable to negotiate with the Redland Shire Council over the siting of the courthouse. Had our Government still been in power, land would have been purchased and the building would have started. Negotiations have stalled because of a lack of ability on behalf of this Government to reach a negotiated solution.

The ambulance stations at Dunwich and Cleveland which were announced in this Budget once again were projects that were announced in last year's Labor Government Budget. In fact, the Dunwich Ambulance Station is finished. Similarly, the \$8m funding for the Moreton Institute of TAFE bayside campus was another announcement of the previous Labor Government. Moneys budgeted for the expansion of the Redland Hospital were also announced previously, with work having begun on this project before the change of Government.

In last year's Budget, \$100,000 was allocated for the construction of the new Cleveland Police Station, with the balance of

\$397,000 to be allocated post 1995-96. There is no allocation in this year's Budget for the new Cleveland Police Station. I am extremely angry that the State Government has not provided funding for the construction of a new Cleveland Police Station. Our police officers in Cleveland work in a building which is in such a dilapidated state that it should be demolished, yet this minority Borbidge/Sheldon Government has failed to provide funding for a new police station. The people of Cleveland, the police officers and I are extremely disappointed about this. The Labor Government provided funds in the Budget last year to purchase land for the new station with the understanding that additional funding would be provided for the construction of the station this year.

Cleveland police should not have to continue to operate in a substandard working environment. The Treasurer's slush fund, with more than \$250m in it, is money that should be used for the construction of a new police station. This slush fund—the Treasurer's advance fund—had only \$100m in it when Labor was in Government. Why does it now need \$250m? This is not a Budget for Queenslanders. It is not a Budget for Queensland families. It is a Budget full of broken promises and will be remembered as such.

**Mr CARROLL (Mansfield) (9.33 p.m.):** The State Budget is a thoroughly detailed work plan that will achieve those objectives set last year for this National/Liberal coalition Government by the people of Queensland. We carefully listened and reflected the needs and wishes of the people in the policies on which we went to the polls on 15 July 1995. A total of 54.6 per cent of Queenslanders said that they wanted this Government to implement those policies. We went to the people with assurances that we wanted to avoid new taxes and yet to offer a balanced Budget. I congratulate our Treasurer and her team, who offer Queensland a Budget that is generous but well focused on needs and careful stewardship.

I am pleased to support both Bills before the House. I turn first to the budget for this Parliament. The sum of \$9m is allowed for the Office of the Speaker, the Committees office, our excellent Parliamentary Library, the Table Office, Hansard, Education and Protocol Office as well as Attendants. In addition, expenditure of \$30m is recommended for the office of the Clerk of the Parliament, Human Resource Management, Information Technology Services, Property Services, Catering, Security and Administration at the Brisbane Parliament

House complex, as well as electorate office support services and the salaries and allowances due to elected members of this Assembly. Spending in the 1996-97 parliamentary budget is therefore to increase 4.8 per cent above that of 1995-96. Staff numbers are to increase by only 6.85 FTE, or 1.77 per cent. I want to congratulate all the staff. They are always courteous, discreet, efficient and loyal. Those engaged in gardening, security, maintenance and catering at Parliament House and the Annexe deserve special commendation for their excellent work.

Turning to the State Budget Appropriation Bill—I want to highlight a couple of important allocations specific to the Mansfield electorate. Funding of \$850,000 goes to the Koala Coast Protection Plan—a matter of some debate in the eastern half of the electorate. It is different from the Brisbane City Council Koala Park Acquisition Program, which I have mentioned previously in this place, because it is closely tied to that State plan. I have made strong representations for constituents in the Burbank area who want to conserve their property and are quite prepared to lock up their land as part of Brisbane's koala park in a way that not only lawfully binds the present owners but also future owners and local governments.

The owners of two particularly beautiful pieces of bush acreage have had a running battle with the Brisbane City Council, which is now insistent upon formally acquiring those pieces of land. There is a serious problem, though. The landowners were told previously by council and State Government employees that the subject land is wanted as an ecotourism base, in other words, for its commercial value. There are other factors that indicate that this land will be exploited for commercial reasons. The landowners affected understandably believe that this is an amoral land grab for one arm of the city council that has gone feral. Why would any sensible council forcibly acquire that land for a couple of million dollars when the landowners have offered to sign the most advanced style of voluntary conservation agreement that would not only permanently bind title to that land but also commit Government to rezone or lock up that land? The latter exercise would truly protect the land at very little expense to the public purse.

It is good enough for that council to boast this month in its *R & H News* magazine about having five VCAs over 33 hectares of bushland and having 50 other sites targeted for VCAs, but curiously the council needs to own the Jenyns family estate at Burbank outright. That family has already suffered

pressure from the council, which led to council acquiring many hectares of their family estate. The land so acquired is not being properly cared for or protected for the purpose that council claimed it.

These inconsistent attitudes by the council to its koala park land grab must be resolved, but Lord Mayor Soorley's team refuse to negotiate. Instead, they are levying Brisbane ratepayers to indulge their covert power play. That sort of two-faced behaviour record has left a dark cloud over our State Government Koala Coast Protection Plan couched in State Planning Policy 1/95 gazetted in January. Members of the Koala Action Group at Thornlands have boasted of exploiting koala phobia to secure funding for experimental projects, such as koala counting. I would be interested to know how much money is likely to go to that.

There are some disturbing aspects of claims by KAG and its guest speakers, who profess to know the full background of the Labor Government gazettal of SPP 1/95. Those speakers, including Councillor Helen Murray, who has focused attention on koalas in the Redland Shire Council, particularly in strategic planning, rezoning and dog issues, have been reported to me as crowing that not only has the Government been misled into paying millions of dollars for land that has no koalas and will not sustain koalas but also into providing hefty grants to amateurish minority interest organisations that cash in on koala funding. I want to give clear notice to those people and anyone who tries to deceive this Government or the people of the Mansfield electorate that they will be exposed as frauds.

I am informed that Councillor Murray quoted Jack Venman as having said, "Helen, don't come up here"—that is, the Venman reserve near Daisy Hill—"looking for koalas. They're all at Thornside." The truth is that the remaining trees providing best koala food are in the better soil of the damper coastal and creek areas, not in the dry, stony hills. Those groups and some Government offices have endeavoured to hide soil surveys from those who energetically oppose the Koala Coast Protection Plan. But the soil type information makes interesting reading. It has led those objectors to believe that the State Government was deceived into declaring a green belt under the guise of the KCPP. That makes me very angry and I want to know the truth. It makes a lot of those property owners angry, too, when they know that what the Labor Government told them is simply not true.

Limited resources applied to koala conservation mean that only the right land will be protected and cultivated as koala habitat. Neither public money nor private resources should be tied up in the wrong land. We know that the koala is the popularly acceptable flagship for animal conservation, but it will be torpedoed if it is a decoy for green belt preservation or eco-tourism that is not necessarily going to sit comfortably with the proclaimed intention of preserving the valuable remaining wildlife, including wallabies, frogs and snakes, in that area.

At page 84 of Budget Paper No. 2, I see \$8m is allocated over the next three years for native species protection to acquire land in the Koala Coast region of south-east Queensland to conserve habitat for a range of native flora and fauna series. I notice from page 4 of Budget Paper No. 3 that \$10m will be spent over three years, beginning with a slug of \$5m this year, on native species protection and park infrastructure rejuvenation. Those hefty allocations must be made on the basis of honest claims from those seeking to justify them.

The koala action group that I have mentioned also looks forward, apparently, to Government grants to actually count koalas on some blocks of land. That group intends to calculate mathematically the number of koalas on other lands. The Concerned Residents Action Group, CRAG, have a note from a conservation officer indicating that there is no conclusive evidence as to the concentration of koalas in those areas. Those two pieces of evidence, I believe, show that the green blanket of the KCPP is hiding a lack of information and perhaps a secret plan. I have been given evidence that senior environmental officers have spelled out plans for the Chandler/Burbank area to be a lucrative eco-tourism centre, bigger and better than Fleay's Wildlife Park and Currumbin Sanctuary rolled into one. I know that this Government has already commended eco-tourism in more remote locations. Our Minister for Environment is in the process of reviewing the Koala Coast Protection Plan, which has admirable objectives but lots of hooks. I am confident that he will take these new revelations into account so that my constituents have a truthful explanation of any necessary conservation measures.

There are lots of good news items in this back to basics Budget which I commend to the House. I refer to items such as \$410,000 for master plan and administration upgrade—new block—at Mount Petrie State Primary where the hardworking principal Kerry Dere, his

staff and the P & C now see enrolments increasing. The QE II Hospital redevelopment will see capital investment of \$10m this year, with another \$1m to follow over the next two years.

In the part of the Budget relating to justice, expenditure on the CJC is to be reined in a little. I draw attention of honourable members to page 7 of the 1994-95 annual report summary of the Criminal Justice Commission which boasts of the plan of the CJC on behalf of the people of Queensland to reduce public sector misconduct. In light of the comments raised today by the member for Broadwater about the conduct of the CJC, I wonder who is guarding the guards. As Mr Le Grand heads the Official Misconduct Division of the CJC, it is worth noting that that division is the largest in the CJC comprising approximately half of the commissions' officers. He is the director responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct against members of the Queensland Police Service and investigates official misconduct against officers of other units of public administration.

A major proportion of the \$20m each year is expended on the Official Misconduct Division. The irony of that situation is that, last year, the Federal Labor member for McEwen tipped a bucket in the Federal Parliament on the most senior law enforcement official within the Criminal Justice Commission, Mr Le Grand, while that Federal member's Labor mate, Mr Goss, was in power in Queensland. What happened in response to that? Absolutely nothing. The CJC was apparently allowed to investigate itself and, until today, we were no closer to identifying the source of the Operation Wallah leaks.

The issues raised by the member for Broadwater are extremely serious and they demand an immediate response. I want to know, in light of this new evidence, why the CJC was allowed to investigate itself in the first place. It is interesting to look back at the possible risk of that, which was foreshadowed in a comment by the previous Clerk of this State Parliament, Mr Alan Woodward, in about 1989. He is said to have mentioned that parliamentary sovereignty would be lost and House powers handed to a non-elected body to be monitored by a parliamentary committee.

The evidence before the member for Broadwater clearly suggests a massive cover-up of monumental proportions. There is nothing more destructive in the fight against crime in this State than to have our law enforcement officials and their agencies under

a cloud of suspicion for corrupt activities. As the member for Broadwater said earlier today, it is the taxpayers who are funding the CJC. We are spending more than \$20m a year to keep that agency afloat, not to mention the legal costs of those appearing before it.

The public deserves to be assured that their law enforcement officials adhere to an appropriate standard of integrity and accountability, and anything less is simply unacceptable. I fully support the need for an inquiry into the Criminal Justice Commission in regard to this matter. I believe that the issues raised in this Parliament today warrant an immediate and urgent investigation. This Parliament is the ultimate controller of the CJC. If an honest complainant appears to have good cause for sidestepping the intermediaries, then this Parliament should hear the gist of that allegation.

This informant claims to have been told by the person impugned that the latter manipulated State and Federal members of Parliament plus the PCJC and, by implication, the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee even while I was a member of it. That is ample justification to bring that complaint direct to the Parliament and I believe that the Parliament must see that the proposed inquiry begins immediately with sufficiently broad terms of reference to clear the air once and for all. In case honourable members are wondering why the documents were not referred to the PCJC, I can tell them that the complainant has lost faith in that particular watchdog. As a lawyer I give my total support to an immediate inquiry.

I turn now to items of particular interest to the electorate of Mansfield. I note that \$13m has been allocated for the completion of the four-lane divided carriageway for the Capalaba bypass, which I mentioned in this House recently. The sum of \$75.1m has been allocated for Queensland Motorways Limited to complete the last stage of construction of the southern Brisbane bypass, which I mentioned yesterday, along with the duplication of the Logan Motorway west of Wembley Road to the Ipswich Motorway. That will certainly ease some traffic at the Garden City intersection.

As part of an integrated regional transport plan for south-east Queensland, \$8m has been set aside for a busway and high vehicle occupancy lanes for the South East Freeway and Pacific motorway between Brisbane City and the Logan Motorway. The sum of \$10m has been set aside for the QE II Jubilee Hospital redevelopment involving installation of

doctors' offices on the top floor so that the breast screening clinic can be completed on the ground floor, for the fit-out of two additional theatres, the upgrade of facilities to accommodate enhanced rehabilitation services as well as surgical needs and the provision of enhanced accident and emergency services. I hope the days will be gone forever when ambulances are told to bypass that very strategically located and important hospital.

The upgrade of the Challinor Centre for intellectually disabled people is a particularly pleasing announcement. I note that new initiatives in funding for the upgrade of the Basil Stafford centre for intellectually disabled has also been announced.

In the past, the State's land titling system has been a problem. It is pleasing to see that that system will be further upgraded to allow it to cope with increased occupant registration in boom times. That should bring the system one step closer to offering electronic settlements, which will cut out much travel and time wasting for vendors and purchasers in remote or rural areas.

Police numbers will be strengthened under a Police Service budget increase of 7.3 per cent, taking law and order expenditure to a record \$573.84m. That is certainly going to be important to the people of Mansfield where, from time to time, crime is still occurring.

Finally, I mention that, in this big picture, \$500m in expenditure cuts along with increases in tobacco tax and bank account debits tax ensured that we brought down a balanced Budget in 1996-97. Despite these relatively small tax increases, Queenslanders will still pay no more State tax per capita than last year, and less than any other State. All in all, this Budget will restore confidence and gently restart our economy. I urge all honourable members to support the Bill.

**Hon. J. FOURAS** (Ashgrove) (9.51 p.m.): I was interested to hear the previous speaker, the member for Mansfield, say that this Budget will restore confidence. No doubt that is wishful thinking, because I believe that there will be no confidence. Quite frankly, the people of Queensland will see through the charade of half-truths and broken promises in this Budget. The other day we saw the ads in the newspaper—that highly expensive and unfortunate public relations exercise that appeared in newspapers throughout the State—that said that we had a back to basics Budget. Those ads should really have been saying that we had a Budget of half-truths and broken promises.

For me, the most fascinating thing that came out of this Budget debate was the Treasurer's statement that it was because of the coalition's seven-month delay in assuming office that it inherited Budget difficulties. That is absolute proof that this coalition Government is not ready for Government. It certainly did not hit the ground running. It is certainly not ready. From the first day of the coalition Government, the Treasurer has tried her best to undermine business confidence. Members opposite can no longer say that this Budget will restore confidence. Over the last seven months, that confidence has evaporated.

The high point was the tabling of the FitzGerald audit. When the Premier tabled that report, I interjected quite vociferously and suggested that he throw it in the bin. I saw the graphs on the cover of the FitzGerald audit that showed this ballooning underlying deficit. If that was the case, we would not today be discussing a Budget such as this one and we would not be discussing a Budget of record expenditure.

To the credit of Opposition members, before even the economic analysts said that the report was a sham, we said that it was a sham. We knew that our stewardship of the Queensland economy was second to none. Of course, after that many competent economic commentators said the same. Daily, we had this heralding of the fact that Queensland was in an economic crisis and that it had an underlying deficit which, as time went on, seemed to grow. It grew from \$180m to \$240m. Of course, in the end, what goes around comes around.

If members look at the Budget papers, they will see unequivocally that there is a cash surplus of \$2.3m, there is an underlying surplus of \$1.3 billion, and there is a surplus of \$48m using accrual accounting—not a deficit, as the FitzGerald audit showed. More than that, the former Government had a large surplus of \$240m in its Budget—and the coalition was calling it a black hole. The coalition was saying that we were ripped off by the Federal Government to the tune of \$250m, which is not true. Page 8 of the Budget Overview indicates an increase of 5.5 per cent in cash payments from the Commonwealth—an increase of \$253.5m.

I will not talk about the macro elements of this Budget for much longer. However, during her speech the Treasurer stated—and this dumbfounded me absolutely—that taxation would not rise for the average consumer. What a joke! If members look at the Budget

papers, they will see an increase of 4.8 per cent. Anybody who can add up will find out that that increase is greater than the inflation and population rates.

As the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Beattie, said in his speech, this Budget sees the greatest raid on trust funds that has ever been contained in a Queensland Budget. If the former Government had done something like that, imagine what Mr Borbidge and Mrs Sheldon would have been saying! They would have been pillorying us from one end of Queensland to the other. We see \$227m taken from the Queensland Infrastructure Finance Fund as well as a further \$167m from the sale of the State gas pipeline. That totals \$394m. Of course, the avarice of that mob opposite, their need to get their hands on money and to empty hollow logs, does not stop there. We actually have a further stripping of \$700m of dividends from Queensland State enterprises—a 100 per cent increase.

Time after time, I remember sitting in the Speaker's chair and listening to the Premier, when he was the Leader of the Opposition, complaining bitterly about the Labor Government raiding Government enterprises and saying that it was emptying hollow logs. The Labor Government did nothing of the sort. However, his Government and his Treasurer stand condemned for doing just that.

We should also look at the other macro factor in this Budget and that is the record expenditure on capital works. The coalition has made a lot of this expenditure. It regards it as the best selling point of the Budget. In fact, the coalition says that it is a 25 per cent increase on last year. Of course, the coalition forgot to tell the public of Queensland that it froze \$406m from the 1995-96 Capital Works Program and, of that amount, \$383m was returned to capital works. So really, when one analyses last year's capital works budget of \$3.6 billion and this year's expenditure, one sees that it is only through the fact that the coalition did not spend the money that the former Government had allocated and carried it over to this year's Budget that it can say that it has a record capital works budget. Again, that is part of the rubbery figures and the fraud that we have had to put up with in this Budget.

However, in macro terms, my most serious concern about this Budget is what the coalition has done in relation to recurrent spending. Mr Borbidge and other members of the coalition always criticised the former Government for being the big-spending Goss Labor Government. We were castigated by everyone for being big spenders. Of course,

we now have a Budget with total outlays increasing by 11.9 per cent, which is the largest increase that we have seen for a very, very long time. If one looks further into the Budget, one sees that there is an increase of 6.6 per cent in recurrent spending. I think that that is not sustainable.

I am seriously concerned that this Government is saying that it is going to phase out land tax and that it will continue to make sure that there is no growth in payroll tax. Those two taxes bring growth into the Queensland Budget. When the Government says unequivocally that it is going to phase out land tax for those millionaires down the Gold Coast and that it is going to limit the paying of payroll tax to fewer and fewer people, the bottom line is that the only thing the Government can do is to sell the family silver. It is not going to be able to fund its Budget because it will not have any growth in expenditure. Instead, it will have to impose a user-pays system on people, such as those people using national parks and those people going to TAFE colleges, and increase tobacco tax. That is the only way the Government will be able to fund its increased expenditure. I think that that is an absolute disgrace.

We do not see any privatisation in this Budget, and I am very pleased about that. However, in my view, the only reason that we are not seeing privatisation in this Budget is that the Government does not have an absolute majority in the Parliament. I notice that the member for Gladstone has left the Chamber. Because Mr Borbidge is not sure of what the member for Gladstone would do if the Government tried to privatise any of our enterprises, we are not seeing any privatisation in this Budget. Because the Government does not have an absolute majority, it is not game to privatise. Government members tried to privatise school cleaning services and Mrs Cunningham told them where to go. She gave us the numbers to be able to do what we wanted to do. Therefore, I predict that the coalition privatisation agenda will be on hold during the term of this Government because it does not have an absolute majority.

The Labor Party corporatised Government business enterprises, which made them efficient and allowed them to build up assets. The Government is going to strip those enterprises, such as the electricity industry and the ports. These enterprises have cash surpluses in excess of operating requirements and they will continue to provide further one-off contributions to the Budget. What a wonderful phrase—one-off contributions!

The day after the Budget was presented, I was interested to read an analysis of it by Peter Morley, the economic writer for the *Courier-Mail*. Despite the Treasurer's trumpeting about savings of \$500m, she has had great difficulty in indicating to anybody where the savings come from. Mr Morley argued that, allowing for the fact that there is always a bit of fat in Government, savings of this type were indeed quite outstanding. He also said of that \$500m in savings—

"Certainly, it is one that justifies a detailed breakdown."

The Treasurer has refused to answer the questions of Opposition members. She said, "Wait for the Budget." Of course, the Treasurer is not interested in hearing this, but I ask her to tell this Parliament what the make-up of the \$500m in savings is. All we have been told so far is that, short of obtaining information from individual departments, we cannot have the details of how \$500m will be saved. Attempts in the Parliament and by the media to get a breakdown have failed. However, the Treasurer has said quite unequivocally, "Just wait. The Budget debate is on in two days' time and I will tell you then." The Treasurer is not listening now, and I think that is rude. She is refusing to listen to me, but she is talking as hard as she can because she is embarrassed by this issue. I guarantee that the Treasurer will not table information to show how \$500m will be saved.

The public has given the Budget a very poor rating. People see the reluctance of the Treasurer to spell out details, and that does nothing for the credibility or the accountability of the Government, even though Government members are so fond of telling us that that is what they stand for. It is about time that we had a bit of credibility and accountability. Indeed, the Treasurer's failure to provide details has a negative effect. Peter Morley stated—

"Rather, it has the opposite reaction, raising scepticism that some of the Budget figures may bounce if dropped."

There is no doubt about it—the figures are very rubbery and rubbery figures will definitely bounce.

The most important issue for my constituents, and for me as a member of this Parliament, is unemployment. Yesterday, Queensland's unemployment rate rose to 9.8 per cent. This is not just a fluke. If one looks at the figures for the previous three months, the underlying trend has been an increase in the rate. Therefore, this is not a one-off; this is a trend of increasing unemployment in

Queensland. That trend will get worse. However, what do we see in the Budget that will correct that?

I am concerned for the long-term unemployed. Indeed, I chair the Skillshare Program in my electorate, and I will come to that later. In addition to a lot of Federal Government funding, the State Labor Government provided proper funding for employment programs. The Labor Government allocated \$30m to labour programs for the long-term unemployed. Minister Santoro has said—

"The way we will solve the unemployment problem is not by creating mickey mouse, short-term employment opportunities."

What a joke! That shows how callous and indifferent the Minister is. The Minister for Training and Industrial Relations has abolished the Public Sector Subsidies and Trainees Program, the Job Training and Placement Program, the Land Employment Enterprise Facilitation Program and the Youth and Employment Service Program.

We also have Vince Lester, a classic in this place. He supported the cleaners and five members of his electorate who work on this program. He came into this House and cried crocodile tears, saying that they were such good workers that they should be kept on in Government. That is classic Vince Lester! He is always getting away from the bad decisions of the Government. He is everybody's friend. He said what a disgraceful thing this was. I get absolutely annoyed that the people he represents do not see through him, but nevertheless he appears to get away with it very successfully.

Over the next three and a half years, a further \$1.8 billion will be cut from Federal employment programs. As I said earlier, I chair the Skillshare Program at Enoggera. We run a number of programs such as Job Skills and Job Clubs. Of course, the new Work Opportunities Program will also be slashed. I am of the opinion that funding for the Skillshare Program will be discontinued in a year's time. How sad it is for long-term unemployed to have nowhere to go and nobody to care for them.

In many ways, the best thing one can do for the welfare of human beings is to give them work. The right to work and the dignity that comes with working is fundamental in any society. People will always ask, "What do you do?" You are what you do. If a person has a job, they belong, they contribute and they are a part of society. If a person does not have a

job, they have none of that. Therefore, I think this will create a lack of social cohesion.

The other day the secretary to the original Canberra inquiry was quoted in the paper as saying that the biggest danger to social cohesion was unemployment. Everybody worries about deficits and pleasing the financial markets. Ultimately, this country is rich enough and has enough resources to ensure that everybody is given a fair go. Public service is about giving everybody a fair go, it is about providing outcomes for people and it is about making sure that there is social justice. I believe that the Budget denies that in the areas of public housing, employment and training. That is ridiculous. Ultimately, a lot of money will be given out for case management and they will get the best people, not the long-term unemployed. Those people will get the jobs; they will take the money, put it in their pockets and run.

Prior to the last election, Labor promised an extra 500 police over three years. After the grandiose promises that the coalition made in the June 1995 election and the Mundingburra by-election campaigns, we have an increase of 139 police. In electorates like mine, there is a rationalisation of resources. Police stations are being closed and there is a grouping of police stations. In my electorate, the large complex at Ferny Grove which encompassed the CIB and the Juvenile Aid Bureau from The Gap police station—which we built at great expense—will be scattered all over Brisbane. That appears inevitable because of the new complex. Therefore, I plead to the Minister: why not use The Gap Police Station so that we have more policemen on the beat and walking the suburbs. One of the serious problems in The Gap is that young people are playing up and are behaving in an antisocial way because they are bored.

Finally, I turn to the western bypass. I mentioned this issue briefly the other day, but I did not get time to say all I wanted to. The Integrated Regional Transport Plan is in draft form. That plan discusses the need for a study of the western bypass. This has been going on for approximately 20 years in the Ashgrove electorate. In fact, there was a story in one of today's papers about the corridor coming through The Gap. My office has been besieged by calls about that. I say to the Minister, it is about time that we put this to rest.

My position is very clear. I will not support a corridor that runs on the eastern side of the dam. Even if it goes on the other side—which, from what people have told me, will be more

difficult—there is still a problem because it will become a quick route for people coming from the Warrego Highway and Caboolture. With a ring-road, there is always the problem of connecting roads. There are only two possible connecting roads—Samford Road and Waterworks Road. Those roads are already clogged and there will be chaos if they are to be used in that way. Under the current circumstances, although the old Route 20 will take traffic away from the city, the problem is that it will create much more chaos than it alleviates. In a submission to the Transport Minister, I will be saying that I do not believe that we need a study; it is not a goer at all. Ultimately, I want the Minister to say unequivocally to the people of my electorate, "Let's put it to bed." Let us end all the speculation. People are not game to buy land or a house. I have a very good friend who wants to buy a block of land near Payne Road, but he is terrified to do so. I do not blame him, because a corridor is rumoured for the area. It is about time that we settled the issue.

Three days before the last election, my Liberal opponent put a story in a throwaway paper—and I was not even consulted—that the western bypass would go right through The Gap. That was pretty cheeky, but good luck to him. I must admit that it would have hurt a bit and I would have lost some votes. The bottom line is that I do not think the paper should have run that story without seeking my comment. Nevertheless, the stories will keep on going. Rumours and innuendo will be spread by people indicating that this road will be built in that area. It is about time that we fixed that road.

This is a Budget of broken promises and half-truths. It is a Budget based on rubbery figures.

Time expired.

**Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay) (10.12 p.m.): This evening, I would like to speak on the effects the Budget of deceit and broken promises brought down by the Honourable Treasurer in this House on Tuesday will have on my electorate of Mackay. I call it a Budget of deceit and broken promises because the members opposite me and the Premier and the Treasurer would have the people of Mackay think that they fared well from the proceeds directed to this city from the Budget. In fact, the people of Mackay should feel ripped off. They should feel like they have been treated like second-class citizens in comparison with their cousins in the south-east corner of the State. The Treasurer has said

that money should go into this area of Queensland because of the tourist dollar spent there. She thinks that, if facilities are provided, more people will visit and more money will be made. That is probably true, but why should the south-east corner of the State be singled out?

I have said on many occasions in this House that the Mackay regional economy is worth an estimated \$2.6 billion per annum. That represents a per capita contribution from the Mackay district to the Queensland economy of \$23,500, which is substantially above the State average of \$18,400. Mackay's economy is predominantly geared to servicing the mining industry, mainly the coal industry, and the sugar industry. It is one of the most livable cities in Australia. The Minister for Sport will find that out tomorrow. It is nestled between national parks, tropical rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef. Tourism is Mackay's fastest growing industry, with immense potential for future development. The people of Mackay have established cultural and sporting organisations and facilities that on a per capita basis would be unequalled in Australia.

The Queensland Conservatorium of Music established its first campus outside of Brisbane in Mackay and is now under the auspices of the Central Queensland University. Mackay's rental market is one of the tightest in the State, sitting on 1.3 per cent. The reason for this is that everyone wants to live in Mackay because of the climate, the lifestyle and the relatively high job prospects that the city offers. More people are retiring to Mackay than ever before.

In outlining the potential that Mackay has and the contribution that the city makes to our State, I am sorry to say that I can also bring to this House's attention the hypocrisy and lies put forward by the Government in its recent Budget in relation to Mackay. Firstly, I will touch on the topic of tourism. In the recent Federal Budget, a 500 per cent increase in the reef tax was announced. That is an increase from \$1 to \$6 per person per day. Mr Barry Dean, owner of Royleen Cruises in Mackay, who has been running cruise boats out from Mackay to the Great Barrier Reef for many years, said after the announcement of the 500 per cent hike in the tax that if the Federal Government goes ahead with the tax he would have to walk away from his business. Just to rub salt into the wounds of tourist operators such as Mr Dean, the Treasurer decided to charge an additional \$3 per person per day for visitors to national parks. I put it to the House that no average family could afford



the cost of a visit to a national park on the Great Barrier Reef once the coalition Governments have had their way. It is all right for the Treasurer to say that the south-east corner attracts tourists, but surely the Great Barrier Reef, with its worldwide renown, deserves a little better treatment than that dished out by this deceitful Government.

The other setback delivered to the people of Mackay in the coalition's Budget is that the \$8m allocated by the former Goss Labor Government for the construction of the marina at the Mackay harbour, and the associated redevelopment, has been scrapped. The \$8m in funding had been made available by the former Labor Government to assist the Mackay Port Authority in providing infrastructure development for a marina, which would have included a new southern breakwater. No doubt this cut has been made to help pay for the abolition of the \$200m Sunshine Coast toll road. The decision to not reallocate the \$8m could jeopardise the marina development.

On 25 June 1996, the local assessment committee made a recommendation to the Transport Minister on who should be the preferred developers of the marina and resort complex. My greatest fear is that the decision by the coalition Government to scrap that funding could mean that the developers will look elsewhere to invest their money. The decision to shelve the marina will have long-term effects in the region and proves that this really is a no jobs Budget for Mackay. The marina development was to be a catalyst in creating huge employment during the construction phase and the development of the marina.

**A Government member** interjected.

**Mr MULHERIN:** It has made the front page since the Budget was brought down. The Government has not had a run in the *Daily Mercury* on the Budget because people feel that they have been ripped off. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads gave his undertaking that he would provide the money for this wonderful development.

The resort hotel complex would have attracted the lower end of the convention market to Mackay and boosted not only employment but also the local economy. There is also a safety aspect involved in this matter, with sailors sometimes travelling up to 36 hours to land in Mackay, only to be turned away because there is no mooring for them. On Thursday, 12 September, I wrote to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads asking him to meet with me, the Mayor of Mackay,

Councillor Gordon White and members of the Mackay Port Authority to address the issue and reach a satisfactory outcome. The Mackay Port Authority is willing to put up \$6m to begin the project, but it needs the guarantee of this Government that the other \$8m required will be forthcoming from next year's Budget.

Mr Speaker, I put it to you that even if this deceitful Government gives such a promise, can it be trusted to uphold its side of the agreement? The people of Mackay and all those involved in the marina project have been duped into believing that this coalition Government would honour the commitment made by the former Labor Government, and look at the result—lies, lies and more lies. Let us look at the Treasurer's slush fund. The Treasury advance account has been allocated \$259m for unscheduled contingencies this financial year. I believe that the Treasurer should look at funding the marina project from this account.

Another blow to the people of Mackay, and this time it is a real disadvantage to the city, is the decision by the coalition to abolish the State's key Jobs Training and Placement Service. By this decision, the Government has abandoned Mackay's young and long-term unemployed. The State unemployment forecast for this period was 9 per cent, but this has blown out to 9.8 per cent. That is a 0.8 per cent jump from the last period. Meanwhile, the latest ABS figures for the Mackay region indicate that the youth unemployment rate, that is, people in the 15 to 19-year-old age bracket, stands at 19 per cent. The State average for this age group is 12.5 per cent. It is important that we do something for these kids and get them into full-time employment.

In 1994-95, the Mackay office of the Youth Employment Service assisted over 700 young unemployed individuals to get jobs and training, and provided over \$200,000 in grants to four organisations for community employment programs. I believe that training programs such as this one got results and are vital because they prepared young people and the long-term unemployed with the skills necessary to find jobs. The staff of the Mackay office of Training Employment (Queensland) were informed on Wednesday of their sacking. The office employed 10 staff in Mackay, and half of those people will lose their jobs.

During the week in this place the honourable member for Clayfield labelled training programs delivered by Training Employment (Queensland) as mickey mouse programs. I feel that this is an insult to the

public servants at Training Employment (Queensland) and their clients who have worked long and hard to achieve positive outcomes. The people of Mackay know who the real mickey mouse is: it is the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations, who has ratted on the young people of our city. He has ratted on young people from Thursday Island to Roma and out to Mount Isa. He has ratted on young people the length and breadth of this great State.

The abolition of Training Employment (Queensland) is a further kick in the guts to young unemployed in the wake of the Federal Government's savage \$1.8 billion cut in Budget funding for re-employment training programs. I feel that, after the savage Commonwealth cuts, the Minister for Training and the Treasurer should be stepping in to do more in this area by boosting funding for employment programs instead of following Senator Vanstone's callous lead in abandoning our youth and long-term unemployed. I again call on the Treasurer to loosen the purse strings in her slush fund, the Treasury advance account, and allocate sufficient funding to allow these programs to continue. Rather than merely following her economic rationalist colleagues in Canberra, the Treasurer should stand up for our young people.

Let me move on to another topic that is a major concern to the people of Mackay—personal safety. In May 1996, the Mackay City Council commissioned a community attitude survey on a random sample of 1,000 households in Mackay. Seventeen per cent of the community surveyed were quite concerned about the level of crime and policing, which was significantly worse than the State average of 6.1 per cent in regard to this very issue. The same survey showed that 45 per cent of Mackay residents are less than satisfied with their personal safety standards.

During the last State election campaign, the coalition promised that, if elected, it would build a new police station at North Mackay. The northern side of Mackay is the major growth area of the region, with at least 60 per cent of the population of Mackay City living on that side of the river. During the election campaign, the then Opposition spokesperson on Police had all the solutions on crime, but as Minister he has delivered nothing except cuts. The coalition has ratted on the promise of the new North Mackay police station and has reduced police numbers in comparison to the promises made by Labor. The former Labor Government said that in 1996-97 there would be an increase of 170 police every year for the

next three years. The coalition Government has reduced police numbers to 152 for this year.

Recently there was a brawl in the Mackay city heart in which eight police officers had to try to control a violent crowd of 40 people. I wrote to the Minister the morning after this incident occurred and called on him to increase police numbers in Mackay immediately. As yet, I have not received a reply. The law-abiding citizens of Mackay have had enough, and I intend to put as much pressure as I can on the Minister to force him to increase numbers in my electorate. Apart from the obvious danger to those involved in the incident, the risk of serious injury to the eight police who had to respond to the situation is a factor that cannot be ignored.

I turn my attention to the state of funding for roads and bridges in my electorate. In the Mackay region there appears to be no extra funding for roadworks or any commitment to the duplication of the Ron Camm Bridge. Mackay deserves better treatment from both the State and Federal coalition Governments on this matter. The former Labor Government promised that the duplication of the Ron Camm Bridge would have been completed by June 1998. To date, the only activities that have occurred—bridge and roadworks design and hydrological surveys—were carried out by the former Labor Government.

I invite the Minister for Transport and Main Roads when he is in Mackay—and I hope it is within the next week or so, considering the mess the Government has created over the marina project—to look at the plight of Mackay's motorists, who experience daily delays of up to 40 minutes when crossing the Pioneer River from the northern part of the city to the southern part of the city and vice versa. There is also a great need to provide an effective public transport system to reduce residents' dependency on the motor vehicle.

I turn the attention of the House to the devastating impact on rural and regional residents of the new taxes on tyres and oil. Because of the high number of coalmines throughout the Bowen Basin, there are a lot of miners who have a second residence in Mackay and faithfully make the journey from places like Moranbah on their weekends off to shop and have some rest and recreation. Last year, a total of 2.5 million tyres of all types were sold in Queensland, of which 60 per cent of all car tyres and 70 per cent of all truck, tractor and earthmoving tyres were sold to rural and regional Queenslanders. As of 1 January next year, the coalition's \$3 tax will

apply to all new motorbike and passenger vehicle tyres, a \$4.50 tax will apply to tractor and truck tyres and a \$30 tax will apply to earthmoving tyres. We have seen the bumbling of the Liberal/National Party Government as it tried to decide just whom it represents. All of Queensland waits with bated breath as the Government argues between portfolios to decide whether primary producers will be exempt from this insidious tax. If primary producers are exempt, will the mining industry be next? If so, we all know who once again will be left footing the bill—the average worker, that is who.

One would have to have blinkers on not to be able to see that people such as miners, who live in regional areas and who travel long distances on the worst roads in the State and use tyres at a much faster rate than drivers in the city, will be the ones to lose out because of this deceitful tax. When one considers that this National Party-led Government has broken its promises and introduced these new taxes on tyres, the backdoor fuel tax on oil, a tobacco tax and an entry fee into national parks, it is hard to believe that it once claimed to represent rural and regional Queensland.

I turn now to sport. The coalition's funding cuts will deprive local Mackay athletes of the training facilities they require to excel in their chosen sport. Mackay has produced its fair share of champion athletes such as Baeden Choppy, Cathy Freeman, Sandra Brondello and Tracey Belbin. All have reached the pinnacle of their sporting careers from humble beginnings on the sports fields of Mackay. Future Mackay champions could be disadvantaged by the spending cuts. The coalition has slashed the Major Sports Facilities Program by more than half from \$20.4m to only \$7.3m.

**Mr Veivers:** No, that's wrong.

**Mr MULHERIN:** What is it?

**Mr Veivers:** They have increased that. You are telling porkies here.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Oh, well.

The Statewide Sports Development Program has been cut, and funding under the Community Sports Development program has also been cut. Last year, 439 sporting clubs throughout the State received grants under that program. Under the former Labor Government, funding for sport grew from \$7m in 1989 to over \$36m. Mackay hockey was a beneficiary of the Major Sport Facilities Program under the former Labor Government. It was pleasing to see that the coalition Government honoured the previous Labor

Government's commitment to contribute \$350,000 to the \$1m Mackay Hockey Association complex. Kevin Casey, the president of the association, and Greg Clutton, the chairman of the project committee, worked tirelessly for Mackay hockey, seeking and gaining community backing and sponsorship. It would have been heartbreaking for them and everyone else involved in Mackay hockey if the coalition Government kept to its track record and reneged on the funding. Every sporting club, peak sporting organisation and athlete in Mackay will be bitterly disappointed by this Budget.

Regional arts is another area that the coalition has treated with disdain. Recent years have seen a significant jobs growth in the Queensland arts industry and an emerging national and international recognition of Queensland as a place of excellence in arts because of programs such as the Regional Arts Development Fund, which was another Labor Government initiative.

**Mr Veivers:** You wanted these figures and I have got them for you. Funding for sports facilities in Queensland has risen from \$37.8m to \$43.9m and——

**Mr MULHERIN:** Well——

**Mr Veivers:** Hang on, there is one more. The Sports budget has risen by \$1.11m to \$68.56m.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I would like to see those figures.

**Mr Veivers:** I will table them.

**Mr MULHERIN:** If the Minister tables them, I will have a look at them on the plane tomorrow.

Unfortunately, though, regional arts groups have been duded by this Government, which has increased the capital contribution to the Regional Arts Development Fund from \$10m to only \$12m. Under Labor it would have been increased to \$15m. Local government will be forced to dig into ratepayer funds to maintain the high standard of arts in regional Queensland.

As I stated earlier, Mackay has the tightest rental market in the State, and over the next 15 to 20 years several more coalmines will be coming on line. This means that there will be an even greater demand placed on the housing market in the region. The State average population growth is 2.3 per cent, while growth in the Mackay region is 4 per cent. The Budget allocation to housing will certainly not keep up with Mackay's housing requirements.

In the area of education, the coalition has totally dismissed the problems facing the North Mackay State High School in my electorate. While I acknowledge and welcome new projects such as the new music block at Fitzgerald school, the new administration block at the Slade Point State School and the new science block for the Mackay State High School, I am amazed that the Government has chosen to ignore the very real problems at the North Mackay State High School. The projected growth for the school for 1996 was 1,239 and for 1998 is 1,415. There is a need to replace two old demountable, tinnie classrooms and the requirement for a new building to house two computer-specific classrooms with a staffroom and two general learning areas. Two extra classrooms would also be needed to replace the modular buildings to address enrolment growth. I ask the Minister for Education: why hasn't the coalition Government addressed these needs in the Budget?

Water is the essential ingredient of the long-term economic viability of Mackay's agricultural, mining and service industries. I welcome the Government's continuing commitment to the Teemburra Dam project. I would also like to take the opportunity of congratulating Mackay Sugar and the Mackay Tourism and Regional Development Bureau for commissioning studies into Mackay and its regional water requirements. I also call on the Minister for Natural Resources to provide additional staff at the Mackay office of his department to clear up the backlog of on-farm water storage proposals from the Mackay and district canegrowers.

Most of what I have spoken about this evening proves that the Budget brought down by Mrs Sheldon is a document of deceit and broken promises and that it offers no hope to the unemployed. The Treasurer lied about no new taxes and she lied when she said that there was no freeze on capital works. The only new initiatives for Mackay were educational initiatives, for which I would like to congratulate the Government. Other items listed in the capital outlays such as the police station, the Dalrymple Bay coal terminal expansion and redevelopment of the hospital were ongoing Labor programs. The Budget will have little benefit to ordinary families in Mackay as they are the ones who will bear the brunt of the Treasurer's tax hikes.

Time expired.

**Mr BAUMANN** (Albert) (10.32 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Appropriation Bills before the House tonight, I would like to take

members back to the first day of school this year, when Year 1 students were left stranded without a classroom at Windaroo State School, where they were herded onto buses, in some cases without the knowledge of their parents, and transferred to another school. As if the first day at school for these Year 1 youngsters is not traumatic enough without that thrown on top. This was fairly typical of the contempt of care, the lip service notions of education and a fair indication of the levels of arrogance displayed by the previous Government. In contrast, I am absolutely delighted to be able to report to the people of Albert that the coalition Government really cares about the education and the future of Queensland students and has shown an outstanding commitment in the form of its record capital works allocation in the coalition Government's first State Budget since 1989.

Millions of dollars have been allocated to schools in the Albert electorate and its close environs. There will be a new primary school at Edens Landing, which will incorporate a special education unit and a double unit preschool. Helensvale State High School will benefit from an almost completed amenities block, and work on the composite workshop will commence shortly. Helensvale State School will gain from a remodelled administration block, while Windaroo State School gains the music portion of the general learning and music block—that is a long-delayed project, dating back to the election last July. On many occasions, it was suggested that the delay was caused because the previous Government lost the seat of Albert at that election.

Windaroo Valley State High School is soon to commence Stage 4 of its construction program. This means two new study blocks, a double machinery shop incorporating art, textiles and science rooms along with the soon to be completed staff and amenities block. All these are in addition to the recently completed Stage 3 which included a second metal workshop, performing arts block and general studies block. That is a big winner for the families residing in the Windaroo Valley area. Woongoolba State School, another school feeling the pressure of an expanding population, will be provided with the funds to build another general learning block.

The population growth in Albert has been unprecedented and will continue at this rapid rate, but this coalition Government is prepared and the money will be spent on those with whom our future lies—the children and youth of the State of Queensland. Funding for the Environment Program within the Department

of Environment has been increased by 16 per cent to \$34.1m. By the way, former State Labor Minister for Environment, Pat Comben, said in Wednesday's *Australian* that the Budget allocation was better than he had expected. Also, according to the same newspaper, other key environmentalists have praised the Budget. Similarly, interested groups have commended the efforts of this Government for its appropriate introduction of the tyre levy and entry fees to national parks. These new funds, of course, will flow directly to this department's environmental framework and initiatives which are results-oriented rather than just rhetoric rich.

Last week, a gentleman entered my electorate office and asked when he, as a self-funded retiree, would be able to have a Seniors Card—a coalition promise, he assured me. From December this year, the age for a non means tested Seniors Card will be reduced from 70 to 65. Again, that is a coalition undertaking that has been achieved. This man, and thousands of others like him who have worked hard all their lives and saved money for their retirement, will no longer be financially punished for doing so. Instead, they will receive a reward they well deserve for the efforts they have made to live out their lives independently. There is no hand-out mentality here. The positive attitude of self-funded retirees should not only be applauded but also rewarded by both State and Federal Governments alike.

The Treasurer and member for Caloundra stated that the Budget recognises that Queensland is asset rich and cash poor and has been spending beyond its means. The estimated 3,600 self-funded retirees presently between the ages of 65 and 70 did not spend beyond their means. They thought and planned for their future, and I hope that this Budget will lead the way in providing the means by which more people may do the same. I hope that next year and in future years, far more people will be encouraged to provide for their own retirement and will feel confident in the knowledge that there will be no punishment for doing so. For those younger retirees who are not yet eligible for the full Seniors Card, the Deputy Leader and Treasurer has introduced another initiative, the Seniors Business Discount Card, which allows people over the age of 60 years discounts on goods in over 1,000 Queensland business outlets in categories ranging from bakeries through to clothing, electrical appliances, pest control, travel and many others. That is in itself an indication of the private sector's

commitment to support such a positive initiative.

At this point, I would like to draw to the Treasurer's attention the plight of TPI pensioners of our combined armed forces and ask her whether any consideration could be given to improving the mobility of this group of people—around 1,000 in total, I believe—by way of similar concessions on off-peak urban rail, bus and ferry services as those offered to our seniors.

Turning to the portfolio of Families, Youth and Community Care, I am pleased to note and acknowledge that the Honourable Minister, Kev Lingard, has provided an extra \$9.85m over three years to implement key legislative changes driven by the Juvenile Justice Act. While victims will now have more rights, a focus has also been placed on strengthening the requirements for parents to accept responsibility for care and supervision of their own children. A case management system will be developed in response to the juvenile justice policy and legislative initiatives such as youth conferencing and the increased involvement of parents in the court process will assist our young people to get back on track with their lives and, at the same time, teach them how unacceptable behaviour has unpleasant consequences for all involved, not only the victim but also the perpetrator and the victim's and the wrongdoer's families.

The Honourable Kev Lingard has earmarked \$1.9m over three years to establish a number of projects to stem the growth of significant numbers of homeless young people or those considered at risk of leaving home or school due to personal and family difficulties. In providing further services to the needs of youth in this State, the Honourable Minister has dedicated another \$1.9m over three years to local government and community organisations in rural communities to employ youth workers with a planned effort to proactively address the needs of young people who have limited employment and recreational options in their home towns.

Nerang Neighbourhood Centre Incorporated will receive funding of \$45,455 to establish a family support service in the Helensvale/Studio Village area. This service will operate under the Family and Individual Support Program and will promote the ability of families and individuals to achieve and sustain self-reliance as well as providing services to children and their families, particularly where there is a risk of child abuse or family breakdown. These support workers will be attached to existing community-based

organisations to ensure a practical approach to service delivery. In this instance they will most certainly be appreciated by the people of Helensvale and Studio Village.

The initiative shown by the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care in establishing a new service to respond to the abuse of older people is to be commended. My office recently took part in a consultative process with the Legal Aid Office. One of the areas of need highlighted in the Gold Coast meeting was that of access to services—legal or otherwise—for the aged. Many aged people are silent sufferers. This service will work with older people, service providers and families to support and protect older people who have been abused.

The vast majority of older people are not unhealthy, disabled, alone or poor. They are active, healthy, astute and positive contributors to the community, with a zest for life that astonishes many of those who stereotype them as a spent force. We should be harnessing, while being respectful of, the knowledge and abilities of our older community members rather than retiring them to society's scrap heap. I would like to see this knowledge valued and used, especially in areas which would assist in esteem building with the young.

The role of the combined Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is very important, as for too long there has been a difference of concern between funding for the elderly and funding for the young. With the ageing demographics of the community, the economic and social emphasis will also shift towards older people. This coalition Government knows this and respects the senior citizens, not for what they can achieve at their age but purely for what they can and do achieve as people contributing to the community. We, as a Government, by giving back and investing in social capital, ensure that all our families and communities are beneficiaries.

I know that within the electorate of Albert many vital community services are performed quietly and without fanfare, and often without thanks, by people following their retirement from the work force. However, often formal and/or informal assistance is required to enable our valued elders to live and enjoy life to its full potential. These are just some of the areas being addressed in this Budget by the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. That certainly deserves the support of this House.

Given the problems outlined in recent years of the institutionalised attitudes of some staff employed in residential service facilities for the intellectually disabled, I welcome the move through the Disability Program to introduce an 18-month, certificate-level, in-service training program incorporating 229 hours of off-the-job training. The ability to convert this course in the future to a traineeship is also a most-needed and welcome initiative indeed, as it benefits two groups of people, namely, those wishing to pursue a career in human services and people who are perhaps the most disadvantaged in the community—those folk who are often so underprivileged that they are unaware that they are disadvantaged. Any move to introduce more professionalism and care into supporting people with intellectual disabilities, as has been done by the Minister, the Honourable Kev Lingard, is another initiative to be applauded.

The member for Warrego and Minister for Natural Resources, the Honourable Howard Hobbs, has allocated half a million dollars for pest, plant and animal management programs designed to eradicate and prevent pest outbreaks. These programs will address pest management at local, regional and State level and will have strong links with other natural resource management programs, such as the Strategic Weed Eradication and Educational Program, or SWEEP, as it is more widely known. As I have mentioned in the House before, concern for the environment is central to the people of Albert. I am sure that any efforts towards the eradication or prevention of weeds, often introduced from overseas, will be as welcome in my electorate as anywhere else. I mention specifically the fireweed infestation—a South African weed imported into this country which has a particularly devastating effect on grazing land.

Having been a member of the Northern Waste Water Strategy Committee, a part of the Local Government Reclamation and Water Management Scheme on the Gold Coast, I am keenly aware of the need to continue funding the water conservation campaign in conjunction with local governments. Waterwise has received another \$300,000 in recognition of the benefits that this campaign provides to Queensland and will continue to provide with this typically positive support and endorsement. Combining as it does both rural and urban areas in times of drought, any methods identified that will assist and encourage community members to conserve more water and utilise reclaimed or waste water is to be applauded. The coalition

Government has made a \$1 billion commitment to the development of water infrastructure, focusing on successful modern technology and building with this knowledge innovative water quality and conservation projects.

The welcome announcement by the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport, the Honourable Mick Veivers, of the construction of a new ambulance facility at Pimpama addresses positively the service demands that come with dynamic growth in the Albert electorate area. I take this opportune moment to suggest to the Minister that sufficient land area for, say, fire services be set aside on that site for future appropriate emergency service occupation. The establishment of the new fire station at Helensvale is indeed timely. Although the siting of this facility has attracted quite a lot of public attention, it will nonetheless be welcomed by the vast majority of the surrounding community.

It is rewarding to be part of a Government committed to the provision of infrastructure in adequate time to meet consumer demand. The \$1.6m installation of a modular substation at Gaven to meet consumer growth and the \$1.5m allocated to infrastructure provision in the Yatala industrial precinct to meet anticipated industry demand reflect a return to solid and sensible business management. The Minister for Mines and Energy and the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry obviously deserve recognition for these initiatives.

As I said, the Honourable Bruce Davidson, Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry, recognised immediately the significant importance of tourism to Queensland's economy as one of our major earners of export dollars—and it is growing annually, I might add. This industry certainly deserves the extra attention that it is being given by this Government. Of particular interest to the people of Albert, being as it is a significant part of the larger Gold Coast City, is a valuable increase in funding to the Gold Coast Tourism Bureau. Once again, the doors are open for business to participate in marketing and promotional incentives in the convention and incentive market, with both the QTTC and the GCTB.

**Mr Davidson:** I also have under consideration that question you put to me two or three months ago. I have nearly finalised the funding for that matter you have put to me.

**Mr BAUMANN:** I thank the Minister very much. That will be appreciated. It is great to see this Government supporting major Queensland events. In line with these initiatives, the Queensland Events Corporation also receives a sizeable injection of funding to again allow that organisation to broaden its focus and capture and support significant events for us here in what we will make the tourist capital of this country.

Another example of commitment to our intercity trade, commerce and travel patterns is the swift and decisive approach by the Honourable the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Vaughan Johnson, to the implementation of the Pacific Highway upgrade. That world-class motorway with its attendant HOV lanes and dedicated busways initiatives is a stark contrast indeed to the six and a half years of dithering which was the previous Government's only contribution to this potentially monumental problem.

The decision to lift the threshold of that most insidious of taxes, payroll tax, will be appreciated by businesses affected. This single most significant disincentive to employment is something that I will continually pressure Government to abolish just as quickly and prudently as possible. This highly discriminatory tax restricts the expansion of successful businesses and is a severe impediment to an expanding private sector driven economy. That is the only way to get the State back on the road. Likewise, another contributor to the burgeoning taxes, fees and fines revenue base of our predecessors is land tax. There is more good news for Queensland on this front, with the first step taken on the road to its abolition. The three-year averaging of property valuation is a great plus. Both of these taxes, now abused, indicate how important it is to establish a system to review and reform such factors on an ongoing basis.

Honourable members opposite, in their criticisms of this Budget, have made much of the big-spending myth. In their criticisms they identify an increase in total outlays of some 10.6 per cent. In doing so, they have elected to overlook the change in accounting methodology that now brings back to the ledger some trust funds that have previously been dealt with as off-budget items. As a matter of fact, that exercise is a revenue-neutral exercise and, if excluded—and that needs to be done to ascertain relative comparisons with the previous Government's efforts—one will see that the real increase in outlays by this coalition Government is among the lowest increases since 1990 at approximately 6.4 per cent, while the Labor

average over its full term was about 8.5 per cent.

Perhaps it is appropriate at this time to remind the House that, on coming to Government in 1989, the Labor Government of the day introduced a first Budget that reflected a 20 per cent increase in taxes, fees and fines over that of the last National Party Government. When averaged over the full tenure of the previous Labor Government, a hefty increase in taxes, fees and fines of 10.5 per cent was recorded. In contrast, the first coalition Budget since 1989 sees an increase in that area of 4.8 per cent, or less than half the average increases of the previous Government during its term of office.

Despite this reduction, I can tell honourable members that Cabinet had a challenging time convincing me that expanded taxes and levies were necessary, but given that Queensland's bottom line represented a very sorry business indeed and that the electorate of Albert had a great and urgent need for infrastructure to support the people residing there, I am confident that the people in the electorate I represent will find that they stand to win much more than they lose. This Budget contains reductions in excessive bureaucracy and administration, thereby allowing the Government to channel funds back into essential services and infrastructure to support rapid population and economic growth. With a coalition Government at the helm members opposite might well watch and learn.

Time expired.

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba) (10.52 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise in this Chamber today to prove that the suggestion that the Workers Compensation Fund has a problem is a lie, and to talk about the mayhem that the changes to the Workers Compensation Fund will cause to the workers and employers of this State.

I refer to the Treasurer's Annual Statement 1995-96, specifically to Part 2, Public Accounts, on page 90. Honourable members will note Item 5, "Investment of Specific Trust and Special Fund Balances". At the bottom of that item honourable members will see that over \$1 billion is in the Workers Compensation Fund at the moment. That fund made over \$180m profit this year alone. There is no deficit; that is cash in the fund, as the accounts show. That is their net market value as of today. It is not a paper loss as has been suggested in this House; that is money in the bank.

I now direct honourable members to page 45 of the same document and the heading "Trust and Special Funds—Lapsed Appropriations". At the bottom of that section, under the heading "Department of Training and Industrial Relations—Public Safety—Workers' Compensation Fund", one sees that \$49m was not used last year. That is \$49m slushing around! I would like to know where that has gone to and so would the workers and employers who paid that money into the scheme. They would like to find out what has happened to their money.

I turn now to page 34 of the same document. Under the heading "Trust and Special Funds Receipts—Property Income" is the heading "Department of Training and Industrial Relations", which shows the Workers Compensation Fund containing nearly \$94m. I would like to know where that money has gone to. What long pocket is that money in that it cannot be used for the workers and employers of this State. That is sitting around in a Government slush fund.

I turn now to page 36 and I will repeat some questions that I asked in this House nearly 12 months ago to the day. That really puts the lie to the Bill Kennedy inquiry and why this Government is saying that it was necessary. It is a straight-out con. I refer to the *Hansard* record of a speech I gave 12 months ago. In that speech I stated—

"The present crisis facing the Workers Compensation Board seems to have sprung from an actuary's report which states that common law claims are spiralling and that common law claims will escalate from the 1993-94 level of \$81m to \$280m in the future."

Since then, the Government has conducted an inquiry and discovered what it costs, and it found out that the fund was \$10m worse off than we knew it was 12 months ago. What a lot of rubbish! The Government knew that that fund was running at a loss and its position. The Premier and the Minister responsible for that portfolio made promises, promises and promises. I can table over 18 statements made by both those members that were quoted in the *Courier-Mail* in which they promised workers in this State that they would not touch common law entitlements. They are all lies! The members knew over 12 months ago what was going on. The Kennedy report was a con. The Government picked up Bill Kennedy because he is a respected businessman of this State and used him to take away rights from workers.



In that speech 12 months ago I referred to—

". . . a premium income for the year 1993-94 of \$503m to a projected figure for this year of \$590m."

According to the Treasurer's Annual Statement 1995-96, that figure turned out to be \$568m. The figure for this year is very interesting: it is \$555m—well down. More workers are coming into this State; more people are working than ever before and yet fewer premiums are being collected.

**Mr Malone:** It's only a six month Budget.

**Mr PURCELL:** These are 12-monthly statements, you goose! They happen to be put out by the Treasurer so they are right; they are put out by yourselves!

As I said last year—

"These are the premium yearly incomes that employers pay to have their workers insured. The question that must be asked is: is that a true figure of all workers who would qualify under the Act?"

I said 12 months ago that it is not, and I am still saying it now. There is a con job going on. At that time I asked whether the workers were insured by their employers. For example, those in the industry from which I came, the building industry, do not insure all their workers. They work a con on the other employers who pay and on the Workers Compensation Fund. Also, in the same speech last year I reported that the Master Builders Association was boasting that it had advised its members of 30,000 employees for whom they did not have to pay premiums—in breach of the Workers' Compensation Act! The Workers Compensation Board was breaching its own Act! I will go through those Acts. I obtained them from the Parliamentary Library today so they are current. The people in the Workers Compensation Board should be hung, drawn and quartered or at least sacked and not given their superannuation for putting in jeopardy the rights of workers in this State to sue when injured.

Twelve months ago, I quoted from an editorial in its journal—

". . . the Master Builders Association told its members that they could save paying workers' compensation premiums to some 30,000 employees"—

their words, not mine—

"for whom they already paid premiums."

That is part of the con at the moment. I continued to quote the Master Builders Association—

"Negotiations have been conducted over a considerable period on this matter with the Workers Compensation Board."

Workers were not told that that was going on. Neither was the industry, because I have since checked with people who worked in the industry. Not one of them knew that that was going on. They had workers running around who were not covered by workers' compensation and who did not have their own insurance. However, when those workers were injured, the board picked them up, paid their wages and, if the worker was so badly injured that it went that far, paid the common law costs while the rest of the employers in this State paid for those bludgers—and continue to pay!

The editorial states further—

"The Board has now advised that nailing guns attached to a compressor, which is owned by the user, and drop saws will be regarded as plant and equipment and not hand tools."

I would like to see people use a hand gun with anything else but their hands. It is the name of the tool; it is a hand gun. The article states further—

"This, in effect, means such persons are regarded as trade contractors and not as workers. It also means that the vast majority of labour-only carpenters engaged in the industry will not be regarded as workers under the Workers' Compensation Act and that Builders will not be liable to pay workers' compensation premiums on their behalf."

That is in direct contravention of the Act.

I turn now to two pertinent Acts. One is the Industrial Relations Act 1990. In the Act, "employee" is defined as—

"a person employed in any calling, whether on wages or piecework rates, or as a member of a buttygang, and includes—

(a) a person whose usual occupation is that of an employee in a calling."

That means a carpenter, a labourer, a truck driver, a butcher, baker, or candlestick maker, or whatever one wants to call it. The Act states further—

"(b) a person employed in any calling notwithstanding that—

- (i) the person working under contract for a labour only, or substantially labour only.
- (ii) the person is lessee of any tools or other implements of production, or of any vehicle used in delivery of goods;
- (iii) the person is the owner, wholly or partially, of any vehicle used in transport of goods or passengers;

if such factor is the only reason for holding the person not to be an employee."

So people cannot get around the Act by trying to set up that people are labour only and are not employees.

The Act states further—

"(c) each person, being of 1 of 4 or more persons who are, or claim to be, partners working in association in any calling or business."

They are employees. I turn to the most damaging legislation. I turn to the Workers' Compensation Act itself, which states—

"Persons declared to be employers or workers

8.(1) For the purposes of this Act, a person declared by a provision of this section to be an employer or a worker is an employer or, as the case may be, a worker in the circumstances prescribed by the provision.

(2) Where a holding company lets on hire the services of a waterside worker or a supervisor stevedore.

. . .

(3) Except as prescribed in subsection (2)—

and this refers to wharfies—

"a person who lends or lets on hire the services of a worker who is a party to a contract of service with that person continues to be the employer of the worker while the worker's services are so lent or let on hire.

(4) A labour hire agency"—

This is where they have been trying to get away with it for years, but they have not been able to. In regard to workers' compensation, this Act is one of the strongest Acts in Australia. They tried it on in New South Wales and Victoria, and in Victoria they beat the Government. They could not beat the

Government here. At the time, Vince Lester was the Minister. This is the part of the Act that they could not beat Vince on because this Act is a strong Act that looks after employees. It states—

"(4) A labour hire agency that arranges, for reward, for a worker who is party to a contract of service with the agency to do work for someone else continues to be the worker's employee while the worker does the work for the other person under an arrangement made between the agency and the other person.

(5) A person who works under a contract, or a piecework rates, for labour only or substantially for labour only, including one who supplies tools of trade designed for use by hand"—

That is where the Workers Compensation Board got rid of 30,000 employees and the premiums that covered them, letting employers off the hook. It did not tell anybody about that. All of those people were not insured. The Act continues—

". . . is a worker for the purposes of this Act, employed by the person for whom the labour is provided.

(6) A tributer"—

My mining mate is not here, but section 6 refers to piece rates for miners who work for BHP underground. So they are on contract. It has nothing to do with how they are paid. Like the Kennedy report, the Government is going to pick up only PAYE employees. This picks up all workers; not just PAYE employees. This person is on a contract working for a set amount of money for a person. Therefore, he is an employee. The Act states further—

"(7) A jockey riding or driving a horse on a racecourse, or doing on the racecourse anything incident to riding or driving a horse on the racecourse . . .

(8) A person who works a farm as a sharefarmer."

This should interest some bods opposite. I know that this will interest farmers. It states—

". . . any wages-worker employed by that person, is a worker employed by the owner of the farm except where"—

This part refers to cases in which people supply their own machinery. In that case, the person is not a worker. Section (8)(b) refers to farmers getting more than two-thirds of the crop not being defined as workers. If a farmer gets less than two-thirds, that farmer is still a worker.

The Act states further—

"(9) A salesperson, canvasser, collector, or other person paid wholly or partly by commission is a worker."

How many people in this State who are doing door-to-door stuff are covered by the employer through the commission that they are paid? I bet that there are none. The Workers Compensation Board has done nothing about picking up these people. In my opinion, there is half a billion dollars slushing around not being picked up. Because of that, we are going to make the workers in this State suffer. The Act continues to refer to salespeople. It states—

"(10) If a contract is made with a contractor . . . for the performance of work that is not incidental to a trade or business regularly carried out by the contractor, individually or by means of a partnership, and the contractor—

- (a) neither sublets the contract nor employs a wages-worker; or
- (b) although employing a wages-worker, performs part of the work personally."

So that person is still a worker himself. It is covered by the person who lets the contract to him. The Act states further—

". . . the contractor, and any wages-worker employed by the contractor in performance of the work, is a worker employed by that person who makes the contract with the contractor."

It is fairly simple, isn't it? The laws of this land say that the Workers Compensation Board is abiding by the law. Because of that we are making workers suffer.

**Mrs McCauley:** You have lost your place.

**Mr PURCELL:** No, I have not lost it at all.

Those people opposite like to think that they are the upholders of democracy and the Westminster system. The bottom line of that is that all people are created equal and should be treated equally under the law. Members opposite are going to make workers less equal than anybody else. They will not be able to sue under common law, but any other citizen can. So who are members opposite going to make less equal? They are the upholders of the Westminster tradition. They want to sit in this place with sheep on their heads and fly a flag that has nothing to do with this country, but they will not look after the people who vote for them and who live in their electorates. Under the law, members opposite are going to give

workers a lesser standing than they have now. They will sell out those people who vote for them. Those blokes opposite know as well as I know that there are workers who vote for them, but they are going to sell them down the drain.

**Mrs McCauley:** They won't know how good it is.

**Mr PURCELL:** They will not know because members opposite will not tell them. Members opposite are conning them. That is the problem.

**Mr Hegarty:** You had a chance to fix it, though.

**Mr PURCELL:** Twelve months ago, I did what I could do. Now I am doing the same thing. Things have not changed much, have they?

I want to go to the problems that have been brought up by the Kennedy inquiry—the things that are under the axe at the moment. More than 75 per cent of all court claims will be eliminated. So 75 per cent of people who we look after now will not be looked after in regard to common law claims. WorkCover will decide 98 per cent of all workers' compensation claims. The claims will be decided upon by people who are plonked there by the board and who will do what they are told. There will be no appeals from those decisions by WorkCover. Journey and recess claims—that is those arising from travelling to and from work—will be abolished. That is absolutely disgusting. It is going to cost \$12m, yet the Government will not cover workers travelling to and from work. The Government intends to make families suffer if their breadwinner gets killed going to or from work for a lousy \$12m.

**Mrs McCauley:** Disgusting!

**Mr PURCELL:** I agree with the Minister. Care claims will be abolished. If members opposite do not know what carer claims are about, they ought to go and find out. They relate to the people who care for those who are really sick. If members know anybody who has asbestosis and who is on his or her last breath—and that person is on his or her last breath for three or four years—they will know what it will mean to take away the ability of that person's next of kin to be able to look after that person. Members opposite are the lowest of the low.

The inquiry failings were as follows—claims were attacked, not the injurer's conduct; the frequency of claims was ignored; claims distribution was disregarded—who was getting injured and why; the costs of claims was

ignored; and the board was shielded from scrutiny. I would like to get in on that board; I would have some fun there. I would find out where the money has gone and why there was a whitewash of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety. All of those blokes ought to be strung up in Queen Street. They do not do their work at all. Premium neglect was hushed up. We have just been talking about who does not pay but should.

For all the mayhem that the Government is going to cause in the workplace, the inquiry found that as few as 132 Queensland employers are responsible for 30 per cent of all common law claims. However, the inquiry does not address the issue and it does not care. Why does the Government not do something about that? If the Government knocked out 132 employers, there would not be a problem.

Queensland has the highest number of injuries for male workers in Australia. What will the Government do about that? Over 105,000 injury claims occurred in Queensland in 1995, caused by 7.98 per cent of employers. Therefore, 92 per cent of employers do the right thing by their employees, but they are going to be carved up because of 8 per cent of employers who do not do the right thing.

I would like to read something to Government members, and I think that they should listen—

"So we must fly a rebel flag,  
as others did before us;  
And we must sing a rebel song,  
And join a rebel chorus.

We'll make the tyrants feel the sting,  
Of those that they would throttle.  
They needn't say the fault is ours,  
If blood should stain the wattle!"

That song was written nearly 100 years ago, but it is still pertinent if the Government does to workers what it is threatening to do in relation to common law claims. The Government is going to make them less than other people in this country and this State, because they will not be able to sue when someone injures them and the other person is at fault. That is the bottom line.

Time expired.

**Mr WOOLMER** (Springwood)  
(11.12 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise tonight to participate in the cognate appropriation debate for the Budget. I begin by congratulating the Treasurer, Mrs Joan Sheldon, on being the first female to deliver a Budget in Queensland and for bringing about such a well thought through and balanced

approach to the redirection of the State of Queensland.

The redirection was highlighted in the FitzGerald Commission of Audit and was starkly apparent to virtually all Queenslanders from those documents. We have heard a lot of rhetoric from the other side of the Chamber in relation to that Commission of Audit in an attempt to completely discredit it across the State. However, the stark reality is that it has been heralded throughout Australia as a document of high significance in the way that it looks at finances of public entities and public administration. It has been used by other States. I believe that units of public administration from overseas have travelled to Australia to discuss the implications of that with the commissioners who conducted the audit.

The Commission of Audit really highlighted the problems that Queensland faces in terms of its budgetary position. One of the big problems that we faced was that there was a decrease in the revenue base. That is because there are a lot more self-funded retirees and/or the elderly, but we also have an increase in population. Therefore, whilst we had an increase in population and a demand for services across our vast State, we also had a decreasing revenue base, but there was still a need for the provision of services.

As I have said before, people in other States do not appreciate the distances and the level of infrastructure servicing that is required across Queensland. We build schools thousands of kilometres from Brisbane, we run powerlines to them, we build rail networks, we provide police stations in outlying areas and in areas which are vastly more expansive than other States in their entirety, but with a smaller population and therefore smaller tax revenue. Therefore, we have to look at ways of financing, balancing budgets and approaching the finances of the State in a different way. We have to get better efficiencies out of the system that we have.

The commission strongly recommended a number of reforms in and across all portfolios. This Government has started to adopt some of those reforms. Over the coming term of office, and in future years in other offices after our next elections, we will be looking at other ways of improving the State's financial position based on commissions of audit. The commission highlighted these problems and we have set about rectifying them in this, our first Budget.

What does the Budget really hold? The theme that we have used with this Budget is

"back to basics". We sat down and thought through that back to basics theme. It is built on the election platform from last year, because Queenslanders were crying out for the provision of basic services. The structure of the Budget is based on an efficient delivery of the essential services, and that is certainly seen in the Budget.

We will implement infrastructure for economic and population growth in the areas I have touched on. We will encourage reductions in excessive bureaucracy—and nobody could say that we have not done that very efficiently. We will focus on outcomes and not processes. The Labor Party was preoccupied with the processes, as we saw under the draconian outfit, the Office of Cabinet, led so spectacularly and disastrously by the failed Kevin Rudd. The savings that have been achieved in all of those areas are to be redirected into core service delivery areas. Therefore, this is a Budget of \$13.5 billion, the largest that the State has ever seen, running a cash surplus. The Treasurer should be commended for bringing in the State's finances in such a position.

The starting position was not so bright and rosy. The spectacularly unsuccessful former Health Minister had a \$56m recurrent funding cost overrun and took money out of the capital works budget to prop that up. In coming to Government, there was an underlying deficit, as recognised in the Commission of Audit. We then suffered the Commonwealth payment difficulties of \$250m—we were behind the eight ball before we started. Considering those things, we were some \$600m or \$700m behind. How did we solve the problem?

We went to the Public Service and through the unnecessary programs and the duplication of services. We instituted better management processes in a lot of those areas. We came through with a 5 per cent productivity and efficiency increase, which saved some \$500m across Government. That will continue to flow in years ahead. That was one of the areas that we looked at to save money. The concept of these savings has been heralded by the business community across the country.

The restructuring of other GOCs has brought in approximately \$200m. We took some money back from the failed QIFF program to refinance some capital infrastructure measures. We have introduced some user charges and broadened the taxation base a little.

I turn to look at the way the Labor Party has attacked this Budget. Opposition members said that it was a big spending and a big taxing Budget. The fact is that the estimated increase in Government revenue in this financial year in the entire taxes, fees and fines section of the Budget—the area where average Queenslanders puts their hands in their pockets for the Government and where all the imposts of the Budget are recorded—rose at less than half the level that it grew on average each year under the Labor Government. The increase of \$200m, or 4.8 per cent, in total taxes, fees and fines revenue in the Budget compares with an average increase of 10.5 per cent per year and an annual \$312m rise under the previous Labor Government. So much for the myth of being the lowest taxing State in years gone by with small increases!

What has the Budget really achieved? We have come forward with a number of redirection packages for infrastructure and core services. If one looks at the Department of Education, one sees that the Minister and the Treasurer have delivered a record spending Budget of some \$3.1 billion. That is a rise of \$266m, or 9.3 per cent. What does that really mean? It means 934 more teachers. It means increased guidance officers. It means more learning support time. It means more schools. It means that there is record spending. It means that the RAIS scheme has been doubled or trebled over a number of years. These are the tangible things which the Queensland population can see. That is what they called for and that is why they voted us back into Government. That is why they are looking at the way that we are going to approach this in the future.

How will that translate in the different areas? It means that, through programs such as Building Better Schools, schools such as Springwood High School will get \$40,000 for works to upgrade their grounds. It means that schools in other electorates will also get those much-needed services. That is very visible, necessary and welcomed by the people. It means that our budget for Education also moves into the service area in vocational training. I am happy to see in the Budget that Logan TAFE will have 102 extra places available for those students who choose not to go to university. There is a great demand for places at the Logan TAFE, because it is a fine institution run by fine people.

Let us look at the Health budget. The Health budget is up 11.6 per cent, or \$312m, to \$3 billion. That is the largest Health budget ever delivered in this State. What does that

really mean? It means that we can put money into places such as the QE II Hospital to get it back on line after it was so dramatically and drastically run down over the years by the Labor Party. It means that we can complete the Logan Hospital staged upgrades, because that is very necessary as well. The floor in the outpatients area at the Logan Hospital is a nice old wooden one. I was there the other night. It is rather cold there in the middle of the night and on weekends. People rattle around and it is quite loud and very cold. I think we might also see some improvements there in time. It is also very busy.

The other night I was somewhat surprised to watch people utilising the Sharps needle exchange program. People from all walks of life were availing themselves of the free needle exchange program. The increase in the Budget will mean 540 more nurses, 80 more doctors and the implementation of the Health Minister's Surgery On Time program. Those are very important outcomes for Queenslanders. It also allows the people to have access to services which they have not had before, especially at the QE II Hospital.

What else did the Budget deliver? In terms of those people who are of most value to our community—the seniors—we saw the extension of the Seniors Card program to incorporate, as of December this year, those over the age of 65 years instead of just those aged 70 years and over. That is a very welcome extension of this program which will affect some 1,100 people in my electorate. I will be informing them of that. Many people have been watching that area with delight.

In the police budget, what have we seen? We have seen record spending which will mean up to 800 more police and 400 more civilian staff by August 1999. We will see the introduction of speed cameras as a safety measure for people travelling on the highways. With a bit of luck, they will keep the road toll down. Those cameras will be positioned randomly. There will be new prisons.

**Mr Barton:** How many more police will we get in Logan?

**Mr WOOLMER:** I take that interjection from the member for Waterford, because I am expecting to find that out after the recruits from the intake have gone through the academy. I will be lobbying for more police, as will the member for Waterford. I identify a need in that area as well. I suggest that we should be working together on that issue because it is very important, and the honourable member and I both know that there is a cry and a demand for more police in

that area. The police will be redeployed in a very smart way. The local police say to me when I speak to them quite often that just having more police on the job will not necessarily mean a reduction in crime. We have to use the community policing concepts so that we can see the police in the suburbs, which is where they are of most benefit. Logan City will certainly benefit from that, because there is a measured demand there. Nobody would deny that there are crime problems there.

Under this Government, the environment will receive a boost in very many ways. I will quickly touch on the Daisy Hill State Forest. I see in the Budget there is some \$350,000 appropriated for works in and around the tracks in the Daisy Hill State Forest which quite often are used by me and thousands of other people in the electorate. There will be some more work on the Koala Centre. The car parks will be brought up to a standard such that gravel and rocks are not thrown around everywhere by cars.

Whilst on the issue of the Daisy Hill State Forest, I wish to congratulate the ranger, John Carter, and his staff at the Koala Centre for looking after the place so well. They have had some 34,000 visitors through that centre in its first 12 months of operation. It is a very good idea and it is very well patronised. I have also spoken to the Minister, and I can assure honourable members that there will be no fees charged for the use of the Daisy Hill State Forest at all.

All in all, we have a Budget for which the State has been screaming. We have a balance which covers very many portfolios. We see that some \$2.1m will be spent on the Challinor and Basil Stafford Centres, providing people with the choice of institutional reform or living in the community, if that is what they want. Choice is what the system is primarily about. Under the Labor Party, those centres were to close. People were going to be forced to go out into community-based care even if they did not wish to. I could never understand the basis of that argument. That was one of those all or nothing arguments which was forced upon Government members by some of the bureaucracy when we were in Opposition. When I called for meetings in my electorate and I spoke to those gentlemen, they said that was an ideological policy position of the Labor Party. They, too, questioned the intent and the basis for abolishing two areas and forcing people into the community. In that area, we are also spending \$700,000 to set up the Children's Commissioner. I would expect that there will

be a high demand for that service. I know that the Minister has a hotline open in the mornings on which he receives calls.

We are spending \$4.1m on the Juvenile Justice Amendment Package, which will give legislative teeth to the implementation of stricter penalties for juveniles. I think we will find that that will come through in the years ahead. We are spending some \$900,000 on upgrading urban fire services and providing more firefighters in those areas.

The member for Bulimba has left the Chamber. He ran around the workers' compensation argument with an extreme passion. We have to appreciate the gentleman's zest in that respect. For all of the arguments he put forward and despite his reference to legislation from other jurisdictions and so on, the fact is that the Workers Compensation Fund is some \$440m in the red, and is going backwards. If the problems of the fund are not addressed, there will be no fund. It is as simple as that. There will not be a fund in another year's time. This Government is going to support it to the tune of \$35m a year. There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that there will have to be a redirection in that area, and that is what we are doing. Sticking their heads in the sand was all former Government members did on this issue. When push came to shove, their union mates put the heavy word on them and said, "You cannot touch this because of the workers' rights issues."

That problem was created under a previous regime which refused to address it. We are addressing the issue and, all of sudden, everyone thinks we are the bad guys. I find that quite ironic. If not for this Government's approach, there would be no Workers Compensation Fund. For all of the rhetoric, I have not heard any alternatives proffered. I have not heard a single alternative coming forward that will maintain the fund in a balanced state and/or repair the fund back to a more balanced state. We hear members saying, "Take the money out of the trust accounts." Mr De Lacy knows full well that we are not allowed to touch the superannuation entitlements of the workers of the State. A Government just does not do those things. As a State, we have never done that. When he was Treasurer, Mr De Lacy refused to take any money out of those accounts. He used to borrow for capital expenditures and he would not borrow for recurrent expenditures.

We have come forward with a solution that will have to work. If it does not work, there will not be a fund in two or three years' time.

We are putting \$35m per annum into propping up this fund at the moment to keep it moving forward, and we will be changing the structure of some of those things. If the workers, especially under the auspices of the ACTU, cannot come to grips with that, the fact is that, if it was proffered out as in some other States to the private sector, there would be a completely different fund structure.

I will sit down two minutes early because of the lateness of the hour. I know members are wanting to leave. I support the Budget. I congratulate the Executive arm of Government and the Treasurer on delivering such a wonderful Budget that will set the path straight for this State in the future.

**Mr ARDILL** (Archerfield) (11.30 p.m.): The 1996-97 Budget produces no surprises and provides no answers to the problems besetting Queensland and Australia as we approach the end of the twentieth century. It increases the decline of the public sector and provides no hope, no incentive and no encouragement to young people and no jobs.

Another of Australia's icons is being sold off to provide instant gratification for a Treasurer who refuses to see the inane stupidity of selling off an asset such as Suncorp, which always provides a sure and certain dividend—just as her disastrous counterpart in Canberra, Costello, is trying to do with Telstra. Not only do assets such as these provide a handy dividend but they also provide a yardstick for efficiency and cost-effectiveness by which the private sector can be judged.

This year, this incompetent and hesitant Government—except in its vicious pouncing on public servants—has consistently misled and confused the public and the media with its blatantly wrong answers to questions and contradictory claims about the state of Queensland's economy. No Government in Queensland, and probably none in Australia, ever came to power with a better handover than this Government received. It was a far better handover than any Government should have received, because the Labor Treasurer directed all of his energies to paying off the debt of 130 years in the sure knowledge that, with no interest bill to pay from consolidated revenue, the Government could then direct all its energy to providing the best infrastructure and services in Australia. In fact, he took the long-term view, which politicians with an eye to the next election hardly ever do. And it will be a long time before it is done again, as the impossible happened: the Opposition, by a process of strategies and sheer good luck and

the strangest judicial decision in the history of elections, took over Government.

This was the lowest serviced State in Australia. The Labor Government upgraded services—there was no other way to go but up—but because we concentrated on good economic management at the expense of the expectations of our supporters, thousands of people failed to believe that the 1995 Budget could deliver the goods, a position which only resulted from paying off our \$5 billion of debt over the five years we were in Government. The Opposition went one better and went on a pork-barrelling, vote-buying spree to counter the measured, funded promises of the Government, never expecting that it would have to deliver.

On coming to Government, the Treasurer embarked on a process of misinformation that there were big holes in the Labor Budget to justify cutbacks in services from our Budget and the coalition's promises. She has been shown to be completely wrong, as there is a surplus under any method that economists and apologists could devise. She promised no new taxes. She promised no increases in taxes. Again, she was wrong on both counts. The Treasurer said that the Federal Government would cut back on its share of the revenue of the State, and maintained this deceit right up to her Appropriation Speech. Wrong again! The Federal Government increased the funding, even allowing for the public housing debacle, by at least \$177m.

What do Liberal politicians do in those circumstances? They call in the clowns. They called in a group of economic rationalist clowns—and all economic rationalists are clowns, no matter who calls them in, because they downgrade human beings. They are vandals who would destroy all our institutions, all our treasures, all our heritage and all our hope just to see a profit made or a reduction in the work force achieved. Their philosophy means reducing the workers and increasing the drones. Their philosophy means reducing the payroll and increasing the dole payout. It means increasing the income of those with disposable income and even unneeded surpluses and reducing the income of those on the breadline—and, of course, reducing the social wage. It means disruption, disputation, hatred, violence, hopelessness, and it also means loss of service to the public.

The clowns say, "Cut off funds to the public sector because it does not return a profit, and abolish any regulation that requires the public sector to maintain standards. If a certain sector does not return a profit to that

section, even though it is only part of the operation, cut it off. It may mean that some other organisation may have to do the job at a higher cost, but that does not matter. Cross-subsidisation must not occur. Nor does it matter if the environment suffers or health standards are lowered." If people do not believe me, they should go overseas and see the effects of Reaganomics or Thatcherism and, incidentally, read my report on my overseas trip.

These are the types of experts who are called in to sustain an unsustainable argument. State Governments are there to provide services and to provide the infrastructure on which the economy can survive and succeed. This Budget fails the test in many ways, but principally in the efficacy of its procedures and its spending priorities. The Government is required to provide protection and security for the people. It is also required to attend to the health needs and recreation needs of the people. The State has the principal role in protecting the environment and heritage for the future of the country and generations to come. In all these areas, it is a disappointing Budget whose rhetoric is supreme and whose expertise, understanding and sympathy are sadly lacking.

Some of the Ministers have good intent and energy, but Treasury and the Treasurer will prevent them from delivering to the public. The Treasurer made great play on capital funding being one-off but failed to signal two things. Much of this capital spending involves a period of two or three years. While the asset sales and raiding of funds will cover the first year, no provision is made for the succeeding years. When the assets are sold off, what will provide the remainder in big-Budget items such as the disgraceful splurge on the Pacific Highway? Once a revenue-producing asset is sold, that revenue is also lost to recurrent expenditure through consolidated revenue. Even the Treasurer's own economic rationalists advised against relying too heavily on revenue-producing entities.

The Treasurer wants to reduce land tax. This is one tax that should never be eliminated, because it is probably the only State tax that is not regressive. It is equitable and reasonable when compared with payroll tax and stamp duty. Perhaps the fact that over one-quarter of all land tax is raised in Surfers Paradise and on the Sunshine Coast has had an effect on the attitude of the Treasurer and Premier. In education, the Budget trumpets provision for 1,000 new teachers when over 300 are needed now to provide for non-contact time already agreed to and over 400



are needed for new schools and additional enrolments which Labor planned for.

What was not said was that schools in my electorate of Archerfield and others in urban areas are marked for closure. Acacia Ridge is a suburb of some 7,000 people in the far southern suburbs of Brisbane. It is a suburb of mostly public housing and of residents who have purchased public housing to enable them to work in the heavy industries which grew in the area in the fifties and sixties. Many of those industries closed down in the last two decades, including the GMH plant—formerly a major employer. As a result, the suburb is a low average income area with high unemployment. In 32 years, the conservative State Government failed to provide any services to that area, and it is only in the last six years that some social services such as 60s and Better, the neighbourhood centre and a housing advisory worker came to the suburb.

Now the new conservative Government has decided to close their high school, which has provided a most useful service to the suburb. This high school is one of only two in Queensland which are part of an Australian network providing a link into the business community where students are given extensive work experience in all areas of industry and business. Many schools provide some work experience, but no other school in Queensland provides the extensive training experience found at Acacia Ridge. The school has been awarded an AST Foundation grant in recognition of the curriculum and extra-curricula work done by the school. All jobs in industry from the shop floor to the laboratory, to the office to management service are encompassed in the students' experience at companies such as BHP and many others. This experience is invaluable in gaining employment for students who otherwise are facing a life of unemployment. There are dozens of high schools around Queensland with fewer students than the 270 at Acacia Ridge. Why is this essential school marked for execution by this Government?

There are also two primary schools in the suburb which are able to provide individual attention to 550 students to give them a start in life. I make it clear that I totally oppose the closure of both of these schools. Unless the Queensland Government accepts that some small schools should be retained in urban areas to suit particular problem solving, many students are never going to receive the individual attention that they need and deserve. After all, small schools are being retained in country areas for social need, and

the same should be done on a limited scale in urban areas.

While this Government saves money by amalgamating schools, local authorities and private bus operators are expected to provide a totally uneconomic bus service to students travelling to another school, and parents who often cannot afford it are expected to pay the fares. Funding for education must be provided because education of children equals the prosperity of future generations. The proposal to eliminate regional education offices and school support centres is one of the stupid suggestions which this Budget will support unless Parliament takes action to prevent the retrograde step. The school support centres have been a great success in assisting schools in my area and in the non-urban areas to the south. Let us hope that the Minister for Education sees the warning lights in this. He certainly gave no heed of the stop light this Parliament displayed to him over the school cleaners. Like many drivers in a certain European country, he thought that a red light meant he had to make up his own mind on whether to stop.

The Minister for Police shows a wilful inability to observe the niceties of a democratic society. He also shows an inability to understand that the proposal to destroy the tenure of commissioned police officers will also destroy the morale of the entire force except those who are there for other than legitimate reasons. What is the point of any officer becoming an inspector or superintendent if that officer can be usurped and made redundant at the end of three years? What then? A roving life filling in, or VERs or the sack. What a wonderful reward for effort, study and achievement.

While I deplore the wishy-washy attitude of the Minister for Natural Resources on the ruinous proposal to grow cotton in the Cooper Creek Channel Country, I certainly am pleased that the Government has restored the local government subsidy on water facilities to what it was under Gordon Chalk in the 1970s and that the Minister is actually investigating water resources and waste water treatment. Members of this House will remember that I have put forward support for this matter since I became a member of the Assembly. If river water can be treated for urban use in drinking, all waste water should be similarly treated before being expelled into streams or the ocean. I do not suggest that it should be retreated to be used for drinking water, as viruses could still be in that water, but it can be allowed to receive further natural treatment as

the strangest judicial decision in the history of elections, took over Government.

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where real Budget interpretation ends and where politics begins. However, the Budget offers to the people of this State a number of very clear positives. If, as the Government has predicted, economic growth reaches 4 per cent in the 1996-97 year, it will create, according to the documents, an estimated 45,000 new jobs. I offer my congratulations on that job creation because, particularly for our young people, productive work and contributory dignity are a priority. Youth unemployment in the Gladstone/Calliope area is at approximately 33 per cent and not conducive to engendering hope.

I note also for local government the increase in water and sewerage capital works subsidies from 20 per cent to 40 per cent. Local governments, particularly rural and regional local governments, will value that increase greatly, as they generally have limited access to the high capital that new schemes demand. This, in turn, may lead to extra employment. Many local authorities have put time and energy into the re-use of effluent for irrigation purposes and will appreciate the recognition in this area. People are becoming more and more water conscious, as they need to be, and more thoughtful use of effluent or recycling of any type can only contribute to a more productive future.

With regard to rural issues—for country councils the continuing recognition of drought effects is essential, and this is included in the Budget. For some agricultural pursuits a single good year can repair much of the financial damage. For graziers, remediation is spread over a larger period. Given the depressed prices for cattle at present, that time is extended.

As to workers' compensation—funding has been allocated to contribute to the Workers Compensation Fund problems. I continue to acknowledge those funding problems but also continue to be of the view that the gamut of proposals only succeeds in removing any options from the worker. The workers are being asked to accept the responsibility for management problems and to answer for the frustration felt by Government at the high level of remuneration to lawyers, perceived illegal claims and other rorts. These may be problems, but they are beyond the correction of the employee and, indeed, the employer—it is a problem with the management of the workers' compensation system. A solution to the problem must be found, but not at the risk of removing any hope for a future for those families whose lives are sadly disrupted by work-based accidents.

Announcements have also been made regarding the introduction of Keno into the wider community, presumably as a revenue generator. Yet I note that amounts have been allocated to counselling services to deal with recognised social consequences. One could question the wisdom of expanding an activity with such measurable negative social costs.

As to taxes—in any Budget the issue of primary concern to most people is, "How will this Budget affect my income?" This Budget, despite pre-election promises, does include increases in charges which, to most people, is the same as increases in taxes, even if technically they may be different. I acknowledge the increase of \$3.60 in registration fees. However, perhaps of greater impact is the \$3 per tyre and 10c per litre of oil to be levied. Many people can justifiably be critical of this increase. In the long term, a great benefit to the community will accrue provided that the money collected is directly used to dispose of the mountain of used tyres and the large quantities of oil in an environmentally friendly manner. "Environmentally friendly" very definitely includes demonstrable effect. The pile of tyres must reduce and, over time, disappear.

The national parks levy is of greater impact to Queensland families. No fees have been set, but even at \$20 per adult per year—usually \$40 per family—and increasing as the families get older, that is, the children become adults, this is an impost to a struggling family. The redeeming feature would be for the dollars collected to be reinvested in those areas where the dollars are taken. However, it is concerning that that may not be the case. Page 83 of Budget Paper No. 2 states that the park user fees and increases in camping and other user charges are expected to generate approximately \$18.4m over three years. However, it follows in the document that these funds will be directed towards—

- improving the management of national parks, including the Great Sandy Region;
- off-park wildlife management, including improving the licensing and monitoring of keepers of native fauna and flora;
- development of a computer database, Wildnet, to provide information on the distribution and abundance of marine and terrestrial fauna and flora;
- documentation of the conservation values of Torres Strait; and
- implementation of the Coastcare program, which provides funds to

community groups to undertake coastal management projects in cooperation with local coastal managers.

Whereas the responsible Minister has given me other documents, that is what is contained in those Budget documents. Yet the revenue is not going to be generated by some of those areas. If people have to pay to go into a national park, they want to see improved facilities in that area.

Then, of course, there is the cigarette tax—a sectional tax on a small portion of the community to pay for a hole left by the Federal Budget. Some have said that it will discourage people from smoking. I guess that, to some extent, it would. But I am concerned about broken promises and the effect that such a large increase will have on the working person yet again. From a health perspective, it is expected to reduce the number of young people who will commence smoking. I wish that outcome every success.

My concerns regarding producers have been clarified by the member for Tablelands, who has advised that funds have been allocated to relieve the impact of the tax increases on farmers in the north. Financial assistance will be available to give relief to the most affected farmers. Whether one likes it or not, it is a broken promise. I spoke against the tax when it was cobbled together with alcohol as a sin tax. My views remain unchanged. However, I have spoken at length to the Treasurer, her staff and the Premier. Both the Premier and Treasurer believe that no other options exist.

The Premier vehemently holds the view that my non-support of the proposed tobacco tax is, in effect, non-support of Supply because the revenue generation stream is so closely linked to the expenditure stream. I do not concur. I recognise my commitment, given in February, to ensure Supply. Therefore, unless another income stream can be identified, I am left with little option other than to support this unjust increase. I can only apologise to those people who have written and called depending on me for relief in the matter.

Another increase on which I wish to comment is the proposed rise in adoption fees, which can be nothing but counterproductive. Raise the cost of adoption and one limits the group of people able to access the process. It does not reduce the number of couples desperate for children and wanting more than anything to offer a family to a child. This increase will most definitely put adoption out of the reach of many. The

department has apparently defended the rise by saying that most families are two-income families. But in the case of overseas adoptions, where the application fee will rise from \$53 to \$200, and the assessment fee is proposed to rise from \$641 to \$5,000, both parents cannot work, as the overseas child is not allowed to be taken care of by anyone other than a parent. Given the relatively low income streams, I implore the Minister for Family Services to review these increases before they are implemented.

There are many things that I believe are positive. In Family Services—I acknowledge the many positive programs which Minister Lingard has proposed, particularly the reinforcing and empowering of the family as the most important support for children. That is essential. I would like to thank here groups who work very hard, with varying amounts of Government help, to provide support to children and adults with special needs. I mention the Endeavour Foundation in my area and across the State; in Gladstone, the Port Curtis Respite Centre; those involved in respite care at Mainstay; and individuals everywhere, even in their own homes, who provide a wonderful service to their children, their loved ones and this community. A number of family support workers have been allocated throughout the State. My electorate has a young average age and, with that, the attendant problems of dislocation from grandparents and other family support. A number of groups have spoken to me of the urgent need for a worker in the region.

In relation to policing—when Premier Borbidge visited Gladstone after coming to Government, he was markedly outspoken about the poor conditions of the police station and watch-house. The Minister for Police and Corrective Services has recently required that no person remain in a watch-house over seven days. This decision is long overdue, and I commend him for it. However, the allocation of planning dollars and, importantly, subsequent construction dollars for a new police headquarters and watch-house in Gladstone is essential. I again take this opportunity to reinforce the urgent need for a Juvenile Aid Bureau for the region given the demonstrated levels of juvenile crime attended by police. Compared to similar districts in the State, my electorate should already have a bureau. In order to fulfil commitments made for additional police, I note the funds allocated to the Townsville academy. Brief reference is made in the Police Service budget to the burden that the implementation of the proposed gun legislation will bring. I urge the

Government to deal with the root cause of crime and violence.

As to Education—\$6.9 million is allocated to behaviour management in schools. I continue to be of the view that a major contributor to lack of control is that teachers have lost the ability to discipline, and students know it. The success of the proposed Behavioural Management Program is yet to be seen; however, I remain of the opinion that relatively simple solutions will be necessary and would be effective. The planning for the Tannum High School continues with a great deal of enthusiasm on the part of all residents of the Boyne/Tannum area. My thanks to the Minister for recognising the needs of the area in his decision. A number of other primary schools have also received funding for buildings, and that is accepted with gratitude.

As to training—I commend the Minister for recognising the value of apprenticeships. For many young people, and the not so young, an apprenticeship is exactly what they want and can succeed in. I draw to the Minister's attention the new impediment to Group Apprenticeship Schemes, which are now being required to fund workers' compensation payments before the funds are raised. Previously, groups could pay their premium in arrears, which gave them the opportunity to accumulate funds from employers accurately. To my knowledge, no apprentice schemes defaulted, yet recent decisions to require up-front payment mean that the scheme in my area must find \$40,000-plus and subsequently try to assess its obligations and charge employers on an assessment-type basis. The previous scheme worked well, without default, and should be returned.

As to Health—Gladstone has received a number of applications for the gynaecologist/obstetrician position and the specialist physician position for the region. Those applicants have spoken with the hospital administration. Again, I thank the Minister for his care for our community for such a basic issue.

We continue with problems of waiting lists for dental, optical and surgical procedures. Physiotherapy and allied community health needs also continue to be priorities. Rockhampton mental health spending will assist our district, with the flow-on from the Budget yet to be measured.

In the area of Emergency Services I note the intention to corporatise the Ambulance and Fire Services. I am unsure of the benefits to the community, and indeed to the service, of this restructuring. Time will tell. However, for

rural communities ambulance officers and fire officers are intrinsic to the sense of safety for many. I commend publicly the officers who make themselves available day and night for the people's benefit. To them: thank you. It is not the corporate structure that helps; it is the people.

Morale in the Fire Service and Ambulance service, and in all Government departments, is a concern to me. It is not expensive to build morale: talk, listen, have a cup of tea and build trust. Endless reviews, committees and changes of structure can create a problem, not a solution.

I note the legislation for the Children's Commissioner. Whilst that legislation does not comply with the resolution that was passed through Parliament, I hope that the defined need to identify areas of paedophilia and other concerns in that area are not swallowed up in a bureaucratic quagmire. I commend the Minister for the Juvenile Justice legislation that passed recently. In public meetings held in my electorate the issues have, in large measure, been covered by that legislation.

Within the Budget papers there is allocation for water provision. That is essential. Proposed damming of the Calliope River in my region does not have general community support. Much greater support exists for the increase of the Awoonga Dam for the provision of water in the future. That has been historically accepted. To a great extent land has been acquired and the project can proceed. Additional costs are associated with the railway line. The social impact of the proposed Calliope Dam, the impact on fishing and the impact on the environment are immeasurable.

As to Transport—funds allocated for the upgrading of the main road into Gladstone are necessary now and have been allocated, for which I am thankful. That is a dangerous bottleneck for the growing traffic in the developing suburbs west of the city. Many meetings have been held with the Minister over concerns with Queensland Rail, and I am looking forward to those concerns being met over time.

Finally, the CJC has been commented on many times. Today allegations have been made regarding a central member of the CJC. Given the high visibility of the commission and the role that it plays, it is imperative that this matter is investigated quickly, objectively and decisively.

**Mr Barton:** By the parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** The investigation should be by an objective group.

Budget time is a period of concern for business, industry and the individual. This Budget has brought many advantages, but also its share of new financial cost. Government's primary responsibility is to work for the betterment of the people whom we serve. As time progresses, I trust our community will see on-the-ground benefits: improvements in their standard of living and improved access to fundamental services.

**Hon. J. M. SHELDON** (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (12.06 a.m.), in reply: I would like to thank all honourable members for their contributions to this Budget debate, particularly the Government members, who have worked very diligently with myself and with the Cabinet Ministers in producing the policies, the direction and, ultimately, of course, the figures for our Budget. I thank them very much for their input. It was a pity that all we really heard from the Opposition was negativity; there was nothing constructive. I think that that is of considerable concern to the community. Opposition members were not really debating the Bill; they were endeavouring to be negative on any issue that the Government may raise.

I will cover a few points that were made generally. This is not a taxing Budget, it is a tax concession Budget. In aggregate terms, 1996-97 puts the brakes on taxes in this State. The State tax burden per capita grew by 40 per cent in real terms between 1989-90 and 1995-96. That is an average of 5.7 per cent per annum in real per capita terms. Those were the years when Labor was in Government. No growth will occur in real per capita terms in 1996-97, despite increases in debits tax and tobacco tax to the average levels of other States.

I will point out some significant tax concessions provided in the Budget. The tax free threshold for payroll tax will be increased by \$50,000 to \$800,000 from 1 January 1997, thereby providing relief to the business community and providing further incentive for employment creation. This payroll tax threshold increase will cost some \$3.3m in 1996-97. Over 4,000 taxpayers will pay reduced or no payroll tax. Less than 5 per cent of employers in Queensland will remain liable for payroll tax. We believe that it is vital that the coalition deliver what it said it would deliver in relation to payroll tax. Obviously that supplies jobs for our people and particularly jobs for our young.

A three-year averaging of land values on which land tax is based will be introduced to smooth out sudden changes to the tax in times of changing land values. That measure will be introduced during 1996-97 to apply to 1997-98 land tax notices and will provide a benefit to land tax payers of some \$13m in 1997-98. As we all know, whether stated now in leases or not, that land tax provision does apply to rents to small businesses, and that affects their end productivity. So, by reducing that tax, we will make small businesses more profitable and more able to employ more people.

As to stamp duty concessions on mortgages—in May 1996, the Government introduced legislation to provide stamp duty relief for home owners refinancing their mortgage and an increase in the mortgage duty exemption levels for first-home buyers. A new mortgage duty exemption of \$100,000 applies for refinancing of a mortgage for a principal place of residence and the mortgage duty exemption for first-home buyers was increased by \$30,000 to \$100,000, effective from 1 July 1996. Overall revenue from taxes, fees and fines is expected to grow from \$4,165m to \$4,364m, which is an increase of 4.8 per cent in nominal terms or 0.3 per cent in real per capita terms.

Growth is concentrated in four areas. The payroll tax net is up 3.7 per cent, but that is a fall of 1.2 per cent in real per capita terms. The tobacco franchise fees are up 8.8 per cent, or 4.3 per cent in real per capita terms. May I add that we have clearly said that the tobacco franchise fee will go to health. This year we have increased spending on health by more than \$315m.

**Mrs EDMOND:** I rise to a point of order. Members of the Treasurer's back bench have already pointed out that most of that increase is owing to differences in accounting.

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

**Mrs SHELDON:** That is absolute rubbish and the member knows it.

**A Government member:** It is surprising she is still awake.

**Mrs SHELDON:** May I add that it is a pity that the member is still awake, because we are not getting anything of much benefit from her. As I was saying, some of this money will go to help provide programs to educate our young people on the dangers of smoking, what smoking does to their lungs, and how it can increase the cost of providing health care.

The debits tax is up 23.7 per cent or 19 per cent in real per capita terms, and fines and fees are up 8.5 per cent or 4 per cent in real per capita terms. Other taxes, fees and fines are expected to grow by 0.5 per cent, which is a fall of 4 per cent in real per capita terms.

With payroll tax, a large proportion of the tax base is exempt under current thresholds and the threshold will be raised from \$750,000 to \$800,000 from 1 January 1997. Growth in the small-business sector will not be reflected in increased taxation revenue.

The tobacco franchise fee rise reflects an increase in the rate from 75 per cent to 100 per cent. With the debits tax, the rise reflects the increase in rates to levels applying in southern States. With fees and fines, the increase mainly reflects higher traffic fines on account of the introduction of speed cameras, increases in motor vehicle registration fees, including \$3.60 to fund significant enhancements to customer service delivery activities, and new environmental levies on tyres and oil to fund waste management activities, which are very much needed in this State. We in the coalition have made a definite effort to try to reduce this pollution, which the previous Government would not do, and did not do.

With other taxes, fees and fines, growth is only 0.5 per cent, or minus 4 per cent in real per capita terms. The major component of this category is stamp duty, which responds more to the asset price cycle and activity in the housing market than to the GSP.

I am very pleased to hear the Leader of the Opposition saying that he does support the levy on tyres and the actions of the Government in imposing a levy on oil. I thank him for coming around and realising what an excellent policy it was.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I rise to a point of order. I seek a withdrawal. That is absolutely outrageous. I never said such a thing.

**Mrs SHELDON:** Yes, he did, when he was sitting right there.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I beg your pardon.

**Mrs SHELDON:** The member can stand up and say what he likes.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I beg your pardon. That is outrageous.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no debate. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I seek a withdrawal. I have been grossly and dishonestly misrepresented and I seek those comments to be withdrawn.

**Mrs SHELDON:** The member said it.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I did not. That is outrageous!

**Mrs SHELDON:** I wish the Leader of the Opposition would withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition believes that he has been misquoted and he has asked for a withdrawal.

**Mrs SHELDON:** Mr Speaker, seeing that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to back up what he said when he was sitting down there, I will withdraw.

I turn now to outlays growth. A comparison of growth rates over time is complex because of significant compositional changes that occur from year to year.

**Mr Elder:** You're an outrageous liar.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Capalaba! That is unparliamentary language.

**Mrs SHELDON:** Yes. Mr Speaker, I would like the member to withdraw that. I find it offensive and I ask the member to withdraw it.

**Mr ELDER:** Mr Speaker, with due deference to you, I will withdraw.

**Mrs SHELDON:** These can include factors such as the transfer of functions to and from the Commonwealth, classification changes, the movement of Trust Funds into the Consolidated Fund and changed accounting arrangements. The most consistent time series data available are the Government finance statistics, but even these include a number of factors which make valid comparisons difficult, such as the reclassification of Higher Education Contribution Scheme revenue as a negative outlay in 1993-94—of course, this was previously a revenue item—growth in CSO payments to electricity and rail; declining interest payments; and incorporation of some housing transactions into the general Government sector. Because of these and other factors, it is difficult to prepare a strictly comparable time series to analyse outlays growth. Accordingly, growth in 1996-97 is best analysed in terms of the underlying data included in the Budget papers for the Consolidated Fund. In this regard, for the Consolidated Fund, underlying growth on 1995-96 actual outlays is as follows: 5 per cent for recurrent outlays, that is, recurrent services, debt servicing and grants and subsidies; 17.8 per cent for capital outlays; and 6.7 per cent for total outlays. On the same basis, underlying revenue growth on 1995-96 actual

revenue is as follows: 1.8 per cent for Commonwealth payments; 4.8 per cent for taxes, fees and fines; 17.7 per cent for other State sources of revenue; and 6.8 per cent for aggregate revenue.

The underlying growth adjusts for base effects caused by the inclusion for the first time in 1996-97 of the core housing program within the Consolidated Fund, new arrangements for dividends and community service obligations for Q-Rail and carryover expenditure commitments from 1995-96.

The underlying growth in real per capita outlays is due to a major increase in capital outlays and for infrastructure that is needed for core service delivery, particularly in areas such as hospitals, law and order, schools and transport.

Much has been said about the Treasurer's advance. Each year, an allocation needs to be set aside to provide funding for a range of issues that have not been able to be finalised for the Budget and will be addressed during the course of the year, such as the outstanding legal liability claims, implementation of competition policy, funding for replacement of specialised heavy vehicles, and major project facilitation costs. Further, no provision has been made in departmental allocations for wage increases under new enterprise bargaining agreements which will be put in place during 1996-97. This contrasts with last year's Budget, where enterprise bargaining wage increases were largely known and could be factored into departmental allocations.

In addition, provision has been set aside for the cost of the provision of six weeks' paid maternity leave together with a range of current outstanding non-enterprise bargaining award variations. Also included is prudent contingency allocations, which need to be made for other outlays which may emerge during the year, such as provision for further drought assistance in the unfortunate event of prolonged drought conditions.

**Mr Barton** interjected.

**Mrs SHELDON:** I realise that the member does not think that our rural people should be helped in times of drought. However, we in the coalition do. Also, provision is made for natural disaster relief and restoration costs. Each year, Queensland is subject to cyclone and flood damage, which in 1995-96 cost around \$33m. Accordingly, the Treasurer's advance provision is entirely appropriate and prudent, given the circumstances this year.

I would like to now comment on Commonwealth payments. Growth in Commonwealth payments in 1996-97 is only 1.8 per cent on a comparable basis, that is, after adjusting the 1995-96 payments to include the CSHA funds for housing, which are included in the 1996-97 numbers. In dollar terms, the increase is only \$90m, or a fall in real per capita terms of some 3 per cent.

I would like to speak on infrastructure funding. Funding to meet the first-year cost of the \$1.6 billion Infrastructure Rejuvenation Package of \$214m is being provided from financial assets which are available to the State, uncommitted balances in the QIFF trust and the net proceeds from the already sold State gas pipeline. Funding for this capital expenditure is coming from one-off funding sources. Funding is not being sourced in 1996-97 from the sale of income-producing assets. One-off funds are not being used to finance the recurrent Budget.

I turn to returns from GOEs. The Government has been very keen to ensure that returns to Government from GOEs in the form of dividends and tax equivalents are commercially based and do not jeopardise the ongoing health of such bodies. Dividend and tax equivalent payments from GOEs in total are expected to increase substantially in 1996-97. The total increase in dividends and tax equivalents amounts to some \$400m in 1996-97, \$463m in 1995-96, and an estimated \$862m in 1996-97, or an increase of 86 per cent.

The main reason for the increase in dividend receipts by the Consolidated Fund in 1996-97 over 1995-96 is that 1995-96 was the first year in which all the major GOEs were subject to the formal corporatisation policy for the full year. Prior to corporatisation, dividend policy tended to operate on a case-by-case basis. Accordingly, 1996-97 is the first year when full year returns from corporatisation will flow to the Consolidated Fund, with the major increases coming from—

electricity corporatisation—an increase of \$113m;

Queensland Rail—an increase of \$208m;

and all other (ports, forestry, etc.)—an increase of \$77m.

The expected increase in total distributions to Government in 1996-97 must be considered in the context of the major community service obligation payments in 1996-97 to Queensland Rail and the Queensland electricity supply industry. The



increase in CSO payments in 1996-97 amounts to some \$175m.

I turn now to the Environmental Franchise Scheme. The Environmental Franchise Scheme fees for motorbikes, cars and light commercial tyres, and for oil, have been set at a level that attempts to capture the costs of inappropriate disposal. However, the fees for trucks, tractors and heavy earth-moving tyres have been set at less than the full costs of inappropriate disposal to provide time for affected industries—which have their greatest impact in rural Queensland—to develop some options for ecologically sustainable disposal of these tyres. It has also been claimed that the environmental franchise fees on oil are a Clayton's fuel tax. However, there will be no fee on 2-stroke oil, oil used in energy generation or grease. This is a sensible, price-based scheme overcoming a real waste disposal problem and is put in place to maintain a clean environment for future generations to which the coalition Government is committed.

The Remote Area Incentives Scheme has had some comment. Suggestions have been made by the member for Fitzroy that the reference to a \$5.6m Remote Area Incentives Scheme for Education overstates actual funding in Budget papers by \$1.1m. The key points are that the ongoing funding available for the RAIS is \$2.2m in recurrent funds for employee benefits such as study incentives and travel and additional remote area leave entitlements and \$1.1m allocation within the department's capital program for employee housing benefits. The 1996-97 Budget enhanced this level of existing funding by \$2.3m, bringing total RAIS funding to \$5.6m. In addition, further funding is provided for emergent leave for teachers in remote areas. This additional funding is around \$1m per annum.

Suggestions have been made that the sacking of youth unemployment workers shows a disregard by Government in providing assistance to young people when Government should be taking up the gauntlet on behalf of the young unemployed. There are a few key points that I would like to make. The Government is not ignoring the plight of the young unemployed. The 1996-97 Budget has been structured to improve their job prospects by providing targeted initiatives which are assessed as leading more directly to improved long-term employment prospects. The National Commission of Audit and an independent review commissioned by the Queensland Government highlighted that duplication existed between Commonwealth

and State labour market programs. Further, labour market programs are essentially a Commonwealth responsibility and the State should not be required to pick up the tab when the Commonwealth determines it is going to reduce spending in this area. Evaluation of existing labour market programs indicates that alternative strategies may be required to improve long-term job prospects of the young unemployed.

This Government's key focus is to provide effective assistance by creating a business environment which is conducive to employment growth. Measures include—

- providing appropriate tax incentives for employment creation; including maintenance of payroll tax rebates for apprentices, trainees and young unemployed and increasing the tax-free threshold for payroll tax;

- developing a flexible industrial relations environment which frees up employers and workers to negotiate productive, innovative work arrangements; and

- providing training opportunities to enable the unemployed to gain marketable skills.

Training is a State responsibility and this Budget will increase training funds by around \$30m in a full year. The additional 16,270 training places subsequently generated will enable young unemployed to gain marketable skills to assist them in gaining a place in the workforce. This Government's \$4 billion Capital Works Program, which includes a \$1.6 billion Special Infrastructure Rejuvenation Program, will provide a shot in the arm for the Queensland economy and will create around 44,000 jobs.

The State's fiscal contribution of \$114.2m is to be offset against Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement block assistance contributions in 1996-97. A sum of \$84.2m will be provided from the Consolidated Fund to offset this reduction in 1996-97. Program outlays within the Queensland Housing Commission Fund in 1996-97 for public housing activities are \$338.3m, compared with actual program outlays of \$370.9m in 1995-96, the difference essentially reflecting the net reduction of \$30m in Commonwealth funding.

Treasury forecasts the State unemployment rate in 1996-97 to be 9.3 per cent, compared with a national average of 8.5 per cent. This is due in part to Queensland's relatively high participation rate and continued high levels of interstate migration, which is concentrated in prime working age groups. Employment is forecast to grow by 2.5 per

cent in 1996-97. This compares with a national employment growth forecast of 1.5 per cent. Nonetheless, over the year to the June quarter 1997, employment is expected to grow by around 3.0 per cent, with an estimated additional 45,000 jobs being created in Queensland.

Forecast business growth for 1996-97 is 9 per cent, compared with a national forecast of 14 per cent. This figure of 9 per cent needs to be viewed in the context of the relatively strong business investment growth in Queensland of 12.4 per cent in 1995-96 and 30.1 per cent in 1994-95 respectively, compared with national business investment growth rates of 9.7 per cent in 1995-96 and 17.1 per cent in 1994-95. Further strong growth in business investment is expected in New South Wales, reflecting the construction of facilities for the 2000 Olympics.

I would like to comment on the 1995-96 Labor funding of the deficit. The 1995-96 Budget was framed on the use of \$185m in one-off funding sources to balance the ongoing Budget. The actual result in 1995-96 was the use of some \$180m as follows—

the run down of Consolidated Fund opening balance of \$45m;

the draw down of Trust Fund balances of \$50m;

one-off funding from proceeds of the Electricity Corporation of \$85m.

On a no-policy charge basis, this \$180m deficit in 1995-96 increases to a funding gap of \$240m in 1996-97.

I would like to comment on police numbers. The Opposition keeps raising questions on what is happening with police numbers. I am only too pleased to respond. Police numbers are being significantly enhanced above levels funded in the Forward Estimates by Labor. The Opposition endorsed funds of \$23.9m over the triennium commencing in 1996-97. This compares with triennium funds of \$75.7m approved by the coalition Government in the 1996-97 Budget—an increase of almost 217 per cent! In 1996-97 alone, we have doubled the funding commitment of the previous Government from \$4.3m to \$8.5m. The funding increase approved in the 1996-97 Budget is consistent with our commitment to deliver an additional 2,780 police by 2005, bringing total police strength to 9,100.

Questions have been asked about the fate of the Technology in Schools Program. Key points are—

the previous Government's initiatives in this area have continued to be fully supported;

an allocation of \$4m has been provided for the Computers in Schools initiative in 1996-97; and

\$22.2m has been provided for continued implementation of the Schools Management Information System.

In addition, the coalition Government has enhanced the provision of information technology in schools in the 1996-97 Budget as follows—

\$7.2m for a new School Technology Infrastructure Program; and

\$2m for the new Global Classroom initiative to allow schools to commence access to on-line information services such as the Internet.

I would like to comment on the increase in nursing staff. It is far from clear how the Opposition can support its claim that there will be fewer nurses in 1996-97 than under funding levels endorsed by Labor. This Government has as its priority in health the improvement of delivery of core public health services. Where savings have been identified in Queensland Health, they have been in non-core, support services and administrative areas such as the regional health authorities.

Not only have there not been any cuts to existing service delivery areas under this Budget, but the Government has also announced a number of new initiatives which will improve services in a number of areas, including: opening wards at the Royal Brisbane and Gold Coast Hospitals; increasing the staffing at the emergency department of Cairns Base Hospital; increasing the number of cardiac procedures at the Prince Charles Hospital; increasing mental health in-patient services at Nambour, Rockhampton and Royal Brisbane Hospitals; and expanding the range of services provided by Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital. All of these initiatives involve the employment of additional doctors, nurses and health professionals to expand or enhance provision of core public health services.

I would like to conclude by commenting on the disgraceful state of the Workers Compensation Fund.

**Mrs Edmond** interjected.

**Mrs SHELDON:** The member for Mount Coot-tha was certainly involved in this debacle.

On current estimates, the Workers Compensation Fund is in the red to the tune of \$441m. The Government has committed nearly \$40m each year for three years to this fund. That money could well have gone into services that were really needed in this State. Instead, we have had to put that money into doing the Government's bit to try to help the Workers Compensation Fund get back in the black to ensure that when our workers are injured there is a fund that can pay for them. As I said, this money could well have gone into supplying very important services that were needed in this State. Instead, we have had to put money into the fund, which was allowed to get into such a disgraceful state by the member for Mount Coot-tha and the member for Yeronga. That point needs to be very clearly made.

Motion agreed to.

### **Reference to Estimates Committees**

**Mr SPEAKER:** In accordance with the Sessional Orders adopted by the House on 3 September 1996, the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) and the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) are referred to the Estimates committees for consideration and report by 8 October 1996.

### **SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr FITZGERALD** (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (12.33 a.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 8 October 1996."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 12.33 a.m. (Saturday).

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE****627. School Cleaning Services**

**Mr BREDHAUER** asked the Minister for Education (6/8/96)—

With reference to his broken election promise in sacking 5000 school cleaners including those in many rural and remote areas like Cape York Peninsula, the Torres Strait and the Gulf—

How does he intend that cleaning in remote schools with no contract cleaners will be managed?

**Mr Quinn** (10/9/96): The issue of cleaning in remote schools is being negotiated presently by the Department of Education and members of the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union.

The attached document will provide details on the nature of this negotiation.

**635. School Cleaning Services**

**Mr SMITH** asked the Minister for Education (6/8/96)—

With reference to the fact that 92 per cent of the budget for school cleaning is spent on wages for cleaning staff and given his announcement that 40 per cent of the cleaning budget will be slashed—

- (1) What guarantee will he give that cleaning hours in schools will not be reduced and that health and hygiene standards will be maintained?
- (2) How many people will cease to be employed by Q-Clean in the Townsville/Thuringowa area in the category of (a) full time and (b) part time?
- (3) In the electorate of Townsville will he guarantee there will be no reduction of hours in any school?
- (4) In view of the reduction of hygiene standards experienced in southern States as a result of contract cleaning, how can he guarantee there won't be a similar drop in Queensland?

**Mr Quinn** (10/9/96): The issues raised in this question are now a matter of negotiation between the Department of Education and members of the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union.

The attached document will provide details on the nature of this negotiation.

**639. Queensland Principal Club; Mr P. Gallagher**

**Mr HAYWARD** asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Racing (6/8/96)—

With reference to a recent question on notice from the Member for Aspley, John Goss to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Racing which requested the Minister to table comprehensive details of expenses incurred by the QPC Committee, in particular those incurred at the Brisbane Hilton Hotel—

- (1) Will he provide details of Race Club expenditure in the same form as Mr Goss requires of the QPC and include details of the cost of Committee hospitality, entertainment, travel and sponsorship related expenses incurred in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 by the following major clubs: QTC, GCTC, SCTC, ITC, TTC?
- (2) Will he confirm that Mr Goss' question was sponsored by QTC Chairman, Mr Peter Gallagher who, since being sacked as Chairman of the QPC on 1 April 1992, is well known to be a revenge seeker and vociferous critic of the control body, the establishment of which took away from his club the power they had previously enjoyed?

**Mr Cooper** (10/9/96):

(1) Information requested is in the form of letters from the clubs referred to, and also from the Brisbane Turf Club, copies of which are tabled. The information provided by the clubs in response to Mr Hayward's question is not as comprehensive as that furnished by the Queensland Principal Club, a statutory body established under the Racing and Betting Act 1980. While a statutory body is governed by the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977, it is apparent from the detail provided that race clubs do not maintain records which can readily be accessed to provide a breakdown in expenditures as sought in the question. Furthermore, informal advice from Crown Law to the Office of Racing is that as these clubs are not units of public administration no legal obligation exists for them to comply with any request for information on club expenditures. Efforts to seek clarification from individual clubs of the information provided may therefore be unproductive in terms of both the likely accuracy and reliability of such information and the absence of any legal basis on which to direct that it be supplied.

(2) I am not in a position to confirm that the question on notice asked by the Member for Aspley, Mr John Goss, was sponsored by the Queensland Turf Club Chairman, Mr Peter Gallagher.

I have no knowledge of the process which prompted the question from Mr Goss neither do I have any knowledge of any third party involvement.

**644. State Debt**

**Mr De LACY** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (7/8/96)—

What is the net Queensland debt as of 30 June 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995 (est.) on the following basis, (a) in the normal way, including superannuation assets and (b) excluding superannuation assets?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): As the honourable member was Treasurer up until February '96, he would have access to all relevant data in his records.

Other data concerning State debt will be revealed in the '96-'97 budget which I will deliver on Tuesday.

**645. Commission of Audit**

**Mr HAMILL** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (7/8/96)—

With reference to her statement in Parliament on 7 August that the Fitzgerald Commission of Audit report confirmed that the State Budget was in deficit and had an underlying deficit on a cash accounting basis—

Will she indicate precisely where in the report these statements were made?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): The Commission of Audit's findings on the estimated accrual Budget result for 1995-96 are set out in Chapter 4 of its report.

The Commission's report did not include an estimate of the Consolidated Fund cash result for 1995-96, because of the shortcomings of this measure—as set out on page 87 of the Report.

In order to calculate this accrual result, the Commission had to take into account several one-off items to come to its results. Applying these same adjustments to the Consolidated Fund results in a cash operating deficit for the Fund.

**647. Cloncurry Hospital**

**Mr McGRADY** asked the Minister for Health (7/8/96)—

With reference to the Cloncurry Hospital and health facilities in that town—

Will he detail the staff situation at that hospital and what actions he is taking to improve facilities in this growing community?

**Mr Horan** (6/9/96): There is presently a full-time relieving surgeon from Mount Isa Hospital resident at Cloncurry Hospital. The Mount Isa District Health Service is actively seeking to recruit two permanent full-time doctors for Cloncurry Hospital, one of which will fill the position of Medical Superintendent. It is anticipated that the positions will be filled within three months.

A master plan has been completed for the redevelopment of Cloncurry Hospital. The recovery area, nurses stations, accident and emergency area and some staff facilities will be upgraded. Additionally, a new ambulance station will be constructed on the hospital site.

Approval has been given to rebuild the private doctors surgery in Cloncurry to provide consulting rooms for two practitioners. Other health services in the local community will be enhanced to support the needs of the growing community.

**650. Schedule of Rates Contracts**

**Mr MULHERIN** asked the Minister for Public Works and Housing (7/8/96)—

With reference to the decision to transfer schedule of rates contracts from the Department of Housing to the Department of Public Works—

Will he give a guarantee to schedule of rates contractors who have accepted a 12-month extension on their contracts that they will receive the

same level of work as they have come to expect in the past?

**Mr Connor** (6/9/96): There are no plans to change policy where it relates to schedule of rates contracts.

**651. Health Department, Capital Works Projects**

**Mr BRISKEY** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (7/8/96)—

What is the total of Queensland Government debt raised to fund health capital works as at 30 June 1990, including debt not specifically allocated to the Health Department in the budget papers but raised for these purposes?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): Details of State Government Debt for 1990 can be found on page 201 of the Treasurer's Annual Statement for that year. This shows that Debt serviced by the then Consolidated Revenue Fund amounted to \$4,156.5M. Debt serviced from other sources totalled \$5,128M. In total, State Government debt at 30 June 1990 totalled \$9,284.7M.

**652. Incorp; Deeragun State High School**

**Mr McELIGOTT** asked the Minister for Public Works and Housing (7/8/96)—

With reference to his determination that Townsville based contractor, Incorp, did not have the "appropriate financial capacity" to be awarded the contract to build the Deeragun High School despite the fact that this tender price was \$50,000 lower than Brisbane firm Contrapac and as this is a clear case of discrimination against the North Queensland construction industry—

- (1) Will he spell out the circumstances under which North Queensland firms will receive equal consideration with southern competitors, on major projects?
- (2) What are the arrangements for damages in the event that this 34-week job is not completed on time?
- (3) Is the contract amount to be increased to meet overtime payments to enable the school to open on time in 1997?

**Mr Connor** (6/9/96):

(1) There is no discrimination between suppliers. Unlike the previous Labor Government we will not contract triple bankrupts like G J Constructions that will force subcontractors to the wall when they don't get paid.

(2) The contract conditions contain provisions for the application of liquidated damages for late completion by the contractor.

(3) There is no requirement at this time for the contract to be varied to enable the school to open on time for 1997.

**661. Ambulance Service**

**Mr J. H. SULLIVAN** asked the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport (7/8/96)—

With reference to the Queensland Ambulance Service—

- (1) How many auxiliary ambulance officers are currently performing duties with the Queensland Ambulance Service?
- (2) At what centres are these auxiliaries stationed?
- (3) What are the conditions regarding proximity to workplace which currently apply to these auxiliaries?
- (4) Is this under review; if so, when will the result of this review be known?

**Mr Veivers** (6/9/96):

(1) The Queensland Ambulance Service does not have any auxiliary officers. The term auxiliary is used in the Queensland Fire Service to define firefighters who are paid only for the part time hours they work. The Queensland Ambulance Service does have Honorary Ambulance Officers and there are currently 342 deployed across Queensland.

(2) I have included for tabling, a list of the Honorary Officer staff establishment for the State, including their station of deployment.

As you can see from the list, Honorary Ambulance Officers are located in all sections of the State and should be commended for their civic duty and dedication of service to the Queensland community. My department recognises the vital role they play and the Commissioner of the QAS informs me that the QAS is committed to the continual educational program for Honorary Ambulance Officers. Honorary Ambulance Officers can complete the Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Ambulance) and become a Qualified Ambulance Officer. The Commissioner also informs me that recruitment for Honorary Ambulance Officers occurs throughout the year as suitable applicants apply to the QAS.

(3) The Queensland Ambulance Service does not require any of its staff to live in any proximity to their place of work, the same is true for Honorary Ambulance Officers. There are many examples of where Officers live in neighbouring towns or outside the township.

(4) There is currently no review being undertaken in relation to the present conditions.

## 662. Youth Employment

**Mr T. B. SULLIVAN** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (7/8/96)—

- (1) Did the Coalition, on 3 July 1995, promise to create 3,500 new public payroll jobs?
- (2) Will this initiative cost up to \$50m to introduce?
- (3) Will this promise be implemented; if so, when?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): The Coalition espouses a range of policies designed to combat youth unemployment.

In line with this, the Coalition budget will contain measures designed to improve employment prospects to young Queenslanders. These will be revealed when I present the budget on Tuesday.

## 664. Cairns Base Hospital

**Mr BREDHAUER** asked the Minister for Health (7/8/96)—

With reference to specialist services at the Cairns Base Hospital—

- (1) Is it true that Cairns Base Hospital is without a neurologist at present?
- (2) What arrangements are being made to recruit a full-time neurological specialist and when does he anticipate making any such appointment?
- (3) In the absence of a neurologist at the Cairns Base Hospital, what interim arrangements have been made to ensure that the people living in this region in need of specialist neurology services receive the treatment they need?
- (4) How much recurrent monies have been set aside for the position in question?

**Mr Horan** (6/9/96):

(1 & 3) A consultant neurologist is employed to visit Cairns Base Hospital, performing one session per fortnight for both inpatients and outpatients. General physicians provide appropriate complementary services to meet additional demand on an ongoing basis. Occasionally, superspecialist neurology services are required. In these cases, patients are referred to Brisbane in line with best clinical practice.

(2 & 4) I am advised that current levels of service demand does not justify recruitment of a full-time neurological specialist. However, given the status of Cairns and district as one of Queensland's key growth areas, I have directed that this situation be subject to continual review.

## 667. Queensland Health

**Mrs EDMOND** asked the Minister for Health (7/8/96)—

With reference to his answer to a series of issues relating to possible job losses in Queensland Health as a result of public sector cut backs, and notwithstanding the fact that many temporary and contract appointments are not necessarily renewed and that many are partly or fully funded by the Commonwealth, they are still positions attached to Queensland Health either in Corporate Office or in the community or district—

- (1) How many temporary or contract appointments existed in Queensland Health prior to the establishment of District Health Services?
- (2) How many temporary or contract appointments are currently attached to Queensland Health?
- (3) How many of these temporary or contract appointments are funded entirely by the Commonwealth at present?
- (4) How many of these temporary or contract appointments are currently funded solely by Queensland Health?
- (5) How many of these temporary or contract appointments are jointly funded by Queensland Health and the Commonwealth?

**Mr Horan** (6/9/96): The Staff Profile Information System inherited from Labor provides a snapshot of staff numbers (headcount only) on a quarterly basis. It produces figures which are based on data where 839 positions cannot be identified against a funding source. The information provided to me is, therefore, qualified by the reliability of this System. Given this, I am advised that:

(1) 3634 temporary employees were identified in Queensland Health as at May 1996.

(2) A snapshot to be undertaken in September 1996 will provide new District Health Service figures. The Corporate Office figure is currently 91 (end August 1996).

(3) As at May 1996, 215 employees were in Commonwealth funded positions. The Corporate Office figure is currently 27 (end August 1996).

(4) As at May 1996, 3167 temporary employees were funded by Queensland Health. The Corporate Office figure is currently 50 (end August 1996).

(5) As at May 1996, 7 employees were identified as being employed in jointly funded positions. The Corporate Office figure is currently 14 (end August 1996).

#### 669. Wairoonga Nursing Home

**Mr DOLLIN** asked the Minister for Health (7/8/96)—

(1) Has funding for the therapy centre at the Maryborough Base Hospital's Wairoonga Nursing Home ceased as this therapy centre provides important therapy services such as physiotherapy for more than 20 external patients a day, five days a week?

(2) Have these patients been encouraged to go to the new activity centre provided by the Blue Nursing Service, which does not provide the important and necessary therapy needed by these patients?

**Mr Horan** (6/9/96):

(1) No, the funding for the therapy centre at the Maryborough Hospital's Wairoonga Nursing Home has not ceased. The centre provides a range of diversional therapy activities including craft and recreational activities (cards and games) and aims to provide a venue for people in the local community to interact socially with nursing home residents. The centre is staffed by one enrolled nurse and is an activity centre rather than a therapy centre in terms of the services provided to clients.

There are no allied health therapy services offered at the centre. However, a Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) machine is located at the centre for treatment of chronic pain. This machine does not require professional supervision to use and is widely available for people to purchase for use in their own treatment of chronic pain.

(2) The patients who attend the therapy centre at the Wairoonga Nursing Home visited the activity centre operated by the Blue Nursing Service on one occasion in July 1996. The purpose of this visit was to provide an opportunity for people to link with another activity group.

#### 671. Hospitals, Recurrent Expenditure

**Mr HAYWARD** asked the Minister for Health (7/8/96)—

(1) Will he detail the recurrent expenditure for year ended 30 June 1996 for the following hospitals: (a) Cairns Base, (b) Royal Brisbane, (c) Princess Alexandra, (d) Royal Women's, (e) Caboolture, (f) Toowoomba, (g) Bundaberg, (h) Townsville, (i) Prince Charles, (j) Gold Coast and (k) Mount Isa?

(2) Was the recurrent expenditure adequate for those hospitals?

**Mr Horan** (6/9/96):

(1) Recurrent expenditure for year ended 30 June 1996 for the selected hospitals was as follows:

(a) Cairns Base—66,063,000

(b) Royal Brisbane—220,961

(c) Princess Alexandra—207,788,000

(d) Royal Women's—43,612,000

(e) Caboolture—20,273,000

(f) Toowoomba—59,818,000

(g) Bundaberg—26,722,000

(h) Townsville—92,607,000

(i) The Prince Charles—95,804,000

(j) Gold Coast—90,240,000

(k) Mount Isa—19,107,000

(2) When the 1996 State Budget is brought down, you will see that the adequacy of hospital budgets is addressed, and that the Coalition's commitment to delivering health services on time and within budget is absolute.

These hospitals' expenditure represents part of the irresponsible blow out of costs which took place under your now Leaders, Messrs Beattie and Elder. These hospitals were also operating under Beattie/Elder system, which endorsed such practices as withholding accounts payable from small business just to balance the books. I ordered these accounts to be paid; therefore the figures given above contain up to fifteen months of such payments. Queensland Health is now operating under a new system of financial accountability, a system which will see it meet its responsibilities to its patients, its communities, its suppliers, and to this Parliament.

#### 672. Land Tax

**Ms BLIGH** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for the Arts (7/8/96)—

(1) Did the Coalition, on 3 July 1995, promise to offer a youth employment land tax rebate?

(2) Will this initiative cost up to \$60m to introduce?

(3) When will this promise be implemented?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): Prior to the '95 election campaign the Coalition released policies designed to create jobs for our youth. At the time, the Coalition had no knowledge of two very important factors:

(i) an underlying Budget deficit of around \$240 million in 1996-97, which we inherited from the Labor Government; and

- (ii) a funding shortfall of around \$250 million or more in 1996-97 from the Commonwealth Government.

These factors have necessitated a reassessment of all expenditure and revenue measures and decisions need to be considered in the context of the State's overall financial position. Details of any revenue measures will be outlined in the Budget, which I will deliver on Tuesday.

#### 674. Redcliffe Hospital

**Mr HOLLIS** asked the Minister for Health (7/8/96)—

With reference to studies undertaken in his department involving length of stay for twenty diagnostic related groups in the ten largest hospitals in South East Queensland—

- (1) Is he aware that of all hospitals surveyed, Redcliffe Hospital had the shortest lengths of stay?
- (2) Is he aware that shorter lengths of stay impose greater burdens upon the community which has heavier responsibilities for assisting convalescence when length of stay is shorter?
- (3) What initiatives and what additional funding for community health has he made available to the Redcliffe district to make allowance for the savings that have been delivered by the Redcliffe Hospital?

**Mr Horan** (6/9/96): (1) Yes. Dr Tony Morton was commissioned by the Epidemiology and Health Information Branch of my department to conduct the study. His preliminary findings were presented to Queensland Health in an article entitled Variation in Length of Stay: Implications for Casemix Funding and Hospital Best Practice. His preliminary findings have been confirmed following his visit to Redcliffe Hospital to further investigate a number of the DRGs.

#### 677. Queensland Building Services Authority

**Mr MACKENROTH** asked the Minister for Public Works and Housing (8/8/96)—

With reference to his statement at the Queensland Master Builders Association awards night that building contracts would be awarded by his department until the builder was approved by the Queensland Building Services Authority (QBSA)—

- (1) How many contracts has the BSA advised him not to proceed with?
- (2) What is the name of each of these builders?
- (3) What was the value of each of these contracts?

**Mr Connor** (6/9/96):

(1) None. However as at 8 August 1996, advice had been provided not to proceed with tenderers on 14 Projects.

(2) Due to the commercial sensitivities of the issues involved, it is inappropriate for the names of these tenderers to be made public.

(3) \$6,339,312.00; \$153,863.42; \$132,978.00; \$4,335,000.00; \$159,915.00; \$909,600.00;

\$475,000.00; \$97,100.00; \$187,000.00;  
\$1,049,000.00; \$549,000.00; \$104,624.00;  
\$227,217.00; \$322,115.00.

One of the tenderers rejected was seeking to be registered on future panels for tenders (not for a specific tender).

#### 678. Commission of Audit

**Mr HAMILL** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (8/8/96)—

With reference to statements by her that the Government's response to the findings of the Queensland Commission of Audit is presently being formulated by a team of public servants and advisers—

Who are these public servants and advisers, what are their position titles, and to which Minister or Ministers will they be reporting?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): Given the wide-ranging nature of the Commission of Audit recommendations and their potential impact on the shape of the Queensland public sector in the future, the Government has established a small Audit Commission Implementation Office to operate until 30 June 1998.

The role of this Office is to assess the Commission of Audit's recommendations and to advise the Government on their implementation. It reports directly to the Premier and myself. Dr Peter Crossman, who headed the Commission of Audit Secretariat, has been nominated to be the Executive Director of the Office. Dr Crossman and most of the other staff of the Office have been seconded from Queensland Treasury and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

#### 680. Superannuation Fund

**Mr De LACY** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (8/8/96)—

With reference to her Ministerial Statement in Parliament on 7 August where she said that the State Government's surplus included \$750m in superannuation provisions—

- (1) What was the total Government contribution to the superannuation fund for 1995-96?
- (2) What was the interest earnings on the fund?
- (3) What was the total payment to beneficiaries of the fund?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): The outcome for the 1995-96 financial year is currently being finalised and details, including the composition of the superannuation surplus, will be available shortly.

#### 684. State Emergency Services

**Mr DOLLIN** asked the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport (8/8/96)—

With reference to the heavy cuts to funding to the State Emergency Services and, in particular, the Rural Fire Brigades and Volunteer Coast Guards—



- (1) What will be the dollar value in funding lost to our area?
- (2) Will this Government continue the funding to the local coast guard Sandy Straits volunteer unit as the previous Labor Government had done to the tune of approximately \$20,000 per year?

**Mr Veivers** (9/9/96):

- (1) There will be no heavy budget cuts to the Rural Fire Division in the 1996/97 budget.

You have also asked for details specifically relating to your area. The Rural Fire Division does not allocate funds to any specific geographical area in Queensland. The Division maintains a number of schemes which provide financial and other assistance to rural fire brigades and each scheme has its own criteria and priorities. In general terms I can advise that the needs of each brigade are assessed on their merits and assistance is provided in accordance with those needs, to the extent that available funds permit.

With regard to volunteer coast guards, no subsidy funding has been lost in this area.

- (2) This government will continue funding to the local coast guard Sandy Straits volunteer unit in accordance with the current subsidy schemes criteria. If the Sandy Straits volunteer unit satisfies these requirements it will qualify for a subsidy of up to a maximum of \$20,000.

#### **686. Workers Compensation Fund**

**Mr ROBERTS** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (8/8/96)—

With reference to Workers' Compensation Board funds (8/8/96)—

- (1) Were these funds used by the former Bjelke-Petersen Government to finance, or partially finance, the construction of a number of State Government building projects?
- (2) If so, (a) which buildings, (b) what funds were withdrawn in each case and (c) what rate of return was received from these funds?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96):

- (1) I am advised by the responsible Minister that no funds from the Workers' Compensation Board were used by the former Bjelke-Petersen Government to finance the construction of State Government building projects.

- (2) Not applicable.

#### **690. Schools, Capital Works Projects; Runcorn State High School**

**Mr ROBERTSON** asked the Minister for Education (8/8/96)—

With reference to the 16 major capital works projects in Queensland schools, listed by the Premier in answer to a question without notice on 5 August 1996—2 of the projects were listed twice, 12 of the 14 or 86 per cent of the remaining projects are located in National and Liberal Party electorates and

only 2 of the projects are located in Labor Electorates—

- (1) How does he justify this blatant pork barrelling of Coalition electorates at the expense of students in Labor areas?
- (2) In light of claims that there is no capital works freeze, why has there been a delay in providing funding from his department for the Runcorn Community Sports Complex at Runcorn State High School?
- (3) How many other major capital works projects in Queensland schools are awaiting his approval and what are the details?
- (4) What is the full list of major and minor capital works projects commenced in Queensland schools since he became Minister for Education and what are the details of each project including location, cost and the nature of the capital works commenced?

**Mr Quinn** (11/9/96):

- (1) Of the sixteen projects referred to on 5 August 1996, one project, Deeragun State High School—New School, was referred to twice. This occurred because a tender for the new school was accepted on 13 June 1996; the successful tenderer subsequently withdrew. A new tender was consequently accepted.

The fifteen unique projects referred to were all approved by the Labor Party Government as part of the 1995-96 Education Capital Works Program.

- (2) On 27 April 1995, the then Minister for Education approved a contribution of \$160,000 and a site, towards the Runcorn Parents and Citizens Association indoor sports complex project. Given that the Department of Education grant is being matched by funding from the P&C Association, the Department is awaiting acknowledgment that the association has incurred expenditure equivalent to the approved contribution. When the relevant documentation has been received, the grant will be paid. The Association was advised of the required procedures on 25 May 1995.

I am advised, therefore, that there are no outstanding matters in relation to the Department of Education and the funding of this particular project. It is believed, however, that the project has been held up as a result of a delay in the finalisation of a \$360,000 commitment by the Brisbane City Council.

- (3) There are no capital works projects in Queensland schools awaiting my approval.

(4) A total of 59 projects from the main Capital Works Program and 27 projects funded under the Building Better Schools Conversion/Upgrading element have commenced in schools since 26 February 1996. The value of these projects total \$52.318 million. In addition, many small projects relating to improvements in security and routine minor works have been undertaken. Refer attached.

#### **691. Women's Health Policy Unit**

**Mr HOLLIS** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (8/8/96)—

- (1) In her role as Minister responsible for Women's Affairs will she outline the Government's priorities and initiatives planned for women's health policy and programs administered by Queensland Health?
- (2) As the Women's Affairs Minister, will she elaborate on the rationale behind the downgrading of the Women's Health Policy Unit from branch status to just one advisory position for the entire Health Department?
- (3) Does she support these changes to the role of the former Women's Health Policy Unit and agree with the reasoning contained in the Queensland Health Information Paper on the restructure that "women's health has been a high priority for the past five years", the inference being that it no longer requires the level of attention it had under the former Labor Government?
- (4) Will she confirm reports that on International Women's Day in 1996, she embarrassed organisers and the audience by cutting short a speech which outlined priorities in women's policy areas that she is well aware will be cut when she delivers the upcoming Budget; if not, then will she summarise new initiatives and expenditure planned by the Borbidge minority Government in its first term across all portfolio areas with responsibilities for women's policy and services?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): (1) The responsibility for women's health policy, programs and services, as for all health matters, rests with my colleague the Minister for Health.

However a range of specific initiatives relating to women will be delivered in the budget, which I will announce on Tuesday.

### 692. Taxes

**Mr NUTTALL** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (8/8/96)—

Is the Government considering the introduction of (a) a fuel tax, (b) increased tobacco tax, (c) financial institutions duty and (d) increased bad tax?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): As the Honourable Member would be aware, the Coalition Government currently is in the process of preparing for its first Budget, which will be presented to Parliament on Tuesday. In this regard, two very important factors will make the framing of the 1996-97 Budget extremely difficult.

- (i) an underlying Budget deficit of around \$240 million in 1996-97, which we inherited from the Labor Government; and
- (ii) a funding shortfall of around \$250 million or more in 1996-97 from the Commonwealth Government.

These factors have necessitated a reassessment of all expenditure and revenue measures and decisions need to be considered in the context of the State's overall financial position. Details of any revenue measures will be outlined in the Budget.

### 693. State Capital Works Projects

**Mr ELDER** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (8/8/96)—

Will she supply a list of all contracts for capital works let by this Government since February 1996, including those from the Labor Government Accelerated Capital Works Program, how much each one was worth and the dates on which they were let?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): As the Honourable Member would be aware, details of major capital works projects (including actual expenditure in 1995-96) will be included in the Capital Works Budget Paper to be presented to Parliament on 10 September.

More detailed information on individual contracts is not maintained by Treasury and as such I am not in a position to provide details on the value of individual contracts nor of the dates on which such contracts were let.

### 699. Rockhampton Base Hospital

**Mr SCHWARTEN** asked the Minister for Health (8/8/96)—

With reference to the Rockhampton Base Hospital—

- (1) How many people are on waiting lists for surgery of any kind at the Rockhampton Base Hospital?
- (2) How long will these patients have to wait to access surgery?
- (3) How many beds are currently available for patients at the Rockhampton Base Hospital?
- (4) How many beds were available in August 1995?
- (5) What was the waiting list/time in August 1995?
- (6) Has there been anytime during the last two months, a situation whereby patients have not been able to be admitted into either the psychiatric unit or any other ward in the hospital because of bed shortages?
- (7) Is there any dispute between the Queensland Nurses Union and his department over the staffing levels at the new psychiatric unit to be opened on 15 August; if so, what is the nature of this dispute, has it been resolved and will the staffing levels be to the level of that expected by the Queensland Nurses Union?

**Mr Horan** (9/9/96): I am advised by Queensland Health that:

(1) As at 1 August 1996, there were 1,470 patients awaiting surgery.

(2) The wait depends on the category into which the specialist has placed the patient.

Category 1—operation to be done within 30 days;

Category 2—operation to be done within 90 days; and

Category 3—no waiting time given, as urgent life threatening and trauma cases take first priority.

Currently, 43 patients are in Category 1; 169 patients in Category 2; and 1,258 patients in Category 3.

(3) There are currently 237 beds available at Rockhampton Base Hospital, of which approximately 216 have been occupied daily in the year to date.

(4) There were 269 beds available at Rockhampton Base Hospital in August 1995, of which approximately 193 were occupied daily.

(5) The number of patients waiting in August 1995 was 1,715.

(6) During the past two months, there have been no occasions when patients have not been able to be admitted into either the psychiatric unit or any other ward in the hospital because of bed shortages.

(7) There is no dispute with the Queensland Nurses Union over staffing levels for the Mental Health Facility. An agreement has been made with the staff that the in-patient numbers will be limited to 15 during the transition period. This limit will give staff and patients adequate time to settle into new surroundings. The transition was evaluated on 26 August 1996, and the extension of the transition period by one month has been approved. The current staffing levels have been agreed upon by the Manager, Rockhampton District Health Service, the Director, Mental Health Services, and the Queensland Nurses Union.

#### **700. Fire Station, Kallangur Electorate**

**Mr HAYWARD** asked the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport (8/8/96)—

With reference to significant increases in population in the Narangba/Burpengary areas west of the north coast railway line, making up a large portion of the Kallangur electorate which now numbers approximately 31,000 and my concern that this area, in particular, is referred to as 'no man's land' by the Fire Service—

Will he give an undertaking to these residents that a fire station will be established in this region in 1996-97 to cater for this population explosion?

**Mr Veivers** (9/9/96): In response to the specific question made by Mr Hayward, I can advise as follows:

The Queensland Fire Service over the last three years has collected risk mapping data for the whole of Queensland. The profile of risk for the area covered by Caboolture, Deception Bay and Petrie fire stations, and a number of Rural Brigades indicates that the area detailed in the question will require an improved fire service as the development of the area progresses.

The Regional Service Delivery Plan is in the process of review to determine whether an additional station in the area is warranted, in addition to the relocation of Deception Bay and Redcliffe fire stations.

Therefore, the relocation of Deception Bay in the financial year 1996/97 has been deferred pending the outcome of this review.

#### **704. Tobacco Tax**

**Mrs EDMOND** asked the Minister for Health (8/8/96)—

With reference to his most recent statements ruling out the prospect of the introduction of an increase in tobacco tax in the Coalition's State Budget and his previous comments in support of such an increase— Will he restate his position to clarify the matter?

**Mr Horan** (9/9/96): Responsibility for this legislation and, therefore, any fee increase rests with my colleague, the Honourable the Treasurer.

#### **705. Sydney 2000 Olympics; Sporting Facilities, Bundaberg**

**Mr CAMPBELL** asked the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport (8/8/96)—

With reference to his statements and those of the Tourism Minister, regarding Queensland taking advantage of the Sydney 2000 Olympics by providing training facilities for overseas national teams in the lead-up to these Olympics—

- (1) To allow provincial cities such as Bundaberg to take advantage of the 2000 Olympics, will he make available special funds to provide international standard training facilities, accommodation and other associated services and facilities?
- (2) In view of the major investment in recent years to sporting and public facilities in Brisbane and Townsville, will he earmark special capital works funding to Bundaberg and other provincial areas to put these areas on equal footing to the large cities?
- (3) Will he make a priority for Bundaberg to receive significant sporting grants in view of the very high unemployment in Bundaberg?

**Mr Veivers** (9/9/96): In response to the specific questions made by Mr Campbell, I can advise as follows:

The provision of government funded sports facilities in Queensland is dependent on a number of programs. Those for which my department has direct responsibility include the National Standards Sports Facilities Program, Community Sports Development Program, and Minor Facilities Program.

A future focus of the department will include the development of a ten year capital works program which will determine the provision of International, National, State and Regional Queensland sports facilities to take advantage of the 2000 Olympics by providing training facilities for Australian and overseas teams in the lead-up to the Olympics. The main aim of the Community Sports Development Program is to develop sports facilities and programs which provide access and improved performance for all Queenslanders.

To this end, the provision of sport grants for Bundaberg and all other areas will be addressed in terms of the requirements of the programs outlined above. The availability of facilities as training venues for overseas teams would be seen as one of a number of factors which might assist in determining the placement of sports facilities across the state.

Any specific allocation of funds to Bundaberg will be dependent upon proven regional need.

### 707.000 Emergency Telephone Service

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** asked the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport (8/8/96)—

With reference to the high level of concern by the community of known problems with centralised 000 dialling—

What review is he proposing for this process and more especially in regional and rural Queensland?

**Mr Veivers** (9/9/96): The 000 emergency telephone line is a designated line operated by Telstra in the form of a Universal Service Obligation for the benefit of the community and comes within the Federal Government's jurisdiction. An emergency call on this service is directed by Telstra to the emergency service nominated by the caller. Considerable infrastructure and operator support is provided by Telstra for this purpose.

The Department of Emergency Services is a client of Telstra. We work closely with Telstra to ensure that they are constantly aware of our needs as an emergency service provider.

The Computer Aided Despatch system currently being installed by my Department will provide a professional and coordinated response to emergency situations with the need for helicopter assistance or additional ambulances or fire trucks to be immediately assessed and activated. It enables specially trained people to respond to the initial call for assistance.

To assist emergency vehicles to quickly locate properties and to minimise confusion with directions, the Department of Emergency Services, in association with the Local Government Association of Queensland, has developed a "Rural Addressing Strategy". The "Rural Addressing Information Package" was launched by me on Thursday, 11 July 1996, and has been sent to all Councils. There has been a very positive response to this important initiative.

While there is no specific review of the currently centralised 000 dialling system, my Department is in constant liaison with Telstra and is pro-active in continually developing systems to improve all aspects of emergency service delivery.

### 709. Queensland Health, Staffing

**Ms Blich** asked the Minister for Health (8/8/96)—

With reference to his answer to Question on Notice No: 490 to clarify the figures provided—

- (1) Has he decreased administration positions in regional and corporate offices by 200 positions, including those who were able to secure a Voluntary Early Retirement package?
- (2) Has this decrease in the size of Queensland Health's public service workforce been effected in full; if not, when will it be finalised?
- (3) With a view to clarifying his answer to part 3 of the previous Question No. 490, does "positions to be saved" mean these positions have been

shed from the administrative workforce, or does it mean that 200 positions will be retained?

- (4) If he is not responsible for authorising memoranda authored by his Director-General and Deputy Director-Generals in relation to important staff considerations resulting from Coalition savings policies as stated in his previous answer, who is?

**Mr Horan** (9/9/96):

- (1) Administrative positions in the former Regional Health Authority and in the former Central Office will be decreased by about 200, including those occupied by personnel who were offered and accepted a Voluntary Early Retirement package.
- (2) I anticipate that the decrease in the size of Queensland Health's public service workforce will be finalised by 31 December 1996.
- (3) There will be fewer administrative positions.
- (4) The constitution of the State, its administrative law, and the conventions of Westminster guarantee an independent, apolitical public service. In accordance with this guarantee, the Director-General carries the operational responsibility for the memoranda in question.

### 710. Aged Care Services

**Mr NUNN** asked the Minister for Health (8/8/96)—

With reference to the future of aged care services and the devolution proposals on the table for consideration by the Commonwealth and the States—

- (1) What is his interpretation or his department's advice on the implications of any proposals or decisions contained in the COAG Communique dated 14 June 1996 for Queensland's aged care health sector?
- (2) Will he outline the key issues raised by peak bodies and service providers in his discussions with them as part of his consultative process?
- (3) What advice has he received from non-political sources that favours the devolution proposal?

**Mr Horan** (9/9/96):

- (1) The COAG Communique of 14 June 1996 indicated agreement to a broad direction for possible reform, and to a process for considering such reform arrangements. No agreement has been reached on responsibilities or funding. However, nothing will occur unless the financial assistance offered by the Commonwealth is adequate. The Health and Community Services Ministerial Council established a working group on the strategy and issues for devolution. Discussions between Queensland Health and the Commonwealth have just commenced: no agreement has been reached on responsibilities or funding.

Analysis of the implications of the proposed reforms for aged care services in Queensland will be undertaken in the coming months. This analysis, together with the proposed program of public consultation to take place later this year, will be the

basis for Queensland's input into further work undertaken under the auspices of COAG. Potential benefits may include those identified in the Communique, including improved effectiveness and efficiency of services and improved cost control, as well as improved flexibility in meeting people's needs. Clearly, the interests of consumers, providers, and the Queensland taxpayer will be paramount in assessment of all proposals. It should be noted that the Communique contains a number of structural proposals in addition to that of devolution.

(2) The key issues raised in initial discussions held by Queensland Health with peak bodies and service providers include:

the maintenance of quality and nationally consistent standards of care, including access to and affordability of services;

ensuring protection of funding for aged care services from diversion to other areas, including growth and capital funding, and addressing current funding inadequacies;

establishing incentives to reward quality service provision, and to enhance consumer choices through increased flexibility in service provision;

improved linkages between services; and

protection of disadvantaged groups.

(3) As indicated in the response to question (2), advice from industry representatives and peak organisations to date has identified both risks and opportunities arising from devolution. Similar advice has been received from Departmental officers.

#### **711. Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Subsidy Scheme**

**Mrs ROSE** asked the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport (8/8/96)—

With reference to the Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Subsidy Scheme—

Will he give an assurance he will honour the previous Government's commitment to increase funding from approximately \$760,000 to \$880,000, an increase of \$120,000 to the blue water rescue services, which include the coastguard at Southport, Point Danger Air Sea Rescue, and the Currumbin Voluntary Marine Rescue Association (air sea rescue)?

**Mr Veivers** (9/9/96): In response to the specific question made by Mrs Rose, I can advise as follows:

The only commitment given by the previous Government was a verbal statement by the Minister of the day, the Honourable Tom Burns, that funding to the blue water volunteer marine rescue associations (Volunteer Marine Rescue Association of Queensland Incorporated [formerly the Air Sea Rescue Association of Queensland] and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard) would be increased from \$610,000 to \$880,000, an increase of \$270,000 per association, over a three year period.

This increase was to bring the level of funding to these two associations up to their entitlement under

the Subsidy Scheme. Neither association had received its entitlement since 1992/93.

Service Agreements entered into between Volunteer Marine Rescue Association of Queensland and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard and the Government state that:

"The subsidy period shall be of five (5) years' duration with a minimum annual subsidy of \$750,000, subject to compliance by the Service Provider with this Agreement."

I have proposed that budget funding for 1996/97 increase to \$800,000 for each blue water association with a subsequent increase to \$880,000 over the next two years.

This budget proposal indicates my strong support to the Volunteer Marine Rescue system across Queensland and the great work that the blue water rescue services undertake in support of the community.

#### **712. Commission of Audit; Privatisation of Public Hospitals**

**Mr T. B. SULLIVAN** asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts (8/8/96)—

With reference to a recent edition of the *Northside Chronicle* where she said, "there are absolutely no plans by the Coalition Government to sell Prince Charles Hospital, or any other public hospital" and her repeated claim in this House following the publication of the Fitzgerald Financial Audit, that nothing can be ruled out, that everything is still on the table—

Will she now assure the people of Queensland that she rejects the relevant recommendations of Dr Fitzgerald, and that she will not privatise services offered in Queensland's public hospital?

**Mrs Sheldon** (6/9/96): The recommendations of the Commission of Audit (Fitzgerald Report) including those relating to health will be considered on a portfolio basis. While various support services provided in public health facilities such as hotel, pathology and pharmaceutical services could conceivably be provided by the private sector, significant gains could be made by retaining these services in-house and adopting commercial type practices.

The Government's primary focus will be on building a responsive, efficient and effective public health system with a solid funding base. In doing so, the benefits of contracting certain services to the private sector will be considered as a means of improving access to services.

#### **766. Mr R. Henshaw**

**Mrs WOODGATE** asked the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care (4/9/96)—

With reference to the employment arrangements concerning Mr Rod Henshaw—

(1) How is Mr Henshaw employed?

(2) What are the terms and conditions of his employment?

- (3) What was the selection process by which Mr Henshaw was employed?
- (4) How many other applicants for the position were interviewed?
- (5) Was the position now held by Mr Henshaw advertised; if so, when and where?
- (6) How much is Mr Henshaw paid per annum?
- (7) How many hours does Mr Henshaw work each week?
- (8) Is Mr Henshaw free to take on additional employment outside of the Minister's department in those hours in which he is not contracted to the Government?
- (9) Is Mr Henshaw employed by the Minister's department or via the Ministerial Support Unit?
- (10) What is Mr Henshaw's role?
- (11) Is Mr Henshaw responsible to the Director-General of the Minister's department or is he part of the Ministerial staff and, as such, responsible to the Minister?
- (12) Did the Minister or anyone else attempt to award Mr Henshaw with a permanent public service position on a salary equivalent to that of Senior Executive Service Level Two; if so, who made this attempt?
- (13) How many people work in the capacity of Media Adviser to the Minister?
- (14) What experience does Mr Henshaw have in the areas of families, youth and community care?
- (15) What role did he play in helping Mr Henshaw win approval to interview jailed former Police Commissioner, Mr Terry Lewis?
- Mr Lingard (13/9/96):** Details of this question were supplied in response to a question in this house on 9th July.
- (1)-(14) Rod Henshaw is employed by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care on a contractual basis through his own Company, Rod Henshaw Pty Ltd.
- He is contracted to provide media work for the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. This includes preparation of speeches and promotion work undertaken by the Department.
- The financial arrangements between Mr Henshaw's Company and the Department are subject to normal confidentiality practices.
- Under the terms of his contract with the Department, Mr Henshaw is free to undertake any other work he and his Company wishes.
- There has never been any suggestion from either Mr Henshaw, myself or my Department that Mr Henshaw be appointed to a permanent Public Services position or that he perform duties other than those I outlined earlier.
- Mr Henshaw's media experience is extensive, covering all aspects of the media and promotional areas and that experience is utilised under the terms of his contract.
- (15) The answer is none.