

WEDNESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 1996

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Mirambeena Drive, Pimpama

From **Mr Baumann** (2 signatories) requesting the House to totally reject Option B of Section 3 of the Queensland Department of Transport's publicly displayed plans for the proposed expansion of the Pacific Highway where Option B relates to an area known as Mirambeena Drive, Pimpama and its immediate surrounds.

School Cleaners

From **Mr Bredhauer** (89,489 signatories) requesting the House to reverse the decision to privatise cleaning in Queensland schools, thereby ensuring clean, hygienic State schools and secure long-term employment of cleaners in schools.

Suncorp

From **Mr Welford** (3 signatories) requesting the House to reject any move to sell off Suncorp.

Gun Control Laws

From **Mr Wells** (34 signatories) requesting the House to refrain from adopting the Weapons Amendment Bill 1996 and retain for use in Queensland the Weapons Act 1990 with amendments and instead "establish a Firearms Advisory Council to advise the Government, via the Minister for Police, on all matters relating to firearms policy including legislation and firearm safety education" and further develop "a national register of prohibited persons who should not be allowed to purchase or own firearms and who, by definition, should not be able to hold a current shooter's licence".

Gun Control Laws

From **Mr Wells** (12 signatories) requesting the House to explain why it is necessary to change the current Queensland

legislation relating to firearm ownership in order to facilitate 2A(1)-(2) of the Weapons Amendment Bill when these principles and objects are already contained within the meaning of the current legislation.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

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

Queensland Industry Development Corporation—Annual Report for 1995-96

- (b) Minister for Economic Development and Trade and Minister Assisting the Premier (Mr Slack)—

Report on visit to the United States of American from 14 to 24 August 1996

- (c) Minister for Mines and Energy (Mr Gilmore)—

Austra Electric—Annual Report for 1995-96

Queensland Generation Corporation—Statement of Corporate Intent 1995-96.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**World Environment Exposition**

Hon. R. E. BORBRIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to advise the House that on Monday State Cabinet agreed to proceed with Queensland's bid to host the World Environment Exposition in the year 2005. Honourable members will be aware that opportunities of this kind, which offer both welcome exposure to an international audience and a chance to create a better environment in the locality of the exposition, are rare indeed. Queensland deserves the best. This opportunity is one that comes only once in every five years, and we should take it.

The Bureau of International Expositions already has expressions of interest from Calgary in Canada and Nagoya in Japan. They have not yet had an opportunity to consider an application from Queensland. We believe that they should have such an opportunity to examine the innovation and zest of a competing proposal from this part of the world. Last night I advised the Prime Minister of our plans. He expressed enthusiasm for the project and offered support wherever possible. This support is essential to success.

On 13 September I advised the House that the matter of whether to bid for the 2005 expo would be evaluated as a matter of urgency. It is on the basis of this evaluation that we have agreed to proceed. A potential site for the exposition has been identified at East Coomera, Gold Coast. Staging the expo in that location would enhance the amenity of the modified environment while also rehabilitating natural ecosystems. We are proceeding with this bid on the basis of low-level outlays ahead of selection. A special one-off Budget allocation has been made to meet the \$53,000 lodgment fee and for a further \$150,000 to enable the Co-ordinator General to undertake preparation of the detailed submission that is also required.

The Government believes that Queensland should, wherever and whenever possible, seek to place itself on the world map. This bid is one such opportunity—one, moreover, that capitalises on Queenslanders' energy and expertise in creating world-class events.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Roma Street Railway Site

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: This morning's *Courier-Mail* carried an article on its front page titled "How parkland became a concrete jungle". The story had as its primary source the Community Development Committee Chairman, Councillor David Hinchliffe. As this matter has never come before Cabinet, and in view of the fact that the plans differ so markedly from the stated intention of the Government, I have today sought information as to the status that these conceptual designs enjoy.

I am advised that the plans in question were submitted to the Brisbane City Council following a workshop on 19 August involving officers of the Department of Public Works and Housing and the Brisbane City Council. In particular, Brisbane City Council officers involved in the workshop were Mr Terry Conway and Mr Murray Ross, senior officers of the town planning section of the council. I am advised that four other council officers representing various departments were also in attendance. On 3 September a Mr Mike Kavali—a consultant engaged by the former Goss Government, curiously, on 16 February this year, two days prior to the change of Government—wrote to the senior town planner, Brisbane City Council, submitting an introductory package for consideration by the council. It is important to note that at no stage

were these plans considered or endorsed by State Cabinet.

As soon as senior officers of my department became aware of the existence of these conceptual plans, most particularly after a phone call from the Lord Mayor, Councillor Soorley, immediate action was taken. On 23 September, Mr Mike Hefferan, the Director of Government Assets and Infrastructure, Department of Public Works and Housing, wrote to the Brisbane City Council. This is on 23 September. In his letter, Mr Hefferan said—

"The information packages accompanying the letters do not represent a government proposal for redevelopment. The information is a result of discussions and workshop meetings between our respective officers and represents a range of development possibilities only.

It is requested that the package not be taken as a formal development proposal for Consideration in Principle and that it not be presented to Civic Cabinet."

I now table a copy of that letter. I am advised that both the Lord Mayor and Councillor Hinchliffe were aware that these conceptual plans did not have the endorsement of Cabinet and, most importantly, that they had been withdrawn.

This Government does not—I repeat, "does not"—support the sort of high-rise development for Roma Street contained in the proposal. While a proposal of this nature would no doubt be a substantial rates boost for the Brisbane City Council, it would, I believe, not be accepted by the people of Brisbane, who in my view support the Roma Street precinct being primarily dedicated to public open space. That view is supported by the Government. I table for the information of honourable members the letter from Mr Hefferan, Director, Government Assets and Infrastructure, Department of Public Works and Housing, to the Brisbane City Council dated 23 September 1996 that both the Lord Mayor and Councillor Hinchliffe were well aware of.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Debits Tax

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday in this House, the member for Cairns and former Treasurer, Mr Keith De Lacy, deceitfully and incorrectly lambasted the coalition for being responsible for the transfer of debits tax to the

State back in 1982. If it was not so pitiful it would be sad to acknowledge just how quickly the former Treasurer has lost his grasp on reality. The facts of the matter are these, and these are facts that are actually contained in the various Budget documents, which I will later table, bought down by the former Treasurer himself.

Debits tax was transferred by the Commonwealth Labor Government to the States, including the Queensland Labor Government, from 1 January 1991—almost 10 years later than the member for Cairns would have us believe. This revenue transfer was accompanied by a corresponding reduction by the Commonwealth Labor Government in financial assistance grants for Queensland and other States. Debits tax receipts were first included in Queensland's Budget documents in the 1991-92 State Budget, a Labor Budget.

For the benefit of all those opposite who do not understand what debits tax is all about—this tax applies to all taxable debits to accounts kept with banks on which cheques may be drawn and to accounts kept with non-bank financial institutions to which payment orders may be debited. Taxable debits include cash withdrawals, interest charges, electronic funds transfers, withdrawals from automatic teller machines and bank fees exceeding \$1.

As part of its revenue-raising activities, the previous Labor Government increased the rate of debits tax by 10c per transaction across all value ranges of debits, with effect from 1 January 1994. While this change was announced as being revenue neutral, to compensate for the abolition of cheque stamp duty, it was clear to everyone at the time that this would not be the case. Indeed, I commented so quite strongly in this House during the Budget debate for 1993-94.

Even blind Freddy could see that abolition of a 10c duty that applied only to actual cheques which were written and replacing this with a 10c increase in debits applying to any form of withdrawal, fund transfer or other debit from accounts with cheque-drawing facilities would be far from revenue neutral. In fact, for 1993-94, the former Labor Government enjoyed a windfall gain from this sleight of hand of over \$10m. The debits tax Budget estimate for 1993-94 was some \$78m, whereas actual receipts for that year came in at \$88.7m. If this is an indication of the accuracy of their figure work, then it is no wonder we inherited the financial disaster that we did upon assuming Government earlier this year.

I suggest that the member for Cairns apologise to the people of Queensland and this House for his misleading comments and return to his ways of the past seven months, which is to do and say nothing. At least that way he will keep himself out of such embarrassing blunders.

I table State Budget 1993-94 Budget Overview documents and State Budget 1991-92 Supplementary Budget Information which are supportive of my statement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mr A. Vasta, QC

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: By the Parliamentary (Judges) Commissions of Inquiry Act 1988, a commission of inquiry was established into a number of matters, including matters relating to the then Mr Justice Vasta of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

On 12 May 1989, the commission of inquiry furnished a report to the Speaker of Parliament. Following consideration of the report by the Legislative Assembly and an address to the Legislative Assembly by Mr Justice Vasta, Parliament presented an address to the Governor requesting the removal of Mr Justice Vasta from office. Subsequently, Mr Justice Vasta was removed from office by order of the Governor of Queensland.

Since that period of time there has been certain agitation on behalf of Mr Angelo Vasta, QC, in relation to the manner in which he was dealt with by the Parliament. The International Commission of Jurists (Australian section) published a report dated 27 March 1995 which was critical of the commission of inquiry and subsequent actions of this Parliament. As a consequence of that report and as a result of representations on behalf of Mr Vasta, QC, the Government took the opportunity of referring the report to counsel assisting the commission of inquiry, Mr I. Hanger, QC.

In an advice dated 15 May 1996, Mr Hanger, QC, together with Mr P. L. O'Shea of counsel, advised as follows—

"We do not believe that the matters raised in the ICJ Report affect the validity of the findings of the Commission. As a result, we do not think that the matters raised in the ICJ Report cast doubt upon the opinion reached by the Commission.

As to the criticisms of the process of removal which are raised in the ICJ

Report, we do not think that those criticisms have any direct ramifications on the findings or the opinion of the Commission. Some of the matters raised do however merit consideration, both by the Parliament should the matter arise again, and by the government (in relation to the question of costs)."

I table a copy of the opinion of Mr Hanger, QC, and Mr O'Shea together with annexures.

As a consequence of the advice of Mr Hanger, QC, and Mr O'Shea, the Government has given further consideration to the position of Mr Vasta, QC, and has decided that no further action will be taken by the Queensland Government in relation to matters raised in the report of the International Commission of Jurists (Australian section) dated 27 March 1995 or in relation to representations made on behalf of Mr Vasta, QC.

However, in light of the recommendations made by the commission of inquiry and the views expressed by the International Commission of Jurists (Australian section) and Mr Hanger, QC, and Mr O'Shea, the Government has decided to make an offer to Mr Vasta, QC, to meet his reasonable legal costs, certified by the Crown Solicitor, for appearances on behalf of Mr Vasta, QC, before the Judges Commission of Inquiry established under the Parliamentary (Judges) Commissions of Inquiry Act 1988. This generous offer by the Queensland Government should bring to an end this chapter of Queensland history.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Treasury Corporation

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: As part of this statement, I would like to table the Queensland Treasury Corporation annual report for 1995-96. I wish to report that the QTC has had a highly successful year. This was highlighted by the QTC maintaining its enviable position as the lowest cost borrower of any State Government entity in Australia. The Queensland Treasury Corporation's strength was also demonstrated by the continued growth in its customer base, which has grown from 81 Government entities in 1991 to 165 in the current year. On-lendings to these 165 Queensland public sector bodies now totals \$13.5 billion or 99 per cent of all Queensland public sector borrowings.

The Queensland Treasury Corporation's status as the lowest cost semi-Government

borrower in Australia, together with its professional approach to financial management, resulted in lower interest rate costs for QTC customers. The savings to Queenslanders from the operation of the Queensland Treasury Corporation have been estimated by the QTC board at \$95.5m for the current financial year, bringing total savings to \$621.3m since the corporation's inception in 1988.

To assist the Queensland Treasury Corporation in upgrading the range and quality of the services it provides, the Government appointed two new board members in 1996, the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail, Mr Vince O'Rourke, and the senior partner of Coopers and Lybrand, Mr Richard Anderson, to strengthen representation from outside professionals and of customers serviced by the corporation.

Consistent with this focus on enhanced service quality, the Queensland Treasury Corporation expanded its range of customer debt pools by establishing five new credit foncier based pools and, more importantly, a facility which allows customers to put in place funding facilities specifically structured to meet individual requirements. These facilities build on the QTC's diverse domestic and international funding base and will ensure that Queensland's public sector will have access to world-class funding and risk management facilities for the foreseeable future. I table the report.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Designer Drug Task Force

Hon. M. J. HORAN (Toowoomba South—Minister for Health) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: This morning, I took a minute to a special sitting of Executive Council seeking the insertion of 4-Hydroxy-Butanoic Acid—GHB—into Schedule 9 of the Queensland Poisons Regulations 1973. I am pleased to inform the House that the minute was approved by Governor in Council and the regulation will be notified in the Gazette on Thursday. This action classifies GHB as a drug of abuse. The manufacture, possession, sale and use of this particular drug is prohibited except for use in scientific or medical research and only with the approval of the chief health officer.

I am also pleased to inform the House that, following a meeting of senior Government Ministers last night, a task force to address the growing designer drug problem associated with the rave dance scene was put in place.

The task force will include myself and my ministerial colleagues Police Minister Russell Cooper, Emergency Services Minister Mick Veivers and Tourism, Small Business and Industry Minister Bruce Davidson. Other relevant portfolios will also be involved with the task force as appropriate. This task force will also examine ways in which a blanket ban on designer drugs could be enforced within Queensland on the basis of such drugs being identified internationally. For example, GHB had been identified in the USA and the UK well before it was evidenced here in Australia.

The task force will examine a number of issues relating to the conduct of the dance party industry, including: the development of appropriate and stringent regulations that cover the safe running of dance parties; the identification of groups and individuals who promote, organise and manage dance/rave parties, to establish dialogue and cooperation between dance party promoters and appropriate authorities to better manage that particular industry; to better educate the patrons of dance parties on the dangers of drug taking, in particular the use of the designer drugs associated with dance parties, like MDMA, or Ecstasy; a total commitment to harm minimisation, including whole-of-Government agreement on health, police and emergency services issues, including law enforcement guidelines, dealing with drug use on and off site, licensing, fire services and emergency services; that all dance parties should as far as possible be drug free; and that there needs to be a duty of care on all sectors, organisations and individuals responsible when conducting dance parties. The task force will be calling for an immediate meeting with Queensland music industry and dance party promoters and health and police authorities to start discussions.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Education Manual on CD-ROM

Hon. R. J. QUINN (Merrimac—Minister for Education) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: I take this opportunity to inform the House of further progress in the Department of Education's red tape reduction strategy. This progress comes in the form of a CD-ROM which replaces the voluminous paper version of the Department of Education Manual. This new CD-ROM eliminates the need for schools to maintain thousands of pages of departmental policies and dramatically reduces distribution costs by up to 80 per cent.

The Department of Education Manual on CD-ROM is yet another practical example of the coalition Government's continuing commitment to slashing red tape and cutting administrative overheads. Notwithstanding distribution problems, every State school in Queensland should have the new-look CD-ROM by the end of this week. This CD-ROM is far cheaper to produce than the hard copy manual, and staff will not have to physically wade through 2,340 pages to find departmental policy on any issue. The information they need will be right there in front of them within a few seconds.

The new CD-ROM supports an earlier initiative that reduced the 12-volume DOEM to just 75 pages and eliminated vast amounts of material which schools considered excessive and irrelevant. The 75-page abridged Policy Compendium details policies in a very concise format, while the CD-ROM provides quick and easy access to the entire manual of policies, procedures, guidelines and other information. Using the CD-ROM is simple, and size-wise there is just no comparison. Until now, the department was able to send the manual to schools only in bits and pieces because of the huge costs involved with postage, but this CD-ROM will provide the complete set in one small and inexpensive package. Every State school in Queensland, from Springbrook on the New South Wales border to Boigu Island at the tip of Papua New Guinea, has access to a CD-ROM drive.

This is just the first step towards getting the DOEM on the departmental Intranet and then, ultimately, the Internet. Once we get to that stage, interested parents and other members of the public will also have ready access to education policies without leaving their homes.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Development Projects

Hon. D. J. SLACK (Burnett—Minister for Economic Development and Trade and Minister Assisting the Premier) (9.54 a.m.), by leave: Business confidence in the coalition Government has been further highlighted by the record number of major development projects being attracted to Queensland and under examination by my Department of Economic Development and Trade. Over 100 such projects are on the books with a potential capital investment of \$14.5 billion and employment generation of 18,000 new jobs. About 20 of those development projects have been attracted in the six months since the coalition came to Government. I understand

that this is a record number of projects for such a short period. It highlights the Borbidge Government's success in promoting Queensland as an internationally competitive location for investment. These projects alone amount to \$3.6 billion in capital investment and thousands of new jobs.

If only some of the 100 projects being examined proceed, the benefits to Queensland could amount to billions of dollars, additional export growth and thousands of new jobs. It is this Government's mission, and mine personally as Trade and Economic Development Minister, to attract maximum investment to Queensland. We welcome world companies and joint ventures that value add, create quality jobs, export to international markets and help provide the infrastructure that Queensland must have in order to compete in the world market. That is why, on Saturday, the Government advertised internationally for expressions of interest from the private sector to provide infrastructure for the development of Queensland's newest resource frontier: the Surat Basin/Dawson Valley. The region has coal reserves of 4.1 billion tonnes—a significant resource for energy-hungry nations to our north.

This is a great opportunity for the private sector to participate in providing infrastructure on water storage and management, new mines, power generation and the construction of railway lines. The Queensland Government extends its hand to the private sector to help access this great resource frontier. The Surat Basin provides one model for innovative development cooperation between the private sector and Government in the supply of infrastructure Statewide. Over the next months I expect to hear the creative ideas of the world business community as to the most productive and cost-efficient ways of doing so.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

UCI World Mountain Bike Championships

Hon. B. W. DAVIDSON (Noosa—Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry) (9.57 a.m.), by leave: It is with great pride that I report today a major achievement in Queensland's quest to be Australia's premier event tourism destination. As many members in the House may be aware, the 1996 UCI World Mountain Bike Championships were successfully staged in Cairns from 12 to 22 September. The event was so successful that UCI officials have publicly declared it the best mountain bike event to date—quite a commendation given

that the Cairns event marked the first time the UCI World Mountain Bike Championships had ever been held in Australia. And many of the competitors agreed. World champion Alison Syder was heard to say, "If someone had asked me to build a world championship course, I would have built one exactly like this."

The 1996 UCI World Mountain Bike Championships in Cairns attracted 1,057 competitors from 35 countries, including Germany, France, Great Britain, South Africa, China and Russia. Additionally, 247 media, including a large international component representing 18 countries, covered the event, showcasing not only the competition, but also Queensland, to the world. SBS televised the event and produced a 54-minute highlights package, which was televised throughout Europe via the network, Eurosport, and throughout America on ESPN network.

Proudly, this Government, through the Queensland Events Corporation, was a major sponsor of this event—an event that is estimated to return an economic boost to Queensland of approximately \$7m. However, the long-term benefit will be far greater. It is Queensland's proven ability to host major international events such as the 1996 World Mountain Bike Championships that is seeing the State develop a reputation as a prime event tourism destination. And it is this reputation which I am confident will put us in good stead to attract more international events, such as the 2006 Commonwealth Games and pre-Olympic training events for the 2000 Olympic Games. The QEC has already commenced discussions with the Australian Cycling Federation concerning future opportunities for Queensland to host other significant international mountain bike events. This Government is committed to nurturing Queensland's reputation as an events destination.

Mr Gibbs interjected.

Mr DAVIDSON: Is the honourable member looking for a job?

We demonstrated that in the budget, with a 40 per cent increase in funding for the Queensland Events Corporation.

Mr Gibbs: They tell me that seven have knocked it back already.

Mr DAVIDSON: I am cleaning up the mess that the member left when he appointed the board during his time as the relevant Minister. They were his appointments.

Mr Gibbs: This is called "come in sucker".

Mr DAVIDSON: If the honourable member really wants to have a go, I will bring it into the House and dump it right on top of him.

I have raised this issue in the House before. Under the previous administration—I think the member who is interjecting was the Minister responsible at the time—the Queensland Events Corporation had a budget of \$1.72m. Its administration expenses were \$1.269m. Under his administration and his direction as Minister, \$480,000 was lost on racing in Asia through his mates. If he wants me to bring it in here and tip it on him, I will—\$480 grand down the drain under his direction as the Minister directing the racing in Asia forum. We will announce the board next week. They are a group of professionals who will be cleaning up the honourable member's mess.

As we continue to attract international acclaim, such as that achieved through hosting the 1996 UCI World Mountain Bike Championships, there is no doubt that we are going to see this important event tourism market grow and prosper.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Valuations System

Hon. H. W. T. HOBBS (Warrego—Minister for Natural Resources) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: Honourable members will recall that on 8 May this year I announced a review of the State's valuations system. Last week the independent project manager of the review, Mr Len Evans, delivered his report to me. Mr Evans toured the State talking to stakeholders, received 231 written submissions, took into account previous studies on this issue and examined processes used in other States. His report contains 67 recommendations, which I believe will go a long way towards correcting inconsistencies and anomalies in the system, improving the accuracy and relativities of valuations, making the process more open and accountable, and enhancing public understanding of the process.

The last major legislative changes to the system were in 1985 when annual valuations were introduced, but little action has been taken since, despite another report instigated in 1990. Action has already been taken on earlier interim recommendations made by Mr Evans and accepted by me. Advertisements have been placed for the position of a State coordinator to help meet some of the more important concerns about the use of different

methodologies, interpretations of legislation and inconsistent application of procedures and policies used around the State. Still to be advertised are positions for five regional coordinators and one for the metropolitan area. Further action will be designed to allay the many concerns expressed by the public and industry groups about the valuations program and service delivery.

This week I took a submission to Cabinet to begin the process of reform. For instance, issues that we can tackle sooner rather than later, pending a further report back to Cabinet, involve amendments to the Valuation of Land Act about the following matters: display period for valuations to be set at 42 days, objection and appeal period to be 42 days, discretion for accepting a late objection in exceptional circumstances, remove reference to licences and assignments in the unimproved value of the land, and provide a separate value for each lot in a plan of subdivision. While those matters can be started now, others will have to wait until the mid-year Budget review early next year. Those recommendations include the posting of notices to each property owner, improvement in relativities between properties, Statewide coordination, database validation, and increased field inspections. Other matters, including further major legislative changes, are proposed to be dealt with progressively over the next three years.

Mr Evans recommended also that site valuation, as opposed to the current method using unimproved capital value, be investigated by a working group for introduction as the method of valuation. Site valuation is the generally accepted method used by the Commonwealth and in other States and has been recommended in two previous reports. However, there have been strong reservations expressed in rural areas about site valuation, and I assure the House that the issue will first be thoroughly canvassed with local government and other interested parties before any decisions are made. A further associated review currently under way of leasehold land rentals is due to be presented to me by late December.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community Housing Grants Board

Hon. R. T. CONNOR (Nerang—Minister for Public Works and Housing) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: I wish to make a statement on the establishment of a board to make recommendations on the allocation of grants for community housing. My decision to establish the Community Housing Grants

Board stemmed from the fact that, in the past, decisions on allocation of this funding were made by the Minister of the day. This left the program open to accusations of political bias or favouritism. In future, responsibility for these recommendations will rest with the board.

High-profile consumer advocate Jan Taylor has been appointed to chair the new Community Housing Grants Board. The board will oversee the distribution of housing funding to non-profit community organisations throughout Queensland. The total program will build an additional 992 homes throughout the State—a very large increase on the 308 homes constructed under this scheme in 1995-96. Ms Taylor will be assisted in her task by an eight-member board. It consists of people from throughout Queensland with extensive community involvement and experience. Ms Taylor has an extensive background in business and Government, most notably as the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs and Director of Fair Trading. She also has experience as a media commentator and presenter, as a public relations consultant, and she serves on a number of boards including the RACQ, Queensland Dairy Authority, Queensland Building Services Authority and the Australian Council of Businesswomen. It is obvious that Ms Taylor comes to the board with a great deal of experience and public respect. During her time as Consumer Affairs Commissioner she gained the respect of consumers and business alike. I am sure that all community housing groups will welcome the appointment, as Ms Taylor enjoys a strong reputation for professionalism and fairness.

The board was deliberately designed to include representatives from right around Queensland. The other board members and the areas they come from are Julie Dudfield of Townsville; Vince O'Donnell from Roma; Karel Duivenvoorden from Brisbane; Beryl Procopis from the Sunshine Coast; Maria Tennant from Brisbane; Rev. Dr Geoffrey Prentice from the Gold Coast; Ross Cunningham from Mackay; and Tony Irelandes from Mackay. The board members were nominated by a variety of organisations including the Tenants Union, Queensland Shelter, church organisations, community housing organisations and local government.

As I said before, it will be the board that will recommend which organisations will receive money and how much. Its key role will be to ensure that recommendations about community grants are objective, independent, accountable and above politics. The level of funding that individual groups will receive will

be recommended by the board on the basis of effectiveness and the extent to which their proposals address areas of housing need. There are approximately 109 community organisations currently receiving recurrent funding under various State Government schemes, while many more receive capital funding. Future funding will depend on recommendations of the new board. The board will also play a significant role in advising on priorities and expenditure on community housing capital works projects. Finally, I am pleased to announce that the new board began work at an inaugural meeting on Thursday, 26 September.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Comments by Member for Caboolture

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: Last evening, the member for Caboolture made baseless allegations regarding the election in Gladstone. He raised a query about the role that the coalition played in the election in July 1995. To my knowledge, their role was to run a candidate, as did the Labor Party. In the *Courier-Mail* of 11 September, a comment attributed to Bob Tucker was that there had been an "understanding" with the now member for Gladstone. I have seen that comment. It was repeated from an earlier report. I do not know the question that Bob Tucker was asked, but I do know that there is no understanding. I do know also that there were people from the Liberal Party, Labor Party, National Party and people with no party affiliations who manned booths and handed out how-to-vote cards, and I thank them for their help. However, that does not mean that there is an understanding between me and the parties.

The member for Caboolture then went on to talk about "an arrangement" with the Liberal Party. I again reiterate that there is no arrangement. He touched on the issue of Jenny Elliott starting her campaign only days before the July election. Frankly, that is Jenny Elliott's choice. She ran as a candidate in the previous election and subsequently ran in the 1995 election. The timing of her campaign and the manner of her campaign is hers, and presumably whoever else helps her. I do not think it is a reflection on the people of Gladstone at all.

Mr Fischer is alleged to have made a comment at a meeting in Gladstone and I cannot comment on that—I have not heard the comment—other than to say that, if he made the statement, it is not true. As I have

said, the contribution that either the Liberals or the Nationals put into the campaign was the extent to which they helped at the polling booths. As to anything else, one would have to ask those parties.

What offers did the Liberal and National Parties make? To my knowledge, none. They certainly made none to me. I think, or I would hope, that the electorate of Gladstone is astute enough—and I know that they are astute enough—not to be conned by offers by any party. They make up their minds themselves. They are a very mature and very responsible group of people and, based on their choice, a very brave group of people.

The final thing that the member for Caboolture said was that the only way that the slur they have cast upon Mrs Cunningham can be lifted is for an investigation to take place. I would say that the only slur that has been cast is the one that was cast last night. It is not valid and it is not true. It is a continuing disappointment that this House is used to manipulate an issue and to present lies as facts for political purposes. The people of Queensland deserve better. There was no deal, there is no deal, there will be no deal. Mr Speaker, I thank you for your time.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Anti-Asian Comments

Mr PALASZCZUK (Inala) (10.11 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"In view of the concerns raised by the Queensland Graingrowers' Association, the Tourism Taskforce and the Tourism Council of Australia, this House calls on the Premier to show moral leadership and disassociate his Government from the anti-Asian comments of Mrs Pauline Hanson, the Member for Greenslopes, and the public show of support for Mrs Hanson by the Minister for Emergency Services and the Government Deputy Whip."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

School Cleaners Petition

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (10.12 a.m.): Today in this House an 80-year-old record of the Parliament has been broken. I have tabled a petition containing almost 90,000 signatures from ordinary people of Queensland protesting this Government's earlier decision to privatise school cleaning. I might say that the size of this petition supersedes a previous petition, which was signed by 86,000 people, and

which was tabled in this Parliament in 1916—80 years ago. That was the largest petition in this Parliament. Interestingly enough, it related to the issue of hotel closing hours. So at no time during the last 80 years has a Government decision in this State prompted so much public outrage and so much public anger that 90,000 people throughout the length and breadth of this State would attach their name to petitions protesting the Government's decision.

It has taken just seven months for this Government to demonstrate that it is not up to the job of governing Queensland, and the people of Queensland know it. That is why 90,000 of them signed this petition. The Opposition is tabling the petition in Parliament, even though the Government was forced into an embarrassing backdown on its broken election promise by attempting to sack 6,000 school cleaners. Today, the Opposition is tabling the petition as a sign of good faith to those 6,000 school cleaners and as a sign of good faith to the 90,000 people throughout the length and breadth of Queensland who signed that petition.

The Education Minister may have been rolled but the 6,000 cleaners and the 90,000 people who signed the petition will never forgive him or the Premier for their arrogant disregard of their election promises and subsequent commitments not to privatise the jobs of the 6,000 school cleaners. The clear message for the Government is that Queenslanders will not tolerate broken election promises or an arrogant disregard for ordinary working Queensland men and women.

Rural Areas

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (10.14 a.m.): I wish to alert this House and the people of Queensland to the continuing financial hardship of people in rural areas. I refer not only to farmers but also to those people who live in rural towns and operate the businesses in those towns. Just when we all thought that large numbers of grain farmers were going to receive a financial windfall in respect of their winter harvest, prices have plunged from almost record highs to low levels. To put that drop in price in perspective, I ask members to think about how many tonnes of wheat it would have taken to buy a Toyota Landcruiser in 1978 and how many tonnes of wheat it would take to buy a Toyota Landcruiser today. If they did that, they would realise that wheat prices have basically been cut in half, if not more.

The whole operation is going to be a disaster for many people. Just when we thought that producers were going to reduce their level of debt by a large amount and get back into some sort of financial kilter, we have seen not only wheat prices drop but also a tremendous amount of frost damage in the Western Downs area, Taroom and through central Queensland. Of course, in central Queensland, just when farmers are starting to harvest, it has started to rain. I do not know where it is going to lead.

I wish to say that if we want to have a viable rural sector—and I am not just talking about farmers; I am talking about the rural business community itself—we need to have a financial assistance package for those people in those areas. Otherwise, about half of those people could kiss their businesses goodbye. Quite frankly, they have no chance of surviving the next decade if there is not an improvement in prices or some help offered to them.

Question Time

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank) (10.16 a.m.): I wish to raise a matter of concern to all members of this place who understand and appreciate the importance of question time to responsible and accountable Government. Mr Speaker, in raising this matter I wish to assure you that there is no implied criticism of you as the Speaker of this Parliament. Rather, the matter I will raise reflects poorly on the Government and its Ministers, who appear to be going out of their way to waste the time of this House with long and often irrelevant answers to questions without notice.

I seek leave to table some statistics and have them incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AVERAGE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE PER SITTING DAY THE RECORD

Former Govt		New Govt	
12/9/95	15 *	2/4/96	14
13/9/95	19	3/4/96	18
14/9/95	17	4/4/96	13
15/9/95	14 *	16/4/96	9
17/10/95	11 *	17/4/96	14
18/10/95	17	18/4/96	13
19/10/95	12 *	30/4/96	11
20/10/95	15	1/5/96	13
1/11/95	17	2/5/96	12
2/11/95	16	14/5/96	14
14/11/95	9 *	15/4/96	14
15/11/95	19	16/5/96	13

Former Govt		New Govt	
16/11/95	20	9/7/96	12
17/11/95	17	10/7/96	13
		11/7/96	12
23/5/95	11 *	23/7/96	20
24/5/95	16	24/7/96	19
25/5/95	19	25/7/96	15
26/5/95	19	6/8/96	14
30/5/95	18	7/8/96	13
31/5/95	17	8/8/96	17
1/6/95	12 *	3/9/96	17
2/6/95	11 *	4/9/96	15
6/6/95	14 *	5/9/96	13
7/6/95	15 *	10/9/96	16
8/6/95	17	11/9/96	14
9/6/95	13	12/9/96	12
28/3/95	19 *	13/9/96	11
29/3/95	20		
30/3/95	20		
31/3/95	20		
21/3/95	4 *		
22/3/95	19		
23/3/95	18		
24/3/95	18		
34 (*12)			
Total	538		375
Average	15.8		13.4

Average (excluding *) 391

17.7 questions per day

N.B. * = Question Times less than one hour duration

Mr ROBERTSON: The table compares the number of questions without notice answered by the previous Government between September 1995 and March 1996 with the number of questions answered by the current Government since attaining office in March to the last sitting week in September. The table notes that, on average, 13.4 questions are being answered each sitting day by Ministers in the current coalition Government. That figure compares unfavourably with an average of 15.8 questions per sitting day answered by the previous Government.

The accountability of this Government to the Parliament compared with the accountability of the former Labor Government deteriorates further when those question times which last for less than one hour are removed from the averaging process. Prior to March this year, although sitting weeks extended over four days, on the first sitting day of each week question time did not extend for the full hour. So when those shortened question times are excluded from the calculations, the average number of questions without notice answered each sitting day under the previous Government was 17.7 per day, which is over four questions more per day than are being answered by this Government.

Mr Speaker, as I have said already, this is no criticism of your Speakership. However, it is a matter which I believe is important. I am sure that if Ministers opposite are truly committed to accountable Government there will in the future be a tempering of the long-winded answers.

Time expired.

Extended Trading Hours

Mr TANTI (Mundingburra) (10.18 a.m.): In common with the Honourable Vince Lester, I have to report to the Parliament that a large number of small-business people have been lobbying me in relation to the extended trading hours issue. I believe that I should at least put some views on this matter.

The full-page advertisements placed by the Retailers Association of Queensland, the Property Council of Australia, the Tourism Council of Australia (Queensland) and Women's Network Australia calling for support for extended trade hours reminds me of the battle between David and Goliath—and, yes, I have been there.

Weapons, such as the large amounts of money expended on these advertisements and the ability to distort survey figures to support the case for those associations, may be gigantic but the weapons of small businesses should not be understated. The large national outlets will never match the personal service supplied by local small businesses. The corner store is one place where this service is given. That service is duplicated throughout the suburbs by local newsagents, takeaways, delicatessens and other small businesses.

Consumers and small businesses do not want or require extended trading hours. Let us learn from the mistakes of the other States. We have certain funds to spend each week; because shops are open longer does not mean that we have more money to spend. It also does not mean that prices will be lower once the small traders no longer exist. One only has to look at the proliferation of huge shopping centres and the vast number of small shops and traders, many struggling to make a living, to realise that we are overshopped.

I know that small business has a place in the community and it should receive support and appreciation. I hope that normality will return to retail trade, where big does not necessarily mean better.

Mr P. Lacey

Mrs EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha) (10.20 a.m.): The whiff of corruption seems to be alive and strong where the Minister for Health is concerned. The Parliament should be alarmed about attempts by the Minister to politicise the Public Service in a most invidious way. Having destabilised the department since he became Minister with his on-again, off-again appointments in the senior management area and his bullyboy threats to anyone who criticises him, he has now chosen to politically intervene in the process by appointing one of his ministerial staffers, who is also a central councillor for the National Party, a Mr Peter Lacey, to the position of acting manager in human resource management. I table proof of that statement from Mr Lacey.

Mr Lacey's rather sudden and unexpected appointment coincides perfectly with Queensland Health's first round of redeployment applications being carried out in corporate office which closed on 30 September 1996. Clearly, there is a great deal of concern for those displaced employees who have been shortlisted for new appointments as a result of the Minister's bungled restructure of corporate office and who must now tread a political highwire for a chance of employment within that office. Apparently, the current incumbent took a month's leave, and this will be roughly Mr Lacey's third week in this job. Isn't that just too convenient?

The human resource management section has not been the same since the widely respected manager, who had some skill in that area, was given a VER under Mr Horan's direction. This outstanding officer was on a hit list prepared by Mr Horan, no doubt with Mr Lacey's assistance, and given to the director-general when the National Party entered Government. Mr Lacey's sudden appearance in the acting position—

Mr HORAN: I rise to a point of order. I find the words that I had a hit list and that direction was given to the director-general untrue and offensive. I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister has asked for the words to be withdrawn. The Minister has found the words offensive.

Mrs Edmond: I have no more time.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister has asked for a withdrawal of the comments. Yesterday, I instructed the Treasurer to withdraw remarks that the honourable member for Cairns had found offensive, and I am now asking you to

withdraw the remarks that the Minister has found offensive.

Mrs EDMOND: I am happy to withdraw. Does that mean I get further time?

Mr SPEAKER: Do you withdraw?

Mrs EDMOND: I am happy to withdraw. Do I do get more time?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable member will resume her seat. I call the member for Albert.

Petition, South Coast Motorway

Mr BAUMANN (Albert) (10.23 a.m.): I bring to the attention of the House a situation causing great concern to the residents of some 249 households at Canowindra Estate in the electorate of Albert. It was the desire of those householders that their petition in relation to the preferred options for the location and alignment of the south coast motorway be tabled in Parliament today. However, because the original petition has been forwarded to the Main Roads Department by the principal petitioner, Mr Adams, protocol and procedure in relation to the tabling of petitions could not be met and a compromised version containing only two signatures had to be substituted.

I am aware that due recognition of the concerns expressed by my constituents has been confirmed by the relevant departmental officers and will certainly be considered before a preferred option is put forward for further comment by all parties. As the elected representative of some 522 signatories to the original petition, it is not simply my duty, it is my pleasure, to support their preferred option and to confirm to them that I will continue to lobby vigorously for the adoption of that option.

Redcliffe Hospital

Mr HOLLIS (Redcliffe) (10.25 a.m.): Why will the Minister for Health not come clean on funding for the staffing of the two new operating theatres at the Redcliffe Hospital which were provided by the former Labor Government at a cost of \$1.7m and, if we had remained in Government, would have been immediately staffed and operational? I have asked repeatedly for recurrent funding to staff these theatres. What do we hear from the Minister? Excuse after excuse!

In a speech made at the Redcliffe Hospital in March of this year, the Minister informed the assembled gathering of health professionals and the general public that he

would look into the budgeting situation regarding the staffing of these theatres after the September Budget. In answer to questions on notice from myself, he said that there is no Budget provision to staff these theatres at a cost of \$2.1m annually. In answer to a further question regarding the Surgery on Time program, he stated that the previous Government failed to provide for the staffing of these theatres. That is untrue.

What do we have? The previous Health Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, provided two operating theatres and staffing for them and this Minister, using continued excuses, will not provide funding for the staffing of these theatres. However, it does not end there. An article in the *Redcliffe Herald* of 1 October 1996, titled, "Hospital set for \$30m injection" indicates that \$600,000 will help to open the two operating theatres provided by the Labor Government. Of course, the article does not mention the 5 per cent tax on recurrent funding for capital works.

Just as this coalition Government provides half a road to the Gold Coast and half a TAFE for Redcliffe, we now have a third of the recurrent funding needed for the effective use of these operating theatres. This Minister makes grand promises, but, unlike the former Labor Government and the Health Minister who took the action to commission these theatres, he will not provide the necessary funds to enable those patients waiting for surgery at the Redcliffe Hospital to have the operations they need.

Time expired.

Townsville Hockey Association

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers) (10.27 a.m.): It is my pleasure to inform the House that the coalition Government has fulfilled yet another election promise. The Premier, with the cooperation of the Minister for Sport, Mick Veivers, and Parliamentary Secretary Mark Stoneman, has secured the approved funding of \$640,000 for the Townsville Hockey Association. The funding has been provided under the National Standard Sport Facility Program.

The Government is totally committed to the development of sport at all levels and in all disciplines throughout the State. It is committed to ensuring that Queensland athletes enjoy the best possible facilities. During the Mundingburra by-election campaign, the coalition, in line with its commitment to the development of sport, provided an undertaking to the Townsville

Hockey Association for the provision of adequate funding to upgrade its facilities. The approval of this funding will enable the Townsville Hockey Association to immediately proceed with the upgrading of the facilities.

The provision of Government funding to upgrade the existing facilities could not come at a better time. The association is currently seeking membership to the National Hockey Association and there is little doubt that this well-timed funding will secure Townsville a place in the national association. The funding will provide the hockey association with international standard facilities and will promote hockey not only as a sporting endeavour in Townsville but also throughout the entire region. It is intended to establish a wet field synthetic grass hockey surface and to provide a first-class standard of field lighting.

Mr McGrady: What about Charters Towers?

Mr MITCHELL: I hope to get one later on. The success of the Olympians, especially on the hockey field, proves that money spent on sporting facilities is worthwhile. With such facilities, hockey players in north Queensland—including those from Charters Towers, I might add—will be able to enjoy a world-class playing arena. I am sure that the Townsville playing field will become the training ground for future Olympians. We already have the money for Moranbah in Mackay, actually.

The Government is meeting this election commitment and, at the same time, is moving forward with the agenda of developing sport. I commend the Government's rapid provision of the funding.

Time expired.

Environment

Mr WELFORD (Everton) (10.29 a.m.): People all over Queensland are asking when the Minister for Environment is actually going to stand up for Queensland's environment. When is he going to stop playing second fiddle to developer-based departments, such as the Mines and Energy Department, that want to run powerlines through the great Daintree rainforest of north Queensland? When will he stop the demolition of mahogany glider habitats in central and northern Queensland? When will he stop developers from pulling down the heritage buildings of the State in the middle of the night when he knows that they are about to be demolished yet does nothing about it? When will he stand up for the environment of the Cape York

Peninsula, while the Premier plays a cynical, racial game to prevent the Cape York Land Use Agreement from being put into effect, for one reason and one only: because Aboriginal people are part of that agreement. Yesterday—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr WELFORD: I withdraw. Yesterday, the representative of the Environment Minister, the grand wizard of Mansfield, stood in this place and told us that they were going to put voluntary conservation agreements into place.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr WELFORD: What are you talking about? I have one minute to go!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! What I am talking about is that I am Speaker and, if you had read the notice for the day, question time starts at 10.30. The member might take the time to learn to read. I call the Leader of the Opposition for the first question, in spite of the member for Everton.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Roma Street Railway Site

Mr BEATTIE (10.30 a.m.): I ask the Premier: as he has now backed down on his intention to convert the Roma Street railway site to high-rise development, will he similarly rule out that he is actively working with Pacific Sports Entertainment to convert the site into two international sporting stadiums popularly known as superdomes? If not, why did he meet with representatives of that organisation in the week ending 27 September, and why is he now expecting a formal proposal for the site to be submitted within weeks by Pacific Sports Entertainment, as reported in the *Sunday Mail* of 29 September? For the information of the House, I table a copy of that report.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Leader of the Opposition is not off to a good start. He was upstaged by the member for Everton and he has got his facts wrong. If he had been here earlier today, he would have had all the information in respect—

Mr Elder: That wasn't mentioned in your statement.

Mr BORBIDGE: I have 59 minutes. Does the honourable member want to hear me?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is replying to the question.

Mr BORBIDGE: Earlier this morning, I provided to the Parliament information in respect—

Mr Fouras: We have heard all that; don't repeat it.

Mr BORBIDGE: The member for Ashgrove is no longer the Speaker—thank heavens!

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ashgrove!

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker—

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I called the member for Ashgrove to order. I now warn the honourable member for Ashgrove under Standing Order 123A.

Mr BORBIDGE: Earlier this morning in question time I detailed to the House—

Mr Elder: Question time is now.

Mr BORBIDGE: During a ministerial statement, I detailed to the House matters that were of concern. I make the point that, as I indicated, the Brisbane City Council was well aware of that documentation. I also say—

Mr Beattie: That wasn't the question.

Mr BORBIDGE: I will come to it. The honourable member asked the question. I will answer it. The member should calm down.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member should contain his arrogance. Opposition members should give us an opportunity to reply to the deceit and dishonesty they peddle in this Chamber. I make the point that, if the Leader of the Opposition had any decency at all, he would have disassociated himself from the comments made by the member for Caboolture in this place last night.

Specifically in reply to the honourable member, I would say that this Government has enjoyed a good working relationship with the Brisbane City Council and with the Lord Mayor. I would also say that the antics of Councillor Hinchliffe, Mr Beattie's associate, have placed at risk the very good relationship that has existed between this Government and the Brisbane City Council. Councillor Hinchliffe has quite deliberately sought to make mischief in a dishonest and deceitful fashion. He should go back to looking after the dog pound.

In reply to other matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition, it is true that the other week I received a deputation from representatives essentially of the Brisbane Broncos but certainly Mr Paul Morgan. In that deputation, he gave me a briefing in respect of the activities of the companies in which he is involved, but it primarily related to the Brisbane Broncos and the tremendous role that they play in the sporting and economic life of this State. I would hope, and I am sure, that that is recognised by honourable members on both sides of the House. During those discussions, Mr Morgan did raise the need for a super stadium somewhere in Brisbane. There was no mention made of Roma Street. I indicated to Mr Morgan that if they wished to proceed with a proposal for a super stadium, whether it be at QE II or at some other venue, it was a matter of them, like anyone else, putting forward a proposal to the Government. Certainly, I am not aware of any mention being made in those discussions about Roma Street.

Roma Street Railway Site

Mr BEATTIE: My second question is to the Minister for Public Works and Housing. I refer to a statement by the Minister on 25 September, two days after a public servant disowned plans for urban development on the Roma Street parklands. The Minister said the Government had decided to scrap the former Labor Government's "green lung" concept for the parklands and instead was looking for "residential and commercial interests" to obtain a revenue-neutral outcome. I ask: is it not a fact that most of the debt involved in this vacant site was caused by the former National Party Government spending \$52.5m of taxpayers' funds on buying Queensland Place, which is now part of this vacant land, for \$52.5m on 30 November 1989, three days before it lost Government, when two years earlier the land had been worth only \$30m?

Mr CONNOR: As we are talking about Roma Street, we might revisit how the fiasco in the media over the past few days came about. On 3 September, a letter was written by a Mr Kavali, who just happened to have been put in place by the previous Government in February, two or three days—

Mr BORBIDGE: Two days before they lost office.

Mr CONNOR: Yes, two days before they lost office. He was also a consultant, not a department officer. He was the one who put that report together. The second issue is: where did that information come from? I wish

to quote Mr Kavali's letter of 3 September, which stated—

"Further to the Workshop meeting on 19 August 1996, an introductory package has been prepared for consideration by Brisbane City Council."

Who was at that meeting on 19 August? Firstly, Mr Kavali was there. Also in attendance was Melanie Gray, a junior department officer—one of mine. But who else was there? Terry Conway, the person second in charge of council planning, was there. Murray Ross, a very senior council planning officer, was there. We also had James Mokrezecki, from Works; Phillip Eastgate—

Ms Bligh: And he's still on your staff.

Mr CONNOR: These are council officers. Also in attendance were: Phillip Eastgate, Water Supply and Sewerage; Lachlan Carkeet, Recreation and Health; and John Campbell, Traffic Planning and Policy. The remainder were consultants. Whose report is this? This is a creature of the council. I might add that Councillor Hinchliffe said today when he went on 4QR with Patrick Condren—

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. The Minister asked: "Whose report is this?" It is his. It is prepared by the Department of Works and Housing. I table it for him.

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

Mr CONNOR: The report was on the workshop I just mentioned. Those were the people who attended. Where did the policy come from? I can tell honourable members opposite where the policy came from. It came from the Brisbane City Council. The policies espoused in that document came from the Brisbane City Council. I might add that Councillor Hinchliffe went on 4QR this morning and expressly said that it was with the knowledge of Councillor Soorley. So what we have is a consultant who was put in place by the former Labor Government doing a report for the Labor council. And the Opposition is trying to stick it to us!

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the House. I draw to the attention of the House the fact that the submission says "prepared for the Brisbane City Council by the Department of Public Works and Housing", the department for which Mr Connor is the Minister—or at least we thought so.

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

Mr CONNOR: The member has finally got the point. It was prepared for the council. It was its policy.

Mr NUNN: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, could we possibly have the question repeated, because the answer bears no relationship to the question?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I take the point the member is making, but he has to try to listen. It is difficult.

Mr CONNOR: I might add that this is a consultant's report. What the Leader of the Opposition does not mention is that the covering letter that went with that document, which was also dated 10 September, was prepared by a consultant not from my department. It was from a workshop from the council, yet he is trying to sting us with it.

On 23 September, once my department was aware of these clandestine activities—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much noise in the Chamber. I ask the Minister to complete his answer.

Mr CONNOR: On 23 September, when Mike Hefferan, my Director of Government Assets and Infrastructure, became aware of this document being produced—I repeat, by a consultant—he withdrew it. It has no credence with this Government whatsoever. As Mr Hefferan said in his letter of that date—

"I refer to the letters from this Department on 3 September 1996 and 10 September 1996 to the Development Management Branch of the Brisbane City Council.

The information packages accompanying the letter do not represent a government proposal for redevelopment."

Let me sum it up. The consultant employed by members opposite put together a report to the Brisbane City Council after a workshop at which it was represented, and members opposite are trying to sting us with it.

Surgery on Time

Mr SPRINGBORG: I ask the Honourable the Minister for Health: would he inform the House of progress of the coalition Government's Surgery on Time program aimed at reducing elective surgery waiting times in Queensland?

Mr HORAN: I thank the honourable member for Warwick for his question. Indeed, it is a pleasure to be able to stand in the

House today and announce the success of the first three months of the Surgery on Time program brought in by the coalition Government. As honourable members would be aware, when we introduced this program on 1 July we set three particular targets. The first target was that by the end of this year we would reduce the number of people who have long-stay waits for Category 1 elective surgery, that is, people who should wait no longer than 30 days. We want to have no more than 5 per cent of the people classed as Category 1 waiting more than 30 days. By the end of next year, we want to have the same apply to those classified as Category 2, that is, those who should have elective surgery within 90 days. We want no more than 5 per cent of those people waiting longer than 90 days. Finally, we want to reduce the number of Category 3 patients, that is, those who should have elective surgery within 12 months. We are aiming to reduce the percentage of those people who have long waits.

In putting this program into place, we have done a number of things. Members would recall that earlier this year we put about \$10m into a number of hospitals to reopen wards and provide for more staff. That has assisted this program. We provided \$1m to the 10 hospitals participating in the Surgery on Time program. That has been specifically to tool up the theatres. We have provided for 10 waiting list coordinators, and we have advertised and are currently recruiting for 10 nurse educators, specifically to train theatre nurses so that we have sufficient theatre nursing staff. We have provided \$2.4m to provide for the information management systems needed to properly manage waiting lists, in particular, to be able to know whether or not we are reducing the time that people wait for elective surgery.

We have just received the figures for the first three months of Surgery on Time which will show dramatically how the coalition Government is delivering on service and getting back to basics. We are doing the things that the people elected us to do. Not only do we have the figures but also, every month when we produce these figures, we have them signed off by a clinical consultative committee consisting of representatives of the various colleges of surgeons, anaesthetists, directors of nursing, the nursing profession, medical superintendents and so forth. These figures are signed off and backed up by the clinical consultative committee.

These are the figures signed off last night, so they are hot off the press. As at 1 July, the 10 hospitals involved in the Surgery on Time

program had a total of 550, or 49.1 per cent, Category 1 patients exceeding the prescribed waiting time. As at 1 October, the number of long-wait patients totalled 156, or 22.6 per cent—a massive reduction from 49.1 to 22.6 in percentage terms. All of the 10 hospitals—

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Why didn't you tell the Estimates committee—a question on notice and you didn't provide it.

Mr HORAN: Listen, Mr Dumdum: these figures were signed off only last night by the clinical consultative committee—

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will be seated. I heard the remark. I ask the Minister to withdraw that comment. It is unparliamentary. He and everyone in this Chamber will refer to members as "the honourable member" with their correct title. That goes for both sides of the House.

Mr HORAN: I retract that statement and—

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. Even if the Minister was correct, I would still be ahead of him.

Mr SPEAKER: We won't have a division on that! I call the Health Minister.

Mr HORAN: The 10 hospitals involved are responsible for 70 per cent of the surgical bed days in Queensland. I want to comment on some of the hospitals involved in this program and the remarkable turnaround that they have achieved in the times that people wait for elective surgery. As at 1 July, the percentage of long-wait Category 1 patients at Cairns Base Hospital was 68 per cent. It is now down to 11.4 per cent. The Gold Coast went from 47 down to 0; Ipswich went from 40.2 down to 24; the Nambour Hospital went from 35.2 down to 1.5; Princess Alexandra Hospital went from 92 per cent down to 40 per cent; Rockhampton Hospital went from 50 per cent down a small amount to 48 per cent; the Royal Brisbane Hospital went from 34.9 down to 26.9. The Prince Charles Hospital had already got its figures down to zero. It is back up. It now has four long-wait patients, that is, 5.4 per cent. The Toowoomba Hospital had 16.6 per cent. It is up to 29 per cent, but like all the other hospitals, is well under the graph line to achieve the target by the end of this financial year. The Townsville General Hospital has gone from 41.4 per cent down to 20.6 per cent. This is a remarkable achievement, and I think it is time we gave a bit of credit and a bit

of a pat on the back to all the staff in those Queensland hospitals who are achieving these remarkable results.

In addition, for the first time ever, a State Government in Australia has the management ability and the courage to put in place a system and to produce figures, to audit the figures every single month, to have a clinical consultative committee consisting of representatives of surgical associations and nursing sign off those figures every month and to produce the figures in the Parliament. We have set ourselves a tough target. We are well on pace to achieve it. This is one other example of how the coalition Government is doing what it was elected to do. It is winning the battle on waiting lists, and it is getting back to basics and delivering service and confidence to Queenslanders.

Roma Street Redevelopment Project

Ms BLIGH: I direct a question to the Minister for Public Works and Housing. In light of the Premier's statement to the House this morning supporting the development of a Roma Street precinct primarily dedicated to public open space, I refer to the Minister's recent statements about Roma Street—

"What we determined was that we would revisit Roma Street. What we were looking for was a revenue-neutral outcome where there would be residential and commercial interests."

I ask the Minister: does "we" in this context mean the Government or his department, or was he referring to himself by way of the royal plural? Would the Minister not agree that a statement by him as the Minister should represent the Government position?

Mr CONNOR: The honourable member obviously was not listening to the statement that I made. I think the member is referring to what I said on the Patrick Condren program. Patrick asked, "So you still intend to have a park, do you?" I answered, "Most definitely, we still want a park. Not only that, it would be a real world standard park." The member either has a very selective memory or she was not listening.

I committed the Government to that. I was speaking on behalf of the Government. I said that that was the direction in which we were moving and that that is what we ultimately wanted. I said that, as far as possible, we wanted the project to be revenue neutral. We did say that as well. We also said that, if possible, we wanted an icon, something very special, for Brisbane. We

wanted nothing like what was in the documents from the consultant that the Labor Party put in place nor what has been discussed around this place over the last day or so. We wanted none of that. We have asked for a full report on how that occurred. Mr Kavali will be asked to explain what happened about that.

The submission was lodged without the authority of the Government. The other point is that the matter had not been considered by me, senior officers within my department, the Cabinet or the Premier. Cabinet does not support high-rise development on that site. Also, as the member would probably notice from my demeanour, I am pretty annoyed that all of this has happened within my department. The Government is committed to maximising the open space on the site and it will deliver.

Youth Suicide

Mr CARROLL: I ask the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care: what has been the Government's response to the growing community concern regarding youth suicide?

Mr LINGARD: All honourable members will acknowledge the massive concern in our community about youth suicide. Although figures are very hard to obtain, because it is difficult to work out whether some single-vehicle accidents or drug overdoses are suicides, some of the figures of suicide in communities are quite shocking. It is hard to believe that some rural areas have had 10 youth suicides—that is young people between the ages of 15 and 24—this year. It is sad to think that Aboriginal communities have suffered two and a half times that figure. Some of those communities admit that they have had one attempt a day by a youth at suicide and that one person a week actually does commit suicide. Those figures are absolutely astounding.

In rural areas, out of every 100,000 young people, 37.7 attempt suicide, yet in an urban areas 24.7 of 100,000 young people attempt suicide. That significant difference between rural and urban areas needs to be considered. The Federal Government has now committed \$18.2m towards the problem of youth suicide. This State's Department of Families, Department of Education and Department of Health will also contribute to that.

I invite all honourable members to make a contribution, either to me or my department, on what they believe is the way to overcome

this massive problem. Personally, I believe that counsellors must go into the communities—counsellors who can talk to the young people and other members of the community. It is very difficult to identify from where these young people come. They come not just from low socio-economic families, high socio-economic families or academia, but from right across the whole spectrum, and that makes it very difficult to identify.

I congratulate Drug Arm, which last night launched an excellent booklet titled "Finding Out About the Devil You Don't Know", which outlines to both parents and young people the problems of drugs. It also lists all drugs, including those that are around at the present time. I congratulate Steve Renouf, Wendell Sailor, Vicki Wilson and Haley Lewis for their contributions to this little booklet, 15,000 of which will be distributed by Drug Arm. I also say to all honourable members that we must do something constructively and very quickly about the massive problem of youth suicide which is sweeping through our community.

Roma Street Redevelopment Project

Mr ELDER: I refer the Minister for Trade and Economic Development to an article in *City News* in which he is quoted as saying that the State Government has commissioned a master plan for the Roma Street rail yards. He goes on to say—

"We could not release the details of the plan which would be the subject of a major announcement to be made by the Premier, Rob Borbidge."

I ask: are these the plans that the Minister now says do not exist and did these plans, as we now know they did, when they were commissioned include residential and commercial development of the Roma Street rail yards?

Mr SLACK: I refer the honourable member to the statement made by the Premier and I reiterate what the Premier said about that *Courier-Mail* article this morning.

Mr ELDER: I table it for the information of the House.

Mr SLACK: It was never our policy and it is never likely to be our policy. I cannot understand why the member is continuing to follow this line about Roma Street when it is getting him nowhere. When the Government's decisions on the Roma Street precinct are made, the Premier will announce them.

Greyhound Racing Facility, North Brisbane

Mr J. N. GOSS: I refer the Minister for Racing to the fact that, since the member for Bundamba closed the Lawnton greyhound racing track against the wishes of the industry, there has been considerable disquiet about the lack of a greyhound racing facility on the north side of Brisbane. I ask: can the Minister advise the House of what efforts are currently being made to reopen a greyhound racing facility on the north side?

Mr COOPER: I thank the honourable member for the question. He has obviously had a lot to do with the Lawnton track. I also thank him for the interest he has taken in chairing some of the meetings held on the north side by the greyhound racing fraternity, who we know are facing considerable difficulty when it comes to the distances they need to travel to race meetings. Ever since the member for Bundamba, the former Minister for Racing, closed that track, those people have had to travel great distances to race meetings. Presently, it is a case of the Government waiting to see what the Greyhound Racing Authority does with its interests at Albion Park.

The Government has received a couple of applications for resuming greyhound racing on the north side; one is for the track at Lawnton to reopen and another is to race at Redcliffe. Both sites need to be assessed, and that is exactly what the Greyhound Racing Authority is doing. I want to make the point, as the member for Aspley mentioned, that these disruptions and frustrations have been caused by the closure by the member for Bundamba of that financially viable site at Lawnton. Also, the authority was forced to waste \$127,000 plus on legal matters that arose from the closure of that site. That is extremely unfortunate; it should never have happened. If it had not happened, there would still be racing at Lawnton today.

Nevertheless, we have to look at the industry in south-east Queensland as a whole. The Government is aware that no greyhound racing is held between Albion Park and Bundaberg and it knows that another site is needed on the north side, be it at Lawnton or Redcliffe. I am still awaiting the Greyhound Racing Authority's recommendation, which is expected towards the end of this year, on the Albion Park Raceway.

Liberal Party Performance

Mr BARTON: I refer the Treasurer to the fact that the Liberal Party Whip did not pay an

\$895 registration fee for the Asia/Pacific conference, the Treasurer's failure to pay a speeding fine and her not fully paying her council rates, and I ask: why is the Liberal Party so arrogant under her leadership that it believes it does have not to pay full price for anything?

Mrs SHELDON: I consider that that question, which was straight from the gutter—as, indeed, the member is—does not deserve an answer.

Live Cattle Exports

Mr MITCHELL: I ask the Minister for Transport and Main Roads: is he aware of comments made last week by the Opposition Natural Resources spokesman alleging that the State Government was penalising rural producers exporting live cattle through the port of Karumba?

Mr Palaszczuk: That's right.

Mr MITCHELL: No. I do not know where the member got that from. Could the Minister tell the House what the correct situation is in relation to live cattle exports?

Mr JOHNSON: I know that the honourable member is concerned about the future of live cattle exports through the port of Karumba. Yes, the Opposition spokesman for Natural Resources, the member for Archerfield, did comment on this issue last week. I know that the member for Mount Isa also made comment on ABC radio in Mount Isa, because I heard it myself, in relation to what I was doing about the \$5.80 per head that was levied on cattle producers to export cattle through the port of Karumba.

Mr Elder: What are you doing?

Mr JOHNSON: I will tell the honourable member what we are doing.

This initiative had been bandied around by the former Labor administration. When we came to power, the Premier authorised me to put in place the dredging of the port of Karumba. That is exactly what we did. We spent \$4.7m there so that we could capture the export earnings of live cattle exports from this State instead of going through the Northern Territory.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I will come back to the honourable member for Ipswich in a minute. If I were him, I would sit quietly for a minute, because I will take the micky out of him again. I do not like doing that, but I will have to if he keeps interjecting.

Mr Hamill: Don't be a bully.

Mr JOHNSON: I am not a bully.

The Ports Corporation of Queensland, which is the landlord of the port authority of Karumba and numerous other port authorities around the State, was corporatised under the Labor Government. The honourable member for Archerfield knows that.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member for Gregory is referring to me as the honourable member for Archerfield. He has done that twice in his response. The electorate—the proud electorate—is called Inala.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is a valid point of order.

Mr JOHNSON: I offer my sincere apologies to the honourable member for Inala. I apologise to the people of Inala for having him, too.

Under the stewardship of the former Labor Government we saw the corporatisation of ports in Queensland. Therefore, the week before last, the Ports Corporation in this State made a commercial decision to levy live cattle exports through the port of Karumba at the rate of \$5.80 per head. I will take members back a little—

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I will come to the member in a minute.

From Cloncurry to Darwin is 1,700 kilometres. From Cloncurry to Karumba is 400 kilometres. A 180-head consignment from Cloncurry to Darwin is costing cattle producers \$52.40 per head. To shift those cattle by road transport from Cloncurry to Karumba costs \$13.30 per head—a difference of \$40 per head.

Let me talk about shipping charges. I know that some producer organisations have tried to take the micky out of me over this. Shipping charges are considerably cheaper in Karumba. It is one and a half to two days further from Karumba to Indonesia or the Philippines than it is from Darwin. Therefore, the charges from Karumba are still considerably cheaper. The Ports Corporation and producer organisations have entered into dialogue to arrive at what they believe to be a fair price for the export of cattle through Karumba.

It seems to me that it has got into the media, and that is unfortunate. One thing I will say is that this Government does not apologise for what it has done. We believe that this is responsible.

Opposition members interjected.

A Government member: You've got 24 minutes.

Mr JOHNSON: As my colleague says, I have 24 minutes. As I said, this is responsible. We are about keeping dollars in Queensland. The former Government did not want to do that. I refer to a question I asked the honourable member for Ipswich on 1 December 1993 in relation to the dredging of the port of Karumba. Part of his answer was—

"In common with every other port authority in Queensland, the Ports Corporation is charged to make commercial decisions on infrastructure development in those ports."

That is exactly what has been done here. If that price is too dear—take \$5.80 away from \$40, and they are still \$35 in front. This is a plus for the cattle producers of not only the gulf area and central and southern Queensland but it is a plus for cattle producers right throughout this State thanks to an initiative of the Borbidge/Sheldon coalition Government. We did not procrastinate, we did it.

Police Minister

Mr HAMILL: I ask the Premier: in view of his Police Minister's statement yesterday that he would thumb his nose at Westminster convention and not resign if it was recommended that he face electoral bribery charges, will he act like a Premier and force Mr Cooper to resign, or is there no such thing as a sackable offence under the Premier's leadership?

Mr BORBRIDGE: I will not pre-empt the outcome of the inquiry in regard to Mr Kaiser or Mr Goss. I suggest the honourable member does the same in regard to members of the Government.

Queensland Showcase

Ms WARWICK: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry: could he inform the House of the outcomes of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation's Queensland Showcase, which was held in Cairns at the end of last month?

Mr DAVIDSON: I know that the honourable member for Barron River has a very special interest in tourism in far-north Queensland. I was delighted to be able to brief her entirely on Showcase, which was an initiative of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation and Qantas Australia. It was an

initiative struck by Alex De Waal from our Munich office and Don Jolly from our London office. It was a fantastic initiative for tourism in this State. It was a first-time initiative. Many of our southern opponents are really jealous and, I believe, quite upset by the fact that we stole the march on them by, for the first time in this country, bringing 172 travel buyers into Queensland, and more particularly into Cairns, for Queensland Showcase. In the past, we have traditionally taken many groups of people from the tourism industry to other parts of the world to sell Queensland. As members would appreciate, it is much more difficult to tell the story about Queensland than to bring those travel buyers to Queensland so that we can show them at first-hand our tourism product.

I want to place on the record the enormous support that Qantas offered for this initiative of the QTTC. I also thank the Far North Queensland Promotions Bureau and the Cairns Convention Centre. I personally opened Showcase at the Cairns Convention Centre. There were 200 or 300 people there. It was a magnificent facility for that occasion. I also thank the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park. Don and Judy Freeman put on a fantastic show on the Friday night and complemented the cultural show with a dinner. All the travel buyers and all others who attended Tjapukai on the Friday night were absolutely delighted with the cultural show and the catering by Don and Judy Freeman. They also went to Kuranda on the Sky Rail and returned on the train. Quicksilver and the Reef Hotel Casino were involved. Dozens of operators in far-north Queensland and others from around the State provided access to product free of charge. This initiative was totally supported by the industry in Queensland. We believe it is a fantastic opportunity for us to sell Queensland to Europe and the United Kingdom. As I said, bringing the buyers to Queensland gives us the opportunity to show them first-hand the product we have. Once again, I make special mention of the efforts of Alex De Waal from our Munich office, Don Jolly from the London office and all the people in Cairns who were involved.

As to the member for Barron River—I know she has a particularly strong interest in tourism in the far north. She is one of the lone voices on this side of the House, along with Naomi Wilson, who continues to ensure that the Government is committed to promoting and marketing far-north Queensland. As she is very much aware, I was up there last week and again reinforced our commitment to Cairns and far-north Queensland with another

\$50,000 grant to the Far North Queensland Promotions Bureau for their promotional brand "Cairns and Far North Queensland".

I continue to have my representatives Ms Wilson and Ms Warwick in the far north making representation on behalf of the tourism industry to me as the Minister. They are absolutely fantastic members who are committed totally to tourism in their State.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr DAVIDSON: I thank the Premier for raising that very important matter. I have not yet had one letter or one inquiry from the member for Cairns on any tourism-related issue in far-north Queensland. The industry in far-north Queensland can have confidence in the fact that Ms Wilson and Ms Warwick are acting on its behalf.

Electricity Task Force

Mr McGRADY: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to the electricity task force that he established at a cost of some \$2m. I ask: does he not understand that the industry and its major investors are anxiously waiting for the review's recommendations and his Government's decision on them? Does he not understand that millions of dollars of investment capital is being held up and possibly lost while he and the Government procrastinate over this issue? In view of the fact that he leaves Queensland this Friday for a two-week trip to the United States and Japan, when will the task force make its report so that he can make the decisions necessary to stop the current freeze on vital investment in the electricity industry?

Mr GILMORE: I thank the honourable member for Mount Isa for the opportunity to expand a little on some of the Government's recent achievements in the electricity industry. The establishment of the electricity task force cost approximately \$500,000 in the first instance, and that was in the budget. It will cost some more—of course it will. We have a task force of three persons.

Mr McGrady: Two million.

Mr GILMORE: If you do not mind, Mr Speaker, I will continue.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is answering the question.

Mr GILMORE: The initial amount set aside was half a million dollars to establish a three-man task force to inquire into the structure—be it legislative, corporate or regulatory—in terms of how we might proceed with the electricity industry into the future,

more particularly into a deregulated and highly competitive market. The electricity industry, of course, is headed that way. We established this task force of three highly reputable people who are well considered by the electricity industry right across this nation and, indeed, internationally. So it comes as no surprise that the previous Minister is somewhat concerned that we are seen to be doing things properly.

Mr McGrady: Industry is concerned.

Mr GILMORE: No, I will get to that in a minute. I thank the honourable member for reminding me because I needed to raise that matter. I expect that the task force will report to me tomorrow, Thursday.

Mr Elder: Before you go?

Mr GILMORE: Yes.

Mr Elder: Will you release the report before you go?

Mr GILMORE: No, I will not release the report before I go, because I am going to do this properly. We are continuing to establish the implementation committee and we are in the process of putting that together. I believe that the implementation committee will have to be a very high-powered committee of competent people who are able to progress this matter in the right direction and to very tight timetables, which I have already established. The good professor and his team were given very, very tight timetables, with which they cooperated, but they came to me some little while ago and asked for an extension of a fortnight to October.

Mr McGrady: You're procrastinating and industry knows it.

Mr GILMORE: Mr Speaker, if you would not mind keeping that person quiet, I would appreciate it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am the Speaker and you will refer to the honourable member for Mount Isa, not "that person".

Mr GILMORE: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I defer to that. The honourable member for Mount Isa really ought to sit quietly and listen.

We are moving towards the establishment of the best electricity industry in this country. In fact, that was the basis of the terms of reference: just give to us the best, the most efficient electricity industry in this country. In respect of the body of the question, in terms of the freeze and the fact that there is a lack of confidence, it is clear that the member for Mount Isa is unaware that this Government has, since we have been in power for just over eight months, let tenders for three power stations.

Mr Elder: You've done nothing.

Mr GILMORE: We have done nothing? In six years the former Government let tenders for nothing. The lad is having a bit of a run, and that is okay.

We have let tenders for three power stations. We are establishing an interconnector of the appropriate order.

Mr McGrady: Industry doesn't believe you.

Mr GILMORE: You poor grinning fool; you poor little man.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I repeat again, and it may take some time, that right from this minute, on both sides of the Chamber, honourable members will refer to other members as the honourable member for whatever electorate he or she comes from, not as "you" or "he" or "she". The honourable member will remain quiet; he has asked the question. I call the Minister.

Mr GILMORE: In fact, the electricity industry in this State, in this country and, indeed, around the world—and I often meet with people from around the world who are simply flocking to Queensland looking for investment opportunities in this State—

Mr McGrady: That's not what the industry is saying.

Mr GILMORE: Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Mount Isa is being inventive again. He has done that a number of times in the House recently, including yesterday morning when he made the most offensive speech, which was not only inaccurate but also absolutely untrue. He is inventing again now. He has been out wandering the streets late at night, clearly looking for whatever it is that he looks for late at night when he wanders the streets.

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. I object to that; that is a sleaze. You're a grub!

Mr GILMORE: I ask for a withdrawal. I withdraw anything the honourable member might have found uncomfortable or unreasonable, but I request that he withdraw the statement that he made, which I find absolutely offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has found a remark offensive and has asked for a withdrawal. Have you withdrawn?

Mr McGRADY: Yes.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Thank you, I did not hear you.

Mr GILMORE: I am pleased about that.

The truth of the matter is not this stuff being peddled by the honourable the member for Mount Isa. The truth is that currently Queensland is the most exciting place in Australia in terms of the future of the electricity industry.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to conclude.

Mr GILMORE: I am more than happy to conclude on that note. I believe that the previous Minister ought to be more positive when he goes out on to the street and talk up the electricity industry of Queensland, because that is what the rest of the world is doing.

Ministerial Conference on Consumer Affairs

Mrs GAMIN: I ask the Attorney-General and Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs: at the recent ministerial conference on consumer affairs in Darwin, what consumer safety measures were introduced to protect Queensland's children and consumers?

Mr BEANLAND: I thank the member for Burleigh for that very timely question. Of course, the member for Burleigh is always interested in consumer issues that not only relate to her electorate but also to the State generally.

On 26 September in Darwin, a ministerial conference of Consumer Affairs Ministers was held to discuss a range of important fair trading issues including child safety, privacy, competition policy and consumerism generally. One of the key matters on the conference agenda was the discussion to outlaw those cigarette lighters that are not child resistant. Recent studies, particularly those carried out in New South Wales, have indicated that each year children as young as two years of age can perish in house fires because of the way in which they play with those cigarette lighters. It is a very serious matter indeed.

The Ministers were unanimous in their call for a ban on those dangerous non-child resistant cigarette lighters and agreed to fast track legislation and, in the interim, develop a mandatory national safety standard that will, in fact, adopt the comprehensive standard that exists in the United States. The importation of unsafe lighters will be banned from 1 March next year and the sale, supply and distribution of those particular lighters will be banned from 1 July next year.

This matter is one of the most urgent consumer affairs issues in the marketplace. I am sure that all members would agree that, in relation to children's welfare, far too many

children in this State and nation get themselves into difficulty in fires. Therefore, the Ministers have resolved to take very urgent action in this regard. I am sure that the member for Burleigh is very interested and concerned about this issue.

The Ministers also resolved to modernise and update a range of mandatory safety standards to ensure that consumers can confidently purchase safe and reliable goods and services in the marketplace. I believe that the ministerial conference on consumer affairs issues was very worth while. As members would know, a worthwhile initiative has flowed from that particular conference. It is one that will benefit children throughout this nation.

Maryborough Police Station

Mr DOLLIN: I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: is he aware that the doors of the Maryborough Police Station are now closed at 4 p.m. daily and that the citizens of Maryborough needing services after that time are required to use a voice monitor? Is the Minister also aware that it has taken the Maryborough Home Crisis Centre up to three hours to get assistance from police in domestic violence cases? Will the Minister confirm that the Maryborough Police Station is to get at least 10 additional police officers in the new year as promised by his representatives? Will the Minister give a cast-iron guarantee that the Maryborough Police Service will receive this additional staff, and when will that occur?

Mr COOPER: I thank the member for the question. Maryborough has to be treated like anywhere else. It is okay for the member to stick up for his local area, but he should not forget that policing matters throughout the State have to be taken into account. That is the way it is going to be.

The question that the member asked had about seven or eight parts to it. I wonder whether he ever put that question to the previous Police Minister.

Mr Dollin: I used to be able to talk to him directly; the doors weren't shut.

Mr COOPER: That is where the problem lies. Between 1993 and 1995, police numbers actually fell by 79. During those three years, they increased by only 29. This Government is going to increase those numbers by 139.

Mr DOLLIN: I rise to a point of order. The doors were not shut when the previous Government was in power. That is why I am bringing the matter up now.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr COOPER: The point is that, because of the actions of the previous Government over six years, matters were set on a downward spiral. That is why there is a problem not only in Maryborough but also in many other areas including Ipswich, where these fellows opposite want more police all the time—and they do. It is those members who cut the police numbers and who set things on a downward spiral.

This Government has to raise the numbers. That takes time, but it is being done and this Government will be able to attend to the good people of Maryborough, Ipswich and many other places throughout the State. As I said, between 1993 and 1995, police numbers actually fell by 79. Therefore, over the last three years, they have increased by only 29—about 10 a year. This year alone, this Government is going to have 139 extra police. As well, civilianisation will bring up the numbers to well in excess of 150. That is a darned sight more than members opposite ever dreamed of when they were in Government. The following year, that number will increase by yet another 100. Instead of the academy at Oxley being half empty, it will be full. It will have about 520 recruits and there will be another 40 later in the year at the academy in Townsville. That will give us around about 600 recruits coming through, not to mention the retreads who will come over the border and come into the service, and not to mention civilianisation which will, in this year alone, increase the force by around about 84.

All of those initiatives will put police numbers back on an upward spiral so that this Government can deal with police numbers, which is what it said it would do in the first place. The 10-year plan is in place and the budgetary matters for this year are in place. Members will find that things will improve. As I said, the people of Maryborough, the people of Ipswich, the people of Inala, the people of Logan and the people in all of those other places will get their due police numbers when we build them up. It is all in train. Members can thank their lucky stars that this Government has put that plan in train because it will now be able to deal with some of the problems of police numbers.

Consumer Education

Miss SIMPSON: I direct a question to the Attorney-General and Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs. An important part of the role of the Office of Consumer Affairs is

educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities in the marketplace, and I ask: what initiatives has the Office of Consumer Affairs undertaken apart from its own internal programs to educate Queensland consumers?

Mr BEANLAND: I thank the honourable member for Maroochydore for that most appropriate question. In common with the member for Burleigh, she has also shown a great deal of interest in consumer affairs issues that relate not only to her electorate but also to the State generally.

As the member so rightly points out, community education is a very important part of keeping the public of this State and the marketplace appropriately informed. It is important that consumers are, in fact, aware of their rights so that they can make informed choices about goods and services. We acknowledge and accept that that is a very important role.

The Government relies on the help of community centres throughout the State to build this culture of consumerism. It is a growing culture, and it has been growing for a number of decades. In August of this year, I approved grants from the Auctioneers and Agents Fidelity Guarantee Fund to be distributed to a range of vocational and community education programs throughout the State. In line with the National/Liberal coalition Government's commitment to regional Queensland, it is important that we have funding approved for those regional centres. For example, the Cairns Community Legal Centre received \$63,000 for the development of a community education program and a kit outlining the statutory obligations of motor vehicle traders, real estate agents and others operating under the Auctioneers and Agents Act. The program will also inform consumers about complaint procedures, claims on the fund and consumer rights. The Townsville Community Legal Service received \$73,000 for its role in the joint program.

As part of this program for consumers, the Cairns Community Legal Centre and the Townsville Community Legal Centre will both provide a free one day a week legal service for north Queensland. The initiatives are an important boost to far-north Queensland, consumers and the community generally. The benefits will be extended throughout the State as the kits become available to all Queensland consumers.

The Townsville Migrant Resource Centre also received \$17,000 to train community workers from non-English speaking

backgrounds. That is another important aspect of the Government's commitment, particularly in relation to the legislative and ethical responsibilities of industry representatives.

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

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (No. 2)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2)

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee D

Report No. 1

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is—

"That Report No. 1 of Estimates Committee D be adopted."

Ms WARWICK (Barron River) (11.31 a.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak in support of the report of Estimates Committee D. As this is my first Budget, the Estimates process is still very new to me, so I find it a little difficult to make comparisons with previous years.

I thoroughly enjoyed my role as chair of this committee and, obviously, my task was made easier by the cooperation and goodwill extended to me by everybody involved. I place on record my very sincere thanks to the support team of David Thannhauser, Megan Collins and Cassandra Adams. Their very professional, reliable assistance and hard work certainly made the job of the committee so much easier. My thanks also must go to the other support staff, mainly Hansard, the attendants and the catering staff.

To the members of my committee, I record my thanks—the Government members, the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Charters Towers, and the Opposition members, the member for Everton, the Deputy Chair, the member for Whitsunday and the member for Chatsworth. All these people contributed in a very constructive and positive manner, and ensured a very successful and fruitful hearing. I also appreciated the bipartisan approach that was adopted by the Leader of the Opposition, who joined the committee to question the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry. This was in relation to the Red Tape Reduction Task Force associated with small business, a favourite subject of mine.

The cooperation of relevant Ministers was also very much appreciated by my committee. I thank the Minister for Environment, Brian Littleproud, the Minister for Local Government

and Planning, Di McCauley, and the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry, Bruce Davidson, for their support of this year's Estimates process.

While I am aware that some committees experienced difficulties in gaining access to particular departmental officers, this was not the case with Estimates Committee D. From memory, I think only one requested official did not attend, and that was because of illness. Indeed, an alternate officer was provided in this instance. My final thanks obviously go to the departmental officers who not only attended as requested but who also answered questions frankly.

The Estimates process is, of necessity, an evolving one. This is the third year of the Estimates process and the committee acknowledges the changes made to the process as a result of the review carried out by the Select Committee on Procedural Review. The Estimates procedures this year, at least in the experience of my committee, enabled flexible allocation of questioning time, while ensuring that Opposition members received more than half of the time available to the committee. I consider it essential to the parliamentary process to allow questioning of the Minister by members from both sides of the House. The introduction of a formal system of directing questions to Ministers before the holding of the public hearing also allowed Opposition members to delve deeper into the Budget documents before the hearing proper. I take this opportunity to thank the departments' Cabinet legislation and liaison officers for their high level of assistance.

The committee welcomes the new procedure whereby it may invite particular public officials associated with the department to attend the hearing and to be questioned. However, the committee notes that, unlike most other parliamentary committees, Estimates committees do not have the general authority to compel the attendance of persons or the production of documents and other things. As I indicated previously, this was not a problem with Estimates Committee D, as it received a very high degree of cooperation from all.

Estimates Committee D also welcomes the removal from Sessional Orders of the exemption which previously deemed the proposed expenditure of Government owned corporations to be outside the scrutiny of the Estimates process. In terms of procedures followed at the public hearing, the committee also welcomes the removal of the requirement that times for questions and answers be

subject to 20-minute block rotations for Government and non-Government members. The absence of that requirement, combined with the continuing safeguard that non-Government members be allocated at least half the time available, enables the committee to take a fair but flexible approach to time allocation, ensuring that lines of questioning are not artificially interrupted.

Time expired.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth) (11.36 a.m.): An issue raised at the Estimates committee was the need for legislation in relation to political donations to candidates running for local government. At the Estimates committee, and contained within the statements to that committee, it was stated that legislation would be in place by March of next year. However, I am most concerned about a statement made by a spokesperson for the Minister, quoted in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 30 September. That person was reported as saying that there was no guarantee that the legislation would be in place before local government elections in March next year. It is very important that that legislation is in place. I say to the Minister that the Opposition—

Mrs McCauley: What legislation?

Mr MACKENROTH: For local government donations.

Mrs McCauley: But you did not do it. You had six years to do it.

Mr MACKENROTH: No. We had stated that we would wait until EARC had completed its report, which we did, and then we said quite clearly that it would be in place for the next council election.

Mrs McCauley: Come on.

Mr MACKENROTH: That was always the case. It is important that it is in place.

If we look at recent events regarding the Springfield Land Corporation in the Ipswich area, we find that people have made a lot of the fact that the developer has made donations to particular political candidates. I was very involved in that development and I will say up-front that I received no political donation from the Springfield Land Corporation prior to the last election. I did not ask for one, nor was I offered one. However, councillors who now hold positions were not made to disclose their situations. The former Mayor of Ipswich, David Underwood, made this matter public and then claimed that there was something sinister in other people having received a donation. He claims that he received \$10,000 in cash and that, therefore,

there is something sinister in other people receiving donations. If he was not happy to take the donation, he should have given it back. However, having taken it, it is unfair for him to criticise other people.

The major issue is that if people had to make public the donations that they received, we would not be in this position. People are looking at this major development—which is very important to the development of south-east Queensland—in relation to campaign donations, rather than in terms of the merits of the development itself. This major development can provide the area with accommodation for the many people who currently live in the area or who will move to south-east Queensland over the next 30 years. Therefore, if those donations had been made public straight after the election, the emphasis in relation to that development would not be on political donations; it would be on the merits of the development, whether we should have a development of that size and what should be in the development control plan. The Minister would be aware that those details are presently before her.

In the three and a half years that I was Minister for Local Government and Planning, I dealt with the Ipswich City Council and the Moreton Shire Council. In that time, I never believed in any way, shape or form that any person did anything improper to push for the Springfield development to proceed. That is an important point. When looking at political donations, we need to bear in mind that a person may accept a donation but that does not necessarily mean that he or she will support a particular project. If a councillor supports a development and receives a donation, that does not mean that he or she supports the development because of the donation. It also does not mean that if someone was opposed to something and they received a donation, they would suddenly change their view.

Mr FitzGerald: You'd take the money on both sides, wouldn't you?

Mr MACKENROTH: I did not take the money at all. I did not receive a donation, nor would I have accepted one as the Minister considering the development control plan. Springfield is a good development and it should go ahead. There are still matters involving the development that the Minister has to sort out. She is aware of my views in relation to that.

Time expired.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook)
(11.41 a.m.): I, too, wish to acknowledge the

work done by research director David Thannhauser and research officer Megan Collins. The committee was very constructive. The questioning progressed quite well. The officers from the various departments provided ample answers to questions.

The first department with which we dealt was the Department of Environment. We addressed the issues of Park Passes in national parks. I thought the questions asked by the Opposition and the answers provided by the departmental officers were interesting. We also addressed issues such as threatened and endangered species. I have a particular interest in the mahogany glider, which is found in my electorate.

Mr Welford: Not for long, the way you're going.

Mr ROWELL: Not in central Queensland, as the member suggested this morning. He is way off target. I was quite interested to hear that they are now in central Queensland, because I was not aware that that was the case. The honourable member has introduced something new into the mahogany glider debate. Only the honourable member could do such a thing. However, the situation is being addressed at present. Recently, a couple of departmental officers spoke with land-holders. A number of the difficulties have been resolved.

The Environmental Protection Act was also discussed. That was an important issue that had to be addressed by this Government. The Minister has done an excellent job in getting around some of the difficulties. A lot of businesses found themselves in difficult circumstances as a result of the initiative put forward by the previous Government.

Mr Welford: Oh!

Mr ROWELL: I am not saying that it is not a good initiative. The problem was the way it was administered. The Minister has certainly made some real progress with small business in addressing the situation.

The Estimates of the Department of Local Government and Planning were also examined by the committee. I found very interesting the sewerage and water supply subsidy program that the Minister has put forward. The \$600m that will be provided over the next 10 years will be a major boost in respect of sewerage and water supply systems throughout the State. In 1996-97, there will be \$20m; in 1997-98, \$40m; and in 1998-99, \$45m. This will be of major benefit to areas in rural Queensland that do not have a sufficient

population for sewage treatment and water reticulation programs to be put in place.

Of course, we also addressed the National Competition Policy, which will be a major challenge for local authorities. In respect of the Department of Tourism, Small Business and Industry, there was talk about the substantial saving that had been achieved through the amalgamation of DBIRD and the Small Business Corporation. Government departments had to save a considerable amount of money as a result of the \$230m-odd shortfall left by the previous Government and also the shortfall in Federal Government funding.

The Red Tape Reduction Task Force will be a major initiative of this Government. It was supported by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Beattie, and I think that is extremely important. Both sides of politics have to support this initiative. The support given by him with respect to the task force was important. We also addressed the Business Advice for Rural Areas Program, which had a shortfall in funding. This Government has supplied \$350,000 in this financial year for that initiative to continue. Small business in rural areas has major problems. It is important that there is support from the Government, because that is essential for the continuation of many small businesses and for the initiation of new ones.

Time expired.

Mr WELFORD (Everton) (11.46 a.m.): I, too, support the adoption of the Estimates, in particular those for the Environment Department. The Estimates hearings were very constructive and, as the previous speaker said, very interesting in a number of respects.

As to what was disclosed as a result of the Estimates in respect of Environment—firstly, the Minister knew very little about his department. Most of the answers had to be given by the staff. However, that is fine; that is what the staff are there for. The fact that the Minister might embarrass himself by not knowing much about his department is really a side issue. More importantly, it was disclosed at the Estimates hearing that the Ministerial Program Statements of the Department of Environment were full of smoke-and-mirror tricks. When we delved into the Estimates, we found that figures were concealed between concealed figures. That is how the Ministerial Program Statements were put together.

The Daintree Rescue Package was rolled into the Wet Tropics Management Authority budget so as to give the impression that the Wet Tropics budget had not been scuttled to the extent it had. There was a 50 per cent

reduction in recurrent funding for the Wet Tropics Management Authority. That is a vicious cut by this State Government coming on top and in the wake of the Federal Government's 30 per cent cut in funding for the Wet Tropics Management Authority. Capital works funding for the Wet Tropics Management Authority has been stopped—full stop. About \$200,000 or \$300,000, the overhang from last year, is the only money remaining for capital works, such as visitor facilities and interpretive activities, which the Wet Tropics Management Authority will carry out in this financial year. The Wet Tropics Management Authority's working budget has come to a dead stop.

What else did we find disclosed in the smoke and mirrors of the Ministerial Program Statements? We also found a whole raft of new taxes introduced under the guise of providing protection for the environment. This Minister has unsuccessfully represented the importance of environmental issues to the Treasurer and his Government. Regrettably, he is a lame duck Minister. The Minister is a reasonable fellow at heart and he does his best, but his best is about as bad as we can get when it comes to protecting the environment. The Minister seems to carry no weight in the Cabinet. He carries no weight when it comes to securing resources for a department which has a whole-of-Government responsibility in many respects in protecting the environment and acting as a watchdog over the activities of every other department. Yet the funding for the department has been cut in a whole range of areas and topped up by a raft of taxes. Let us have a look at some of those taxes.

In this financial year alone, between March and June next year, the Minister plans to raise \$1.1m in new national park fees that will apply to all national parks and conservation parks. If people go for a walk through the forest at Daisy Hill, they will have to pay to do so. If people camp on the ground in a national park with no facilities, they will have to pay to do that also. If people visit a national park which does have facilities, they will have to pay for doing so. In four months, some \$1.1m will be raised. How much will be available out of that amount after the Minister has spent money to promote the Park Pass? Less than \$100,000! More than \$1m will go in expenses to raise \$1.1m this financial year.

Let us look at the oil and tyre taxes, which will raise \$8m this financial year. Do honourable members know how much of that money will be available to deal with the problem of tyres, recycling and so on? Less

than 25 per cent! That is what was revealed. Less than \$2m will be spent on dealing with the very issue on which the taxes are raised. This is a smoke-and-mirrors budget for the Department of Environment, a department which has had its budget gutted by the Government and the Treasurer. The budget has had to be topped up in the only way left—by raising a whole raft of taxes. In a series of press releases, the Minister has pretended that that money will somehow benefit the environment. The companies and retailers who sell oil and tyres know differently. They know the Minister is attempting to pull the wool over their eyes. They know that the Government is using their businesses as a tax gatherer for the State Government and that the environment will not be helped one iota.

Time expired.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers) (11.51 a.m.): At the outset, I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Chairman of Estimates Committee D, Lyn Warwick, the member for Barron River, on the way in which she conducted her chairmanship of these hearings. I believe that all members of the committee were given a fair and equal chance in the time allotted to question the relevant Ministers and departmental staff. It was decided that extra time could be given to members during their section of questioning if the chairman was of the view that the questions were pursuing a particular line of inquiry. I believe that this allowed the hearings to flow smoothly with very little adverse feeling on the part of Government members, non-Government members, the Ministers and their staff. As I said, I congratulate Lyn Warwick on a job well done.

As a member of Estimates Committee D, I am pleased to support the report on the proposed expenditure of the Department of Environment, the Department of Local Government and Planning and the Department of Tourism, Small Business and Industry. At this stage, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Mr David Thannhauser, Research Director, Ms Megan Collins, Research Officer, and Ms Cassandra Adams, Executive Assistant. As all members have already done, I thank also all the parliamentary staff involved in the Estimates hearings. I congratulate the Ministers on their cooperation with the Estimates process. The Ministers are the ones who have their heads on the chopping block for something like three hours apiece. The Ministers appearing before Estimates Committee D took only seven questions on notice from eight and a half

hours of questioning, which reflects a good performance by them.

The Minister for Environment, Mr Brian Littleproud, outlined the expenditure of \$34.112m for the environmental program, with the conservation program allocated \$136.164m of the \$170.276m budget. The Minister was examined on all aspects of his portfolio—from National Parks and Wildlife to coastal management, heritage listing and all environmental issues.

Mrs Di McCauley, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, outlined the departmental savings achieved since the separation of the housing program from the portfolio and the discontinuation of some programs such as the Regional Open Space System. Mrs McCauley also announced new initiatives to come on line under the coalition Government, including the sewerage and water supply subsidy program—which was mentioned by a previous speaker—and also the Integrated Planning Act, IPA, which will achieve projected savings of \$630m over a 10-year period for both Government and businesses. The Minister also advised on the need for rural communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to have improved access to Government information and other services. The department will be working to develop solutions to these issues. I congratulate the departmental staff of both of those Ministers. They did a wonderful job.

The portfolio of the Department of Tourism, Small Business and Industry is really progressing under the Minister, Mr Bruce Davidson, and his very commendable staff. I was very impressed, as I am sure some of the other members of the committee were, with the efficient manner in which they assisted the Minister throughout the Estimates hearing. The Minister advised on the restructure of his department in both the business and tourism areas and the savings made. Despite these measures, the department will still deliver enhanced programs and new initiatives for the coming financial year. Mr Davidson reported on the establishment of the Queensland Small Business Council to provide advice direct to Government on a broad range of small business issues. The Red Tape Reduction Task Force, which has already been mentioned, has also been established to make recommendations to Government to reduce the compliance burdens placed on businesses—in other words, the bureaucratic mess we have had for about five years. Other matters examined by the committee were: the promotion of Queensland in order that it might benefit from the Sydney 2000 Olympics—an

amount of \$458,000 has been allocated to the Olympic 2000 Task Force—environmental tourism; the 1997 Indy car event; the Main Street Program; and liquor licensing issues.

In total, 40 pre-hearing questions were asked across the three departments. I reiterate that I believe that all members had adequate opportunities to pursue the examination of the proposed expenditures referred to Estimates Committee D.

Mrs BIRD (Whitsunday) (11.56 a.m.): I thank the Government members and also the non-Government members who sat on Estimates Committee D. We had a particularly good committee. After a torrid debate, the member for Barron River narrowly won the position of chairperson for the day!

Mr Littleproud: With a casting vote.

Mrs BIRD: It was very close! Obviously, the other contender, the member for Everton, became vice chairman. We were a very amiable group, and it was a very good experience. I thank also the staff who participated in the hearings. They were very efficient, particularly those who assisted the Ministers, and also those staff who assisted us in preparing the reports for subsequent tabling in the Parliament.

Tourism is a wealthy industry in that it is very labour intensive. It provides many jobs and presents business opportunities. It carries with it the assumption that, because of the nature of the beast, it is a very laid back, relaxed type of industry. However, it is also a very busy, hard-working and sometimes unstable industry. It deserves a higher profile than I believe it has had for many, many years. The windows of opportunity for tourism, particularly on an international basis, open and close very quickly—probably far quicker than we would have imagined a decade ago. So it is important that we stay on top of the industry.

The budget allocated to Tourism is a bit disappointing, and I worry about the future of the industry under this Government. During the Estimates hearings, the Minister advised that he was required to find savings in the order of \$16m. That was my first concern. My second serious concern was the lack of investment in tourism for the long term. The other point relates to the fact that the hearing was advised that, despite the Government's back to basics propaganda, the Minister chose to spend funding on vast staff expansions in the Tourism Department rather than investing that money in urgently needed promotion. The claims of efficiencies achieved through staff reductions simply did not exist.

Queensland will have three Budgets before the celebrations at the turn of the century and, more importantly, the celebrations for 2001. The whole world will be partying and travelling in the year 2000. Promotion for these events must start now, both on the domestic and international markets. To get a jump ahead of the competition, we must implement our strategies now. Queensland experiences average annual growth of 10 per cent. However, this budget did not reflect that growth. It is difficult to believe that this budget contained no measures to prepare for the celebrations in the years 2000 and 2001. There will be continuous celebrations in both those years in Queensland and in the rest of Australia. However, the Government has chosen to focus more on the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. We need to plan for all these events, particularly those to be held in 2001. In the last days of this century, the tourism industry is about economic and visionary expansion. That requires thinking that is relevant and bold and invigorating investment targeted at the marketplace. This budget lacks energetic, positive commitment to our fastest expanding industry—one which is both labour intensive and very demanding.

The budget contains some elements of deceit. For example, at the Estimates hearings it was claimed that efficiencies will be achieved through a decrease in staff due to the larger unit of the Department of Tourism being administered by a single corporate services branch. That is untrue. Indeed, what has occurred is a transfer of staff from the redundant areas of the portfolio to new initiatives within the portfolio. There were no efficiencies, particularly in staffing numbers. They were exactly the same. No time and motion studies were used to measure anticipated efficiencies—

Time expired.

Hon. D. E. McCAULEY (Callide—Minister for Local Government and Planning) (12.01 p.m.): I would like to thank the member for Barron River, who was the chairman of Estimates Committee D, and the committee members for the part they played in our Estimates. It was interesting that, of the three Opposition members on my Estimates, one was not there for any of it and the other one said nothing; it was all left to one player to carry the load for the Opposition. I would also like to thank my departmental officers. They did an enormous amount of work. I think they worked out that it was probably a year's work for one person to put all this information together, and I think that is a good basis to

work on in future. We had the information available to answer just about anything that was asked of us.

I will comment briefly on what the member for Chatsworth said. He obviously did not have any problems with the Estimates committee because he did not speak about it at all in his summation at the beginning of this debate. Instead, he chose to talk about a pecuniary interests register. I think it is hypocritical in the extreme of him to say that the Government should be bringing in this pecuniary interest register in time for the next local government elections when he had four years to do just that and did not do it. In fact, when I took over as Minister there was nothing progressing within the department along those lines. We put out a paper to all interested parties in June or July to get some feedback on what local government felt about this. The member mentioned Ipswich councillors, but, in the case of any serving councillors, there is a safety net there. When they fill out their pecuniary interests forms, there is a section which says that they are to list gifts over \$500. If they were a serving councillor and they got money, be it \$5,000, \$10,000, \$7,000 or anything in excess of \$500, from anybody then I would assume that those serving councillors would have put that in their pecuniary interests register, which would then be available for public scrutiny. That safety net is there. Even if the disclosure provisions do not get up in time—and the department is progressing that at the moment—that safety net is there and it was there after the last local government elections. I presume it was adequately addressed by all council members who were sitting council members at that time.

To get back to the Estimates, I know that the member for Chatsworth was concerned about the corporate services section within my department, which previously had been part of Public Works and Housing—they were all in the one—and had been subsidised by housing trust funds. We felt that that was not the correct use of housing trust fund money and when we set up the corporate services within the Department of Local Government and Planning we made sure that it was a very lean, mean, tight operation and we benchmarked that with other departments to ensure that we were not going to be top heavy with corporate services.

I agree with the member that it is important that we do not have an oversupply of bean counters. It is necessary to have those people, but we certainly need to keep them at a reasonable percentage. My department's percentage of 15 per cent

compares favourably with other departments, whose percentage of corporate service people is much higher. I was quite relaxed about that, but I did feel at the time that it was wrong of the previous Government to use housing trust funds to prop up its corporate services. It was an improper use of that money and it should not have been done.

I also noticed that the Opposition had obviously not read the answers to the questions on notice, so I would question whether it is worthwhile having questions on notice. Many of the questions on notice were detailed and they were answered in great detail, but they were then asked again, which took up time that could have been fruitfully used for other purposes during the Estimates. If Opposition members had not read those answers, it was logical that they would ask them again because they obviously were not aware of those answers to questions on notice. That was a shame because it would have saved us regurgitating issues.

I have always had a fairly ambivalent attitude towards the Estimates and I guess I still do, but it is useful to have all the information that has come forward as a result of the committee. It is useful for us within the department. Even if the Opposition perhaps does not get as much out of it as it would hope to achieve, that information is useful within the department. It is all there; it has all been gone through very thoroughly; there is not one area that has been overlooked. I guess, in terms of a stocktake of what departments are doing, the process is beneficial.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank) (12.06 p.m.): As I follow the Minister for Local Government and Planning, I wish to concentrate on areas within her portfolio. At the commencement of the Estimates hearing, the Minister said that her portfolio's record for 1995-96 clearly demonstrates a commitment to improving the economic and social development of the State. Unfortunately, that is not being backed up by the moneys that have been provided to the department to provide the essential services necessary to facilitate that objective.

Mrs McCauley: \$600m over 10 years.

Mr ROBERTSON: The Minister should hold on a minute. I was about to turn to the credit side, which is the very program that the Minister has just mentioned in an interjection, but on the debit side there are some really important programs which, in the four years that I have been in this place, I have spoken

about continually. I appreciate the fact that I am a member of an electorate in south-east Queensland and I perhaps have a jaundiced view as a result, but it just so happens that south-east Queensland, being the fastest growing region in Queensland, if not Australia, is facing serious problems with respect to the provision of services and infrastructure.

When we see the winding back of funds coming through the Building Better Cities Program—and I appreciate the fact that that is not the Minister's responsibility, but it certainly is as a result of the winding back of funding from her Federal Government—it really does place in jeopardy a lot of the very useful and important programs introduced by the previous Labor Government to cope with the infrastructure requirements of south-east Queensland now and into the future. If the Minister was actually serious about maintaining a commitment to SEQ 2001, then perhaps the Treasurer of this State would not have over \$250m in a slush fund that could well be put to making up the shortfall that this Minister has in her department through the winding back of Building Better Cities money.

Part of the programs that have been wound back, apart from Building Better Cities, is of course the ROSS scheme—the Regional Open Space Scheme. Again, I appreciate that that scheme will continue this year, but only through the expenditure of funds that have been carried forward from the previous financial year. In fact, the real reduction in funding for that scheme is around about \$2.8m. Similarly, the Community Renewal and Community Parks Program will be ceasing this year. The Planning Program overall, with much of its funding coming from the Building Better Cities Program, has reduced this year from \$37.4m to \$17.4m, a reduction of \$20m. That is 20 million important dollars that could go towards solving some of the real problems we are experiencing right here in south-east Queensland.

I question the direction in which this Government is going when it winds back schemes such as that and, at the same time, releases quite useful documents, such as the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for which, whilst the Department of Transport has principal responsibility for it, in terms of the wider strategy of the Integrated Regional Transport Plan there will be a requirement for funding from other departments to support that basic transport infrastructure. As we have seen in this year's Budget, that commitment by this Government is simply not there.

The Minister outlined in her comments to the Estimates committee that 1997 will see the introduction of the new Integrated Planning Act, which of course is this Government's version of the Labor Government's reforming legislation. The problem with that Act will be that, whilst there will be some nice sounding commitment to environmentally sustainable development, it will not be provided with the resources to actually make that work. It is all very well requiring the private sector to engage in environmentally sustainable development, but unless the Government has the resources to engage in environmentally sustainable development itself, whether it be transport infrastructure, the ROSS scheme or Building Better Cities, and unless it has the commitment, then the whole strategy falls down. That is the fundamental problem with this department's budget. Whilst there have been some good moves towards infrastructure for rural areas, overall it is a failure.

Time expired.

Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs—Minister for Environment) (12.11 p.m.): Firstly, I endorse the comments made by previous speakers with regard to the chairmanship and membership of Estimates Committee D. I especially congratulate my departmental officers, who I thought on the day showed a good understanding of all aspects of the department. The member for Everton, the shadow Minister for Environment, made much of the fact that I allowed departmental officers to provide details on many of the questions he asked. He was trying to imply that, as the relevant Minister, I was lacking in knowledge of the department. That is a long way from the truth. Perhaps the people who read *Hansard* would like to know that, in the past seven months that that member has been the Environment spokesman for the Opposition, he has asked only one question without notice in the House. So people can judge for themselves the knowledge of the department that that man has.

The member also made a lot of comments about what he said was a lack of funding for the department. It is interesting then that the 1996-97 budget for the Department of Environment provided a record \$170.3m for the portfolio. Although it is good for departments to be provided with record amounts of funding, it is equally important in the case of the Department of Environment that this funding show a balanced approach to the green and brown issues which are the main business of my department.

On the brown side, which deals with pollution issues—the Government has had the courage to address the growing pollution problems caused by the debris of technology and lifestyles. The most pressing areas are the problems of used tyres and oil. On the green or conservation side of the department—we are continuing to acquire land for conservation purposes, particularly critical habitat in the Daintree area and under the Mahogany Glider Conservation Plan.

Acquisition is only one side of the coin. The coalition Government will place increased emphasis on management of national parks and improving facilities for the people of Queensland. This area was neglected under the former Labor Government, and this neglect has created an enormous problem for the department in the next few years. Major budget initiatives include—

nearly \$11m for land acquisition, including the Daintree Rescue Package, the Sugar Coast Package, which includes the mahogany glider, a Koala Coast conservation area jointly with the Redland Shire near Brisbane, and some acquisitions in the coastal zone;

\$10m to implement the Environmental Protection Act, including \$3m for subsidy of first-time licence holders under that Act;

\$19m over the next three years for improved management of, and provision of, facilities in national parks, improved off-park wildlife management, development of the WildNet computer database, documentation of the conservation values of Torres Strait and the implementation of a Coastcare program to fund community projects—funded by the introduction of national park user fees for adults, and camping and other charges;

additionally, \$3m over the next two years to improve facilities at key, high-visitation national parks;

an Environmental Franchise Scheme from 1 January 1997, applying to waste tyres and oil, raising an anticipated \$8m this financial year and subsequently \$16m annually, to fund rebates for tyres and oil disposal other than landfill, a Cleaner Production Program, and waste management and waste-tracking initiatives;

more than \$1m for preparation of coastal management plans, with at least four to start this financial year, including the Hinchinbrook management plan;

provision of more than \$800,000 for a Brisbane River Management Plan—\$562,000 from the Environment portfolio—a project that had stalled badly under the previous Government; and

grants totalling nearly \$200,000 for conservation groups, in addition to funding for the Queensland Conservation Council's quarterly forums with the department, and a QCC community coordinator to help develop the environmental protection policy for the mining and petroleum industries.

In addition, the portfolio will play its part in reducing administrative costs across the public sector. The Department of Environment has reduced its central office administrative costs by \$726,000 this year, which shows a genuine commitment to providing lean and efficient services support to its programs. The Government has tackled the hard issues which previous administrations had been unable or unwilling to do anything about.

The question of fees for national parks has been addressed. The benefits of a modest park user fee will quickly become evident as facilities improve in the popular high-usage park areas. On the issues of tyres and oil—the public have shown that they are sick of polluting tyre fires and oil being dumped in waterways and soil. Governments have to come up with answers to meet this challenge. Rebates given to industry will encourage sustainable collection recycling and waste disposal for tyres and oil, financial assistance for cleaner production and the implementation of a comprehensive waste management strategy. The Environment budget for this year is a blueprint for meeting the challenges of today in a way which safeguards our future. Tough decisions have been made.

Time expired.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland) (12.16 p.m.):

The Estimates process has once again highlighted this Government's lack of commitment to the protection of our precious Queensland environment. The recent Clayton's increases in the Environment budget are symptomatic of this Government's lack of commitment to this vital area. A supposed \$4m surplus has been achieved only by replacing deep cuts to the Environment budget's real funding with a plethora of new and increased taxes and charges. One only has to realise that the oil and tyre taxes alone are due to raise \$16m in a full year, and the new national park fees \$18.4m over coming years, to appreciate how deep those cuts

have been and how duplicitous this Government has been in claiming an increase on Labor's past Environment budgets.

But what else could we expect from a Government that continues to fiddle with long-overdue tree-clearing guidelines for our leasehold lands that comprise in excess of 70 per cent of Queensland? What else could we expect from a Government that is proudly planning to construct further massive coal and oil-fired power stations and, in the process, thumbing its nose at global scientific warnings over the effect that such plants will have on the worsening greenhouse effect? What else could we expect from a Government that is hell-bent on getting power across the Daintree to satisfy a short-sighted few but, in the process, placing at threat one of Australia's and the world's great biological treasures?

This State's environmental movement is wide awake to what has happened to the Environment Department budget. They have marked it down as yet another black mark against a regime that is hell-bent on repeating all of its mistakes of the seventies and eighties. They have marked it down alongside the cuts in funding to the mahogany glider rescue plan, the financial gutting of the Wet Tropics Management Authority, the kowtowing to speculators over the Koala Coast protection policy, the scrapping of the Cape York Wilderness Zone, the failure to produce a zoning plan for the Moreton Bay Marine Park, an absence of real funding to buy new national parks and collusion with its Federal counterparts to make the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority dependent on an outrageous hike in the reef tax to fund its day-to-day operations.

Mark my words, this Government's environmental record is at an all-time low and is sinking further with each new economically rational decision it makes. This Government's plans to litter this State with dams, with their attendant environmental effects, and ignore the wealth of alternative technology available to produce the same outcome, are matched only by the Government's dismantling of Labor's alternative energy programs which were, for the first time, setting this State on a long-term ecologically sustainable future as an energy conserver rather than an energy consumer.

The Government's granting of five new whale-watching permits in southern Queensland will wreak havoc with the fledgling whale-watching industry in Hervey Bay. The Government's new national park entry fees, increased camping fees and higher recreation

area management fees will put islands such as Moreton and Fraser out of the reach of the average Queensland family, and the Government's new wildlife fees will make the family pet birds a luxury item. Tragic as it is, of the gaffs and stumbles that this Government has made, it is the environment that so clearly proves that Government members have learnt nothing since 1989, but they have also forgotten nothing.

Hon. B. W. DAVIDSON (Noosa—Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry) (12.20 p.m.): I commence my address by recognising the efforts of the Chair, the member for Barron River, Lyn Warwick, and the way she conducted the Estimates hearing. I thought that she was a very appropriate Chair for Estimates Committee D, which examined my portfolio. I acknowledge also the contributions of Marc Rowell, the member for Hinchinbrook, and Robert Mitchell, the member for Charters Towers. They made contributions through the questions that they asked and the interest that they showed, particularly in relation to tourism and small business.

I also recognise the efforts of my departmental staff, who worked tirelessly in the two weeks leading up to the Estimates to prepare all the briefings that are required for questions from members of the Opposition. In particular, I mention the staff of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation and the Queensland Events Corporation, who in many cases sacrificed their time on the days before the Estimates to prepare briefings for the hearing. I also mention the shadow Minister for Tourism, Lorraine Bird. I thought her approach to the Estimates was very fair minded. At times I did feel sorry for her because she was left by herself at the hearing for almost the whole time. Mr Beattie did drop in and ask a few questions. I was pleased that she approached the Estimates in a fair-minded way and I respect her for that.

As to tourism—in a tough budgetary year the coalition Government has increased the base funding of the QTTC from \$27,985,000 in 1995-96 to \$29,885,000 in 1996-97. As a Government, we are aware of the enormous opportunities that will be presented to Queensland over the next four or five years in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. More importantly, currently we are getting the structure of the QTTC right. When the Government took office and I was appointed Minister, major concerns were held across the State about the board of the QTTC and some senior staff members of the QTTC. We have addressed those issues and those problems.

In a short time, with the appointment of a new marketing director, we will have a structure to market and promote Queensland to Australia and to the world for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Funding of \$3,211,000 for the Office of Tourism has been mentioned. It should be noted by members of this Parliament that, when I was appointed Minister, the Office of Tourism was a cricket team: it had about 11 staff. They did not have the resources or expertise to write policy for the tourism industry of this State. With the funding that has now been provided to the Office of Tourism, we are now able to enter into tourism industry research; assistance will be provided in the implementation of regional tourism strategies; an environmental tourism branch will be established; and backpacker, cultural and sports tourism strategies will be implemented. The office will work to improve the quality and professionalism of the tourism industry, encourage the introduction of new air services into Queensland, initiate an aviation strategy, complete the Queensland Ecotourism Plan, promote investment in emerging tourism markets and provide an advisory service on Government regulation impacting on tourism infrastructure development.

I want members of this Parliament to appreciate and understand that, when I was appointed, the office had only a dozen-odd staff. The Government has now given it resources. We will shortly be appointing personnel to ensure that the Government is keeping pace with the demands and needs of the industry to lead us into the next five and 10 years. I am looking forward to the next couple of months when we have appointed all of the staff to the Office of Tourism and ensuring that we have the policies in place on behalf of both the department and the Government to cater for the industry.

I was pleased that the member for Hinchinbrook showed quite an interest in the business initiatives of the Government, as did the member for Charters Towers. I was very pleased to advise the Estimates committee of some of the great initiatives that we have introduced in the short time that we have been in Government, particularly the Small Business Council, the Red Tape Reduction Task Force and many other initiatives that we are working on. Through the Gateway Licence Project we have reduced 60 per cent of the most common licence applications in Queensland onto one form. We are advancing that. Hopefully, in the next six months we will have most licence applications in this State on one

application form. We have been able to secure Australian Taxation Office——

Time expired.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (12.26 p.m.): I join this Estimates debate to raise some issues concerning tourism and especially the impact on that industry in Bundaberg. I welcome the news of the establishment of the Silicon Graphics Training Centre in Queensland. That is a great announcement. I remind honourable members that a parliamentary trade delegation visited Silicon Graphics in late 1995. At that stage, it was thought that that centre would go to Melbourne. I hope that a team representing all of Queensland may have had a small impact and may have helped bring Silicon Graphics here. That is great for the infrastructure of our film industry. It will provide a great service, which will have a great impact and result in more films being produced in Queensland.

I am concerned about the impact of taxes on our tourism industry in Bundaberg, where those taxes will have a major impact on two Barrier Reef islands. The increase in the Federal Barrier Reef tax of \$5 up to \$6 plus the national parks tax of \$3 results in an extra cost of \$8. Island packages are sold for just under \$100 a day. Those increases mean an 8 per cent increase in the costs. Many tourist operators cannot absorb that increase in their profits, because the profit is not there. It is a very tough industry. Some of those tours have been presold to wholesalers for over 12 months. Now those operators have to absorb that \$8 increase. I do not know whether we have fully considered the impact of those taxes on those tourist operators.

People camp on Lady Musgrave Island. People have to pay not only the increased Barrier Reef tax of \$6 and the national park entrance fee of \$3 but also increased camping fees, which I think are about \$3.50. If people want to go over and camp on our Barrier Reef island for three days, they will have to pay Government charges of \$19.50. That will have a great impact on something that was costing less than \$100. I believe that we have not really considered the full impact of how that will affect the tourist industry in Bundaberg, which has a depressed construction industry and high unemployment. We need every tourist dollar we can get.

The previous Labor Government made major improvements in tourism, especially in western tourism. The member for Inala and I visited Windorah and saw what had been done for the west. New industries have been

started, for example, in Longreach, the Stockman's Hall of Fame; in Barcaldine, the Workers Heritage Centre; in Winton, the Waltzing Matilda Centre. Charleville, which is now a tourist destination, was rebuilt and repainted. It now has the Stargazer observatory and money was provided for a feral goat abattoir, which is about to be opened. The Matilda Highway was developed over recent years, and infrastructure such as that for the Spirit of the Outback has been provided. A lot has been provided to help the west and country areas.

We should acknowledge that tourism is one industry in which we can put a lot of time and effort into helping those areas. We cannot ride on the sheep's back; we need other industries. I hope we all realise that it is important to continue the good work that has been done. It must be recognised that those State and Federal taxes will hurt the tourism industry in Bundaberg.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee E

Report No. 1

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is—

"That Report No. 1 of Estimates Committee E be adopted."

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (12.30 p.m.): Estimates Committee E involved the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Mines and Energy. As the chairman of that Estimates committee, I would like to thank all of those people who were involved in it. We received tremendous support from the staff—Graeme Kinnear, Andrew and all of the other staff who were involved in the background from Hansard, the committee staff, the attendants and staff from the catering division. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to have these Estimates committees run smoothly and without any dramas. I thought my committee ran reasonably smoothly. We were pretty happy with it.

I would like to thank the members, particularly the member for Mirani, the member for Maroochydore and the member for Mount Isa, who travelled quite long distances to attend not only the actual Estimates committee hearing itself but also the wash-up meetings when we were writing our report. It is a long way to come. I know

that it was also of considerable inconvenience to the member for Mirani, who had to put something else off to be part of this process. I would like to thank the member for Maroochydore who, at the last minute, took her place on our committee in lieu of a member who was ill. That was certainly greatly appreciated. It certainly was of great assistance to us.

I would like to touch on a few of the positive areas of the process. During the previous debate, I was interested to hear a former Minister say that members did not utilise the information that they received through questions on notice or, upon receiving that information, strayed from that information or asked the same questions. I do not recall that happening in this Estimates committee—maybe it did occur and I missed it.

I believe that the Estimates is a changing process and that we all have to learn to use it better. It is probably the best opportunity for the Opposition to do some fishing for information which later on it can use to draw to the attention of the public or highlight the various ways in which the Government is being run. I believe that Opposition members need to work particularly hard in this area, and I am sure that they will.

In relation to the system of having questions on notice to provide detailed information to a committee member for his or her use during the hearing, we have to work on that and make sure that it works really well. Also, the increase in the time available for consideration of the matters and the preparation of the report after the public hearing is an improvement on the old system.

I would like to raise a few matters of concern. I believe that the time between the passing of the sessional orders and the presentation of the Budget needs to be extended. In my opinion, the process of tabling public documents at a public hearing needs to be clarified. Although the committee did not have a problem with the matter, it needed certain clarification as there seemed to be some confusion about the process. I think that the sessional order in respect of the tabling of documents needs to be looked at and we need to work out another procedure. The system of the timing of the questions and the answers at the public hearings could be reviewed.

I would like to touch on a few points that relate to my electorate. In respect of Powerlink, my colleague the member for Warwick and I are two of the main players in respect of that revised initiative, which used to

be called Eastlink. I believe that the route taken by Powerlink has created a total change in attitude towards the project. During the Estimates committee hearing, I found it interesting to ask the Minister questions about it. Perhaps we went on a bit of a fishing expedition to try to understand it a little better. However, the whole philosophy behind Powerlink going over Crown land instead of private property is a big improvement. I can see that we can use that route down to New South Wales. I think that we have to have a considerable amount of discussion as to how we are going to take the route over the border to try to dovetail in with New South Wales. That remains to be seen.

Time expired.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa) (12.35 p.m.): I reiterate the remarks made by the chairman of the committee in thanking the staff who served the committee. I would also like to congratulate him on the way in which he conducted the affairs of the committee. I would like it recorded in *Hansard* that the Opposition found him to be most fair and reasonable.

I believe that the Estimates committee hearing is a time during which a Minister can demonstrate whether he or she has an understanding of the portfolio which he or she administers. Nobody would expect a Minister to know all the details of what is happening in his or her portfolio. However, I think that the Minister is expected to have a basic understanding of what is happening. I say that I found Minister Hobbs to be quite exceptional in his knowledge of his portfolio. He answered most of the questions asked himself. Out of the three Ministers whom we had before us, Minister Hobbs shone.

Over a period I have discovered that the morale in the Department of Mines and Energy is at an all-time low. I understand that many senior people are receiving counselling. However, when I asked a question of the Minister about that matter, he refused to answer. In recent times, many excellent people have left that department—the latest one being Mr Ken Gluch, who served the mining industry and the department for over 34 years. I found him to be a loyal and faithful servant of the Queensland Government. At one time, he was the senior policy adviser to Minister Martin Tenni, so nobody could accuse him of being a Labor supporter or sympathiser. I always found Ken Gluch to be a person who played the role of the true public servant—loyal and faithful to the Minister and the Government of the day. I want to say that

I think that it is a disgrace that Mr Gluch has been treated in the way in which he has. Some quarters believe that, because of his role in changes in the department previously, it is now payback time. I certainly hope that that is not the case.

The Opposition has a number of major concerns about the direction of this department and some of the decisions that have been made. Firstly, I refer—and this matter will be covered by later speakers—to the implementation of the recommendations of the Moura report. The Minister claims that there will be funds available for this in the mid-term budget. Let me say that it is in the annual budget of a department that these allocations are made. I tabled a letter from the Minister to Mrs Sheldon, the Treasurer. The Minister claimed that he did not know whether he had signed it or not. In fact, he had signed the letter. I have a grave concern that there is a move afoot by Treasury to try to prevent moneys being spent on the implementation of the recommendations of that inquiry. I will be watching very, very keenly to see if all of those recommendations are implemented lock, stock and barrel.

The other point about which I have a concern is the way in which this department is handing out work to consultants. The protocol is that, for any consultancies costing more than \$10,000, three quotes must be obtained. What did this department do? It handed out an \$88,000 contract to reorganise the department without getting any other quotes. When asked a question about this matter I was told, "We did not have enough time." We are going back to the old days—a contract for \$88,000 was let when the system stipulates that, for anything costing more than \$10,000, three quotes must be obtained.

The original cost of Eastlink was \$300m. The Minister has been informed that, as a result of his decision and the re-routing of Eastlink, it is now going to cost between \$400m and \$450m. He has been told that by his department—possibly an extra \$150m. I established a register in which anyone who received gifts had to sign the register. The Government has abandoned that and there is now a free-for-all. Another thing which is an absolute disgrace is that the Minister led a group of senior public servants up to the National Party headquarters to seek their approval. We are back to the Joh days!

Time expired.

Hon. T. J. PERRETT (Barambah—Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry) (12.41 p.m.): This was my first

experience on the receiving end of an Estimates committee and, in my case, it was Estimates Committee E, ably chaired by my colleague the honourable member for Cunningham, Tony Elliott. I also thank the other members of the committee—the members for Mirani and Maroochydore from the Government side, and the members for Bundamba, Mount Isa and Inala from the Opposition side.

I found the experience both enlightening and rewarding in terms of gaining a better understanding of the budgetary processes that are so critical to the effective delivery of Government programs. There is no doubt in my mind that the process of accountability for Budget expenditure is enhanced through the Estimates committee process. It clearly provides an opportunity for both sides of the Chamber to seek and gain a better understanding of the way in which public money is spent. At the same time, it provided me with an opportunity to present the highlights of the programs which I am now implementing with the DPI in order to take that organisation back to the bush. This initiative is long overdue, but it will enable me to restore field services so that the organisations which have been run down over the past five years can be restored.

Of course, we are very concerned that, following the Budget, we are able to deliver more jobs, particularly in the area of service delivery into rural Queensland. It is of paramount importance that the Primary Industries Department is driven by its clients. In other words, if it is going to be successful, it must deliver the services that are going to support the producers of Queensland in their endeavours to deliver economic wealth to this State. To do that, it is important that we get it right.

The areas of research and extension are vital. As members know, this Budget will allow the department to set up research institutes which will be a collaboration of all the players in the field, including industry organisations, CSIRO, universities and the department itself. Steering committees have already been set up to chart the course for the future. Extension will follow, to deliver the results of that research.

Another very important industry for this State is fisheries which, of course, is divided into two parts, the commercial sector and the recreational sector. We have obtained funding via the Budget to deliver some of the initiatives that we had promised, but the bottom line is that we must ensure that there will be fish

stocks for the future. Our policies are very much aimed at such things as the development of aquaculture. We must ensure that our children, our grandchildren and generations to come will be able to go fishing and actually catch fish.

Forestry also falls within my area of responsibility. We are very concerned to ensure that we have a timber industry in the future. It is important that we maintain plantations to take the pressure off our native forests. It is also important that we deliver on our promise of establishing farm forestry. Tree farming is a new industry that needs promotion, and the Budget has provided funding to do that. We are also about—

Time expired.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (12.46 p.m.): In responding to the Estimates committee hearing, I will concentrate on the Mining Inspectorate and the fact that there has been no budget allocation to fund the restructured Mining Inspectorate according to the recommendations of the Mining Inspectorate Review Committee. The review of the Mining Inspectorate was conducted as an outcome of the Mining Warden's Moura No. 2 inquiry report and the Coroner's report of 17 January 1996.

During the Estimates committee hearing I raised the question of funding for the implementation of the outcomes from the Mining Inspectorate Review Committee, as is supported on page 10 of the report to the Parliament by Estimates Committee E under the heading "Funding For Mines Inspectorate". In paragraph 57 of that report it is noted that "... the Minister has indicated to Cabinet that some \$2m extra will be required to properly fund the new inspectorate." Paragraph 58 states—

"In response, the Minister reassured the Committee of his Government's commitment to fulfil its obligations under the Moura implementation process and that the Cabinet decision on the funds will be part of the mid-year Budget review."

In his statement to the Estimates committee, the Minister showed no urgency in acquiring the \$2m required to fund the new inspectorate. He is using fancy words and various figures in an attempt to try to convince the public that he is getting on with the job. The Minister has real problems with the department's budget because he cannot stand up to Mrs Sheldon. The Minister is allowing Mrs Sheldon to control the purse strings to the detriment of mineworkers and their workplaces.

Mr Gilmore, as the Minister, was right when he stated in a press release on 4 April—

"The Moura findings must be treated as a major priority and their implementation must occur without delay."

He went on to say—

"We owe it to those who died, to those left behind, to those who daily go underground in coal mines, and the broader community to ensure that the Moura findings are not some nine day wonder, but rather a turning point in the history of coal mine health and safety in this State."

Those are fine words and I agree totally with them, but the Minister has failed his first test in sincerity by not being able to act immediately in receiving the report from the review committee. He has failed, because he cannot tell me or the miners of Queensland that he can act immediately to fill vacant and newly created positions within the inspectorate. He simply does not have the money. When will the Minister get the \$2m? What is the time frame for advertising and filling positions? When will the new salaries be paid and the resources put in place?

I should not have to remind the Minister that the Government is spending \$10,000 a day to investigate the CJC because the National/Liberal Government does not like the watchdog of accountability. We know that Mrs Sheldon has a piggy bank with \$259m stashed away in it for election pork-barrelling. The Treasurer has increased the price of cigarettes by 80c. There is a new tax on oil and a new tax on tyres. There is a 35 per cent increase in debits tax and a new tax on the entrance to national parks. A sum of \$200m was spent on a tollway to help the people in the Treasurer's back yard, \$80m was spent on the stock market for the Metway merger and \$300m in royalties has been provided for coal. However, the Treasurer and the Minister cannot agree on \$2m additional funding to improve the safety of workplaces for coalminers. The Minister is weak. He cannot stand up to the Treasurer and she treats him with contempt.

The Minister's letter to the Treasurer advising her that the Moura implementation process is under threat due to lack of funding is evidence of just how much trouble the department is in. In that letter to the Treasurer, the Minister states—

"My department currently receives the majority of funding for core service

delivery through special allocations. Fifty percent of the total budget in 1995/96 comprised specials. Many of these specials cease in 1995/96 and, due to the imposition of the \$4.3m ceiling on new initiative bids, it appears these will not be funded in 1996/97 and the out years. The implications of this include that my department will. . ."

The letter goes on to identify six programs that will not be funded, including item 3, which reads, "cease the Moura Inquiry Implementation Program." The Minister goes on to state in the letter—

"In addition, we can expect strong community reaction if we walk away from mining rehabilitation projects and strong industry reaction should we cease the implementation of the Moura Inquiry recommendations and Native Title."

I agree with that. In conclusion, the Minister requests confirmation that the Budget committee is aware of and supports the consequences of the strategy. Guess what is No. 1 on the list? The letter states—

"The department will cease the implementation of the Moura Inquiry Findings."

In recent weeks the Minister has had plenty of opportunities to tell us exactly where the \$2m will come from. The truth is that the Minister does not have the money and he does not have the courage to admit that Mrs Sheldon has him bluffed. It is about time that, in the interests of safety and providing an inspectorate for the mining industry in Queensland, the Minister told us publicly that he has the money and that he is prepared to implement the recommendations as soon as they come—

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick) (12.51 p.m.): Although I was not an active participant in Estimates Committee E, I have a great deal of interest in the Estimates of these three departments. I turn briefly to the issue of the alternative Eastlink proposal that is planned to run through the western part of my electorate. This proposal is in great contrast to the one announced and pushed by the former Government, in that this Government proposes to use Crown land to the greatest extent possible.

One of the concessions won by the Minister for Mines and Energy in Adelaide when he signed off on this project a couple of months ago was our being able to build in some flexibility in respect of a crossing point

on the border. It was important that we were able to take into consideration the private property rights of the land-holders in that part of the world—something that was not considered by members opposite when they sat on the Government benches. They believed that the corridor should have been across private land as far as possible. We look at that issue rather differently. I believe that we will be able to come up with a corridor which will have a minimal impact on private property rights in our part of the world. I am sure my sentiments concur with the view of the honourable member for Cunningham. That is a process which we as members representing that part of the world will be watching very carefully over the next month or so as we go about refining crossing points and so on.

I wish to turn briefly to a couple of other issues. I congratulate the Minister for Primary Industries on the wonderful job he has done in his few short months in Government in rebuilding the decimated Department of Primary Industries in this State. He has made it very clear that he intends to replace almost one-third of the officers sacked from the Department of Primary Industries in one budget alone. Already, over 70 jobs have been advertised. In my part of the world, we are looking forward to those officers providing on-ground service for people.

I congratulate the Minister on another innovation. He has also provided a farm financial counsellor for the southern Darling Downs, which is something that has been required for a long time. We have some special problems out there. We have problems with smaller properties and the fine-wool growing areas of the State. It is an area that will be served very well by a farm financial counsellor. We look forward to those positions being filled over the next year and, hopefully, more positions beyond that.

In addition, I commend the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Hobbs, for his grasp of his portfolio, which was alluded to by the member for Mount Isa. I commend him for the establishment of the Water Infrastructure Task Force, which is currently looking at about \$7 billion worth of projects around the State. I hope that, with my part of the world being one of the great water catchments in the State, we can share in some of that money when it is made available.

Another point that I wish to touch on—and it is something that has been worrying me for a while—concerns the issue of native title, which was mentioned in the report of the Estimates committee. We need to look at the

way we handle native title issues in this State. It is absolutely ridiculous that, when a person lodges an application, for example, for a small pumping site licence within a forest which neighbours his property so as to be able to pump water—and that would require only a few metres of land—that application has to run the gauntlet of the Native Title Unit. If the unit cannot find anything which may have extinguished prior native title, that person's enterprise is put on hold. This is not an attack on Aboriginal people and native title rights. However, it is an absolutely ridiculous situation.

A person in my electorate is wishing to build a water facility on a disused road. His application has to run the gauntlet of the Native Title Unit. That is not what native title is about. That is not why it was established. Certainly, it is not about impinging on the ability of people to be able to run a profitable enterprise. These issues about which people are speaking to me are very reasonable. This is a serious issue. The Minister should be raising the issue with his Federal counterparts to try to have these sorts of minor problems with regard to native title worked out. It really is impacting on the viability of a lot of people in my part of the world.

Time expired.

Mr PALASZCZUK (Inala) (12.56 p.m.):

At the outset, let me congratulate the honourable member for Cunningham on the manner in which he conducted the deliberations of the committee. I must admit that he was very fair and just and he gave everybody a fair go. I note that for the public record. Secondly, I thank the Minister for the manner in which he responded to the questions of the committee. He was very frank, to the point and he did not beat about the bush. His knowledge of the portfolio was very good. That must be partly because of the officers who work behind him in the department. They also contributed very positively to the deliberations of the committee. I also put on the public record my appreciation of the manner in which public servants handled themselves during the committee process.

However, sometimes an intimate knowledge of a portfolio does not translate into commonsense. The proposal for the growing of cotton in the Channel Country around Windorah is a case in point. The stage was reached at which the local cattle producers had to band together—an exercise that exhausted a lot of their energies—to oppose a proposal to grow cotton. On behalf of the Opposition, on the public record I

applaud the commitment and dedication of graziers in their widespread opposition to that proposal to grow cotton.

As I said previously, the Minister for Natural Resources, unfortunately, took a far too one-sided attitude to this issue and failed to listen to the graziers. Unfortunately, that united graziers in the west in a way we had not seen before. I will leave my comments on this issue at that. Commonsense has prevailed and I understand that something will be done shortly to satisfy the needs of the cattle producers in that area. Hopefully, during the Minister's deliberations today he might be able to respond to that issue.

Secondly, based on the Minister's answering of questions during the Estimates committee hearing, I have arrived at the conclusion that the Borbidge Government is looking very closely at selling off our most basic and vital natural resource, that is, water. The Minister argued during the Estimates committee that he intends only to corporatise our water resources or commercialise the department's operations. In the media, the Minister—

Mr FitzGerald: That was the previous Government's decision.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Yes, that is right. However, the Minister went a bit further. In his public statements, he has admitted that he is looking at private firms being able to own, build and operate for profit our infrastructure. We are not just looking at remote rural irrigation schemes which would not otherwise be provided by Government; we are also looking, I understand, at our urban water services. Members will also be told that the private sector will achieve cost efficiencies and, therefore, water prices will not rise. That is the type of economic rationalist rubbish we should not be hearing from the Government of the day. How can the private sector make a profit other than by increasing the price of water? I believe that rural water prices in particular will rise many times over. Rural Queenslanders will be the big losers as the cross-subsidies which protected them from paying the real cost of rural water services are scrapped by private operators. In South Australia, water charges have increased considerably.

In conclusion, I wish to quote the Premier's comments that appeared in the *Courier-Mail* on 12 January this year. He stated—

"... we will not be flogging off the family silver ... we will be a Government that will be getting on with the job of concentrating

on the basic areas of Government service."

On the one hand, we have the Premier saying that he is not going to flog off the family silver. On the other hand, we have the Minister for Natural Resources saying on the public record that he is looking very closely at the privatisation of our water services. That is a situation which cannot exist.

Time expired.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 to 2.30 p.m.

Hon. T. J. G. GILMORE (Tablelands—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.30 p.m.): It is with some pleasure that I take the opportunity to enter into the debate to finalise the Budget and to wrap up Estimates Committee E. I want to begin by thanking my staff, both departmental and ministerial. During the entire budgetary and Estimates committee process, they worked tirelessly at their task. They provided me with excellent support and briefings, and I thank them very much for it. I congratulate the member for Cunningham on the manner in which he chaired Estimates Committee E. He was professional—

Mr Palaszczyk: He's a good bloke.

Mr GILMORE: He is a good bloke, as I am told by the honourable member for Inala. He was professional, he kept order, and I believe that the committee was a success because of it.

Contrary to the reservation in the report, I personally hold the committee process as important. Indeed, I believe it is very important. It is a great opportunity for members to get into and become involved in the budgetary process. Clearly, honourable members who were involved on both sides had done some homework. They also held this process as important, and I appreciate their cooperation on the day. There was a real cooperative spirit and it was a very important day.

During his earlier contribution, the honourable member for Mount Isa indicated that he believes that the Estimates committee process is an opportunity for the Minister to demonstrate knowledge of the department. That is true. It is also an opportunity for the Opposition to probe and to test and to generally ensure that the portfolio is being properly administered and managed. To the greater part, this was so, although I must express some deep disappointment at the petty and, might I say, childish petulant tone of some of the questions. Some were personal in nature and clearly directed at

individual officers of my department rather than being an attempt to look at the broader budgetary strategies and programs. Sadly, the member for Mount Isa demonstrated his obsession with trivia and therefore much of the potential of the committee was lost.

During his contribution, the member for Fitzroy again raised the matter of the implementation of the recommendations of the warden's report—and so he ought. It is absolutely reasonable that he do so, and I am happy to respond once again to that question. The Budget provides sufficient funds for the process, and all of the demands for funds will be met. In respect of the inspectorate—I can give an absolute assurance in that regard. As late as Monday of this week, I raised the matter with the Cabinet, and I have been assured by the Cabinet that the report will be implemented and fully funded. There is no question about that. Might I say that there is no want of dedication to this task and no want of money to fulfil it. No amount of posturing will change that. I might add that as recently as this last week, I have spoken with union representatives about this matter. I take this opportunity to thank them for their unstinting cooperation and their work and support during this whole process of the implementation of the Moura report.

There have been and will always be disappointments in the highly complex negotiations surrounding the development of a Budget. My department, however, fared reasonably well, with funding provided for those important core areas such as resource development and AIRDATA acquisition. The department is soundly placed to provide excellent service to the community and the Government, particularly in the highly complex areas of legislative change. It is well known that the department is presently undergoing an organisational and procedural audit to ensure that this is the most efficient and effective administrative machine in the whole of Government. Typical problems have been unearthed. As to ministerial or departmental correspondence—it is a fact that there are 11 people who read it going down and five people at least who read it coming back. These changes will be brought about, because it is inevitable that they must be.

I conclude by commending the parliamentary staff for their professional attention to the needs of the committee throughout the whole of the hearings of Estimates Committee E.

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (2.35 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to join this debate.

This coalition Government has put the forestry and sawmilling industries under threat, firstly through the Howard Federal Government's national agreement to retain 15 per cent of our native forests existing prior to the year 1750, which the Honourable Ministers Mr Perrett and Mr Hobbs will sign in the very near future. This is in contradiction to everything that this Government promised in the run-up to and since the last election.

For example, an article quoting Mr Perrett which appeared in the *Maryborough-Hervey Bay Chronicle* of 25 March 1996 carried the heading "Lock-up of forests doomed". In addition, in answer to my question in this Parliament, the Honourable Minister, Mr Perrett, stated that the coalition would not be supporting the locking up of 15 per cent of forests which existed pre-1750 and reminded me that this was not approved by the former Labor Government, either. That is not what this coalition Government is saying now. Nor is it what Mr Truss, the Federal member for Wide Bay, is saying. What the Government is saying now is that it will sign the agreement supporting the 15 per cent retention but with some flexibility. I ask: what does this mean to those in the timber industry? No longer is the Howard Government's agreement to be binned; no longer is it doomed. It is going to be signed by this Government, in spite of all the promises given to the timber industry prior to the election. This is just one more broken promise. The coalition won a lot of votes from the timber industry at the last election on the false promises that it gave. I can assure members opposite that they will not fool the timber workers again.

The second threat to forestry and the timber industry as a whole is the intention of this Government to privatise our forest resources, as recommended in the FitzGerald Commission of Audit. This has the potential to do as much damage as Howard's 15 per cent lock-up. I want to quote from an article in the *Courier-Mail* headed "Privatisation of forestry would kill small millers and small towns". It outlines the views of Mr Rod McInnes, the Manager of the QTB. The article states—

"Hundreds of small timber mills will be wiped out if the State Government adopts FitzGerald audit recommendations to privatise state forests, the timber industry and conservationists say.

Of Queensland's 335 timber mills, all but a handful operate in publicly owned native forests.

They are mostly small, labour-intensive operations making up about 15

per cent of the state's annual \$1.4 billion timber production.

In a submission obtained by The Courier-Mail, the Queensland Timber Board has warned the Government of far-reaching consequences of privatisation, including the decimation of rural communities and cuts to services such as schools and hospitals which mill closures could trigger."

This will affect the areas represented by members opposite. The article continues—

"Vince FitzGerald's Queensland Commission of Audit suggested a broad privatisation strategy."

Members opposite have agreed to go along with it. It continues—

"'The current system of pricing and allocating the native forest outputs reduces revenue and encourages inefficient use of forest products,' the audit said.

Board manager Rod McInnes said country communities"—

Mr PERRETT: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the House. I feel deeply aggrieved that he is making those statements—

Mr DOLLIN: I am very pleased with the elevation in status. I am now the Minister!

Mr PERRETT:—that we have agreed to go along with the 15 per cent lock-up, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DOLLIN: Am I the Minister?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister has asked the member to withdraw.

Mr DOLLIN: May I carry on?

The CHAIRMAN: No, the Minister asked the member to withdraw.

Mr DOLLIN: Withdraw what?

A Government member interjected.

Mr DOLLIN: I suggest the member go up and get a kiss off Pauline. Perhaps he will leave that to his partner. I withdraw. The article continues—

"Large companies would be expected to win any tender process, leaving small operators without a resource and the previously decentralised industry would become centralised."

Members should look at the headline of the article that I have in my hand. It reads: "Lock-up of forests doomed". The article states—

"The former Federal Government's National Forest Policy will be dumped.

Queensland Primary Industries Minister Trevor Perrett said that the State Government would not be party to locking up 15 per cent of pre-1750 forests.

Speaking at a Forest Industry Training and Education"—

Time expired.

Hon. H. W. T. HOBBS (Warrego—Minister for Natural Resources) (2.40 p.m.): That is a pretty hard act to follow! I take the opportunity to thank the member for Mount Isa and the member for Inala for their comments on the way our Estimates committee was conducted. I especially pay tribute to DNR officers and my ministerial staff for the hard work that they put into the process. The briefing was very professional and very skilled and it was very much appreciated. I believe that was recognised throughout the whole of the Government.

The Estimates process gave MLAs the opportunity to question matters of importance to them and the Queenslanders they represent. The Estimates process gave all members and Ministers the opportunity to explain those issues. I did not want to have a confrontationist attitude towards the process. It was an information-gathering exercise for both sides of the Chamber which also allowed me to explain where my department is at and what it is doing.

The restructuring of the old department to become the Department of Natural Resources has occurred quickly and reasonably smoothly. As the Budget Overview mentions, DNR and DPI together will go in a new direction by sharing corporate services. We believe that will be of great service to the department and to the people of Queensland. It will show that, with cooperation between departments, many new initiatives can be addressed and put in place quickly.

Much has been said about the high-priority planning studies for water storage in Queensland, which I believe is very important. Funding for that probably received the highest profile of any part of the department. The member for Inala, the shadow Minister, talked about ownership of water. I want to make it quite clear that ownership of water will always remain with the Crown. Distribution and, in some instances, ownership of related structures is another matter. However, water will always be fully owned by the people of Queensland. We must be careful how we deal with it. The price of water will increase. My

general philosophy is that we should not have to build a dam every five years and that we should be able to provide volumes of water at a price that will be reasonable in the long term. If we let things go on the way they are now, the price of water will blow out completely. We would find that, within maybe five years, there would be a huge jump in the cost that people would find very difficult to pay. We need to plan for the long term and to make sure that we are able to put in place procedures that allow for the best use of water. Water is a very scarce commodity; we must make sure that we do that properly.

As has already been mentioned by an Opposition member, the Cooper cotton issue is very important. I want to make it quite clear that I have not been taking sides on this issue. I believe that I have run the due process in a fair and honourable manner. I have done that because if, at the end of the day, the matter goes to court, everything must be fair and above board. I strongly support the people of that district. In fact, legislation will be introduced into this Parliament that will allow a Minister or a chief executive to make a decision on an important issue such as that and perhaps reject an application on some basis of fact.

I must mention the drivel we heard from the member for Maryborough about forestry. I have never heard so much garbage and so many misconceptions from a person who sits in this Chamber. Nobody in their right mind would allow all of those towns to close down. There will be flexibility within the system, and we have an agreement with the industry to make sure that they have security for their members.

Mr Dollin: But you are going to sign the agreement.

Mr HOBBS: Where was the member when the Labor Party stopped logging at Fraser Island? Where was he then? What happened to all those workers? What happened to all of that money?

Time expired.

Hon. G. N. SMITH (Townsville) (2.45 p.m.): This is the third year of Estimates and I believe that to some extent the process has been refined. I support the comments of those members who see it as a beneficial exercise for both the Government and the Opposition. It is also beneficial for departments because it is, as a previous speaker mentioned, something of a stocktake. I believe that in many instances, without the necessary Estimates process, some Ministers

would not be as well informed about their departments as they are.

When I think back to the years when Estimates committees did not exist, I acknowledge that the Estimates process demystifies the operations of Government and the departments. I believe that in those days, the Parliament was nowhere near as well informed as it is now. I would illustrate that by saying that few people really knew what went on in this place. Becoming a member of Parliament is a big step, and I could recommend to a new member nothing better than to read the full record of the Estimates debate because it certainly illustrates the essential functions of Government. While I am mentioning the *Hansard* record of the Estimates committees, I think it would have been better had the questions on notice been included in the record. That would have made it a little easier to follow for those people who were not present at the hearing. Perhaps someone might take some note of that.

I refer to the comments on valuations and the recent report by Len Evans, that former well-respected member of the Lands Department. With some amusement, I notice that the Minister for Natural Resources is now quite enthusiastically embracing the concept of site valuations. There is a lot of merit to site valuations. When the rest of the country has gone that way, there is probably very little else that this Government can do. However, I am amused because, when site valuations were first floated, it was certainly portrayed by the then Opposition as a bogeyman and something to be avoided at all costs. Still, we will learn with experience and move on. I am not going to take the Minister to task over that.

There have been problems with valuations and particularly with inspections. I know that many people are not satisfied because they do not see a valuer every year, which is impractical. I am aware that the trial using private firms to do valuations has proceeded, and while I think that the department must always do some of this themselves, there is no doubt that there is a case to fully evaluate that and to see whether in fact the private sector can provide it in a more satisfactory service.

However, still on the subject of valuations, I noticed the Minister's comments on IVAS. He was indicating that there were problems that had been ironed out. That is not my impression of what happened. It is my impression that IVAS has very serious problems. It is not something new; it has been around for many years—probably over 10

years. Frankly, my impression was that the existing program is sooner or later going to crash unless a tremendous amount of money is spent on it or a new program is developed. I was not entirely satisfied with the Minister's comments that those faults could be corrected. I will be watching that very closely, because it is something that is very important and it is something that happened before the member became the Minister. Treasury had intended to use the IVAS program for its valuations for land tax, but it does not have enough confidence in that program to use it for that purpose. That is wrong; there should be just the one valuation program that can be used by all departments.

The Minister also talked about electronic progress and he criticised the previous Government for its timing in introducing the automated titles service. He said that we should have introduced it at a time when registrations were not high. Of course, that is impossible. That also took place over a number of years, and the fact that there happened to be a boom at the time that the process was introduced was circumstantial and it could not be avoided.

Time expired.

Mr MALONE (Mirani) (2.50 p.m.): I rise with pleasure to speak about the Estimates committee system. It was the first time that I have actively participated in that committee stage—

An Opposition member: And probably the last.

Mr MALONE: I thank the honourable member. I appreciate those comments.

Firstly, I congratulate the chairman of our committee. I thought that the honourable member for Cunningham did an excellent job. He was very conciliatory and very concerned about the opportunity for Opposition members to have a fair say. We were all pleased about that. I congratulate also all members of the committee, including Opposition members, on the way in which they conducted themselves. I thought that, overall, the committee did achieve quite an outstanding outcome. I recollect the day when the first committee was put into place two years ago. I sat through the Primary Industries section with former member and then Primary Industries Minister, Ed Casey. I am sure that most honourable members would agree that we have come a long way since then. I would not like to speak ill of Mr Casey, but in those days it was difficult for Opposition members to gain very much out of the committee at all.

I congratulate also the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry, the Minister for Natural Resources, the Minister for Mines and Energy and their staff for the way in which they conducted themselves. I was appreciative of the way in which they answered questions. Even though at odd times some of the questions were a bit picky or inconsequential, those persons did the best they could to handle those questions in a responsible manner.

I intend to comment very briefly on all portfolios. In relation to Mines and Energy—we are in exciting times in relation to Mines and Energy, particularly in relation to gas pipelines. I refer in particular to the Pandora gas pipeline to Townsville, which opens up a whole new era of power generation and ancillary industries for north Queensland. I refer also to the link to Mount Isa, which will bring on line very high-quality fertiliser with reacting sulfuric acid—the by-product from Mount Isa Mines—into Western Mining's development at Phosphate Hill. As a result, we can probably export very high-quality fertiliser from Australia, as opposed to the present situation in which we are a huge importer of fertiliser. As I said, this is a very exciting time for primary industries and the mining industry.

In relation to Natural Resources—this is another interesting sector. The coalition parties have put into place some very good initiatives, including the Water Infrastructure Task Force, which is identifying dam sites all around Queensland. It is identifying the priorities and having them developed. Any person who has any real thought about the future of Australia would have to say that, because this is one of the driest continents in the world, we really have to sit down and think about the direction that we take in relation to the conservation of water. These initiatives are going to make a heck of a difference for future generations.

The duplicate certificate for land title is a very important aspect of Natural Resources. We are now very secure in the knowledge that, when we do transfer land, the land tenure is secure. That was a real problem for the previous Government. We have actually been able to solve that problem to a certain extent. The capping of the valuations has also been a very positive aspect. Some of the valuations in my electorate are quite unbelievable. Some of them have involved over 100 per cent increases and differentials between two identical blocks of land. That is very hard to justify when one thinks about how valuations should be done.

In relation to Primary Industries—the live cattle export enhancement project is one of the things that will turn the beef industry around in Australia, particularly in Queensland. Our beef industry is in crisis. The only bright spot on the horizon is live beef exports. Unless we achieve that and are able to sustain it—

Time expired.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (2.55 p.m.): I have listened to several Government members say how great it has been to see the DPI reorganised and new people employed. The only problem is that others have been sacked. There are sections in Government offices—DPI offices or Natural Resources offices—where the lights have been turned off, the doors locked, and those services not provided. I am referring to information centres in Bundaberg and in other areas. The people who have been specially trained as the coordinators of those areas have not been able to retain their tenure. In other words, no-one is servicing those information centres. It is all right for the Government to say that it is going to put on people here and there, but that is the first place where many members of the public—mainly primary producers—get their initial information. I believe that the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for Natural Resources should look at this issue to make certain that those centres are reopened. Those information centres should be open. I believe that, because of a big changeover of funding between the DPI and Natural Resources, that sector has missed out. I believe also that it is more than Bundaberg that has missed out. They are very good centres that should be kept open.

Mr Perrett: The information is very important. I take that on board.

Mr CAMPBELL: But the problem exists. That room is locked because they have no-one to service it.

When I read page 331 of the Estimates committee transcript, I noticed that the Minister for Natural Resources said that the tree-clearing guidelines were expected to be made available about June 1997. However, on 7 October, just two weeks afterwards, the tree-clearing guidelines had already been changed. Now primary producers can get rid of 80 per cent of the trees on their land, whereas previously it was 70 per cent. It is marvellous that the Government is saying, "No, we are still working on the guidelines, but you can now cut down more trees. We will change them as we go along."

Tree clearing is a very ill-conceived concept, because from the start it was never going to get industry support. Tree clearing is only part of what I regard as a tree management program. That is what we are looking at—the overall part that trees play in farm management. Clearing trees, maintaining trees and utilising trees should really be part of property management planning. It is important to know what trees can be removed and what trees should be provided.

Tree management involves tree planting, tree selection, tree management, tree preservation—which is where I believe the tree-clearing guidelines come in—and tree utilisation in relation to timber and fodder. I believe that to take one aspect and make that the most important goal for tree management is an incorrect concept. We should wait to see what part tree clearing plays in overall property management.

There are important aspects to this issue. If we allow trees to be removed—whether it is 70 per cent or 80 per cent—there will be soil and water erosion and salinity problems, and gully stabilisation programs will need to be implemented. That type of degradation can occur. We should be considering all aspects of tree management rather than just concentrating on tree-clearing guidelines. Until we get that concept changed, and until we see the importance of trees in overall property management, we will not achieve the proper concept.

I am concerned that the guidelines have been changed when they have not been properly thought out. In this Parliament we should be taking the time to be sure that we have proper tree management. Tree-clearing guidelines are only one aspect of that. We should be implementing the program properly, not in a very haphazard way. As I said, already the tree-clearing guidelines have been changed. I believe that this will be to the detriment of the whole of our natural resources in Queensland.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee F Report No. 1

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question is—

"That Report No. 1 of Estimates Committee F be adopted."

Mr J. N. GOSS (Aspley) (3 p.m.): It was indeed an honour to have the privilege of chairing Estimates Committee F. I must add

that the committee functioned very well, with all members of the committee asking probing and interesting questions. The committee worked very much as a team. I thank the committee staff, Rob Hansen, Rob McBride and Tania Jackman for their guidance and assistance. I acknowledge the marathon commitment of the Hansard staff and I compliment them on their performance. I also thank the departmental staff who attended from Works and Housing, Transport, Main Roads and Queensland Rail.

The Estimates committee hearings certainly showed how the former ALP Government boasted about housing funding and housing construction programs and the funds it made available to build and purchase housing. When we look at the figures for the previous Government, there were going to be an additional 1,750 houses, plus another 450 in the accelerated capital works program; yet, after being in Government for eight months Labor had commenced construction of only 777 houses. That fell far short of the estimate. Through the On The Spot Purchase Program, we purchased 549 houses in the remainder of the year. There was a great difference between the funding and what was anticipated. Unfortunately, there was a lot of talk about commencements. Commencements do not mean anything. One can put a peg in a block of ground and say, "Yes, we've commenced work on this house." In the Estimates we have to consider houses that have been purchased totally or commenced and finished. It should not be a case of having something left over from the previous year and doing minimal work in the current year to make it look as though there were an extremely high number of houses when the finished product for people to move into was not available.

Funding did become quite an issue during the hearings. When we came into office, we found that care had not always been taken when awarding contracts in the housing area. As the Minister said during the hearings, G. J. Constructions was a triple bankrupt and had just gone into bankruptcy for the fourth time, while building millions of dollars of State housing. That shows that there was very little care taken with public money. A slight delay in construction occurred while we checked out contractors thoroughly; otherwise, we risked throwing away hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' money. Money was being used from the Building Services Authority's insurance scheme.

That insurance scheme needs a review. Perhaps the provision of that insurance should

be put on the open market, because good builders are paying the same premium as bad builders. The bad builders are not penalised. A good builder should be able to get a lower insurance premium. Bad drivers have to pay a lot more for their car insurance and we should treat builders in the same manner.

The Building Services Authority advised the Government that 14 contracts should not be proceeded with because of doubts about the ability of builders to fulfil their contractual commitments. That would have slipped through in the past. I compliment the Minister on bringing in strict guidelines.

Time expired.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.05 p.m.): I thank the committee under the chairmanship of the member for Aspley. I actually thought his chairmanship was constructive. He showed a fair amount of commonsense and discretion. The discretion shown by the chairman was unlike that shown by the chairs of a number of other committees on which I served. I also would like to thank the research staff and Hansard.

In the time available I will raise a number of points relating to the Transport portfolio. The most concerning point for non-Government members of the committee was the cost of the Sunshine Motorway. During the Estimates committee hearings the full cost was revealed. The cost for Queensland taxpayers is not \$200m; it is actually \$394m. Under previous arrangements, the tolls on the Gateway Motorway would have ceased in the year 2013. Unfortunately, because of the decision to reduce the toll, those tolls will continue until the year 2016. It is a bit of a double whammy: the cost of removing the toll from the Sunshine Coast Motorway is \$400m and the reduction in tolls on the Gateway Motorway extends the debt to \$440m and Queensland taxpayers will have to pay a toll on that road until the year 2016. While serving a purpose of reducing the number of trucks in the city, the reduction in the Gateway toll will certainly not do anything for those drivers of ordinary vehicles who use it because 20 cents is hardly a reduction at all and will be picked up in the next CPI increase, as was stated in the hearing.

I was also concerned about the Minister's complete lack of understanding of what competition policy is all about in Queensland Rail. He rolls around the State saying that he will be keeping out third-party access. He reinforced that in the Estimates committee hearings, yet contradicted himself time and

time again when the officers in Queensland Rail reinforced with him that they were working towards world's best practice, which would allow the opening up of Queensland Rail to competition. Unfortunately, the Minister did not realise and understand that point until about two-thirds of the way through the Estimates committee hearing, when he started to realise what it was about and that he was contradicting his officers. He then started to say that in some areas third-party access probably would be available. That was the first time that he admitted that.

The same occurred with workshops. During the July election campaign and the Mundingburra by-election campaign and since then, he has rolled about the State saying that no jobs would be lost in workshops. He was quite vocal in saying that in Townsville during the Mundingburra campaign. He has now had to admit that further job losses in the workshop area will occur, from the 1,844 jobs that exist currently to somewhere around 1,100 by the year 1998. Significant job losses will also occur in the freight group. Time and time again he said that that would not happen. In the Estimates committee hearings he had to finally acknowledge that point. For the information of rail workers I point out that he was very comfortable with the fact that those job losses from the workshop group would continue until 1998. He was also very comfortable with the fact that, in the freight group, a reduction in jobs will occur from 6,300 to around 4,000 by the year 2000.

During the Estimates committee hearings he was unable to explain or shed any light on how the Government planned to fund the Pacific Highway expansion beyond the first year. The funding for the first year depends on a private infrastructure sale—moneys coming from Suncorp or somewhere else. No forward estimate was provided to the Estimates committee for funding of the eight-lane highway beyond the first year. There is no clear guarantee that the future cost of that road will not be met from the roads budget. The Government may find that it does not have infrastructure sales to carry that cost, and that will adversely affect the roads budget, which is already copping a pounding because the Federal Government has walked away from funding for the National Highways Program. Already regional roads are under pressure and the Minister was unable to explain that.

An alarming concern that I have is the commitment by this Minister in the budget of only \$8m for busways. He has clothed himself in public transport, yet \$8m will not buy

anything more than a number of studies to actually determine where busways may go. That money will provide no infrastructure to build a busway—not one bit of bitumen pavement. In other words, the Minister has scaled down the Labor Party's commitment of \$20m a year for the next five years for busways to \$8m this year, with no guarantee of further funding. Again, nowhere was the Minister able to actually articulate or outline from where those funds were coming to build busways.

So in the Estimates process, I found a Minister who was lacking in detail and knowledge in a range of important areas that are of ongoing need for the people of Queensland.

Mr BAUMANN (Albert) (3.11 p.m.): As a first-time member of Parliament and a back bench member of the coalition Government, it is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to the report on the deliberations of Estimates Committee F. Under the chairmanship of the honourable member for Aspley, Mr John Goss, the proceedings were at all times civil and at some times perhaps even amicable. I concur with the thanks and praise that the honourable chairman gave to all the departmental and parliamentary staff who were involved in the functions of this committee. I also recognise the contribution to the process by the honourable Opposition members for Chatsworth, Capalaba and South Brisbane and my parliamentary colleagues in Government, the chairman, the member for Aspley, Mr John Goss, and the member for Toowoomba North, Mr Graham Healy.

Some of the points discussed that are of particular interest to a great many people of Queensland included the responsibility, under the Public Works and Housing portfolio, of the Queensland Building Services Authority of the protection of subcontractors, to which reference was made by the chairman. The housing accommodation program was another area to receive attention. In that regard, it was pleasing to note that the department has given priority to people leaving institutions and to people with disabilities.

In the examination of Q-Fleet and the construction of mobile dental units, I note that Q-Fleet obviously competes with private sector builders in this niche market. Although I note that this market is expanding, it may well be an area to be performance audited at some stage to confirm its viability.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Program benefits from an expenditure of \$18.7m in 1995-96 and the

provision of 121 additional houses in 1996-97 as a result of that initiative. If nothing else, it will certainly ease the current 12-year waiting list in that area.

In relation to the Transport portfolio and the disproportionate attention that the removal of the toll from the Sunshine Motorway and the reduction of the toll on the Gateway Bridge attracted from the Opposition members of the committee, one could speculate on a return to full toll charges on both of these carriageways in the event of a return to a Labor Government in Queensland.

The success of the Gold Coast rail line thus far has been recognised. It is a great service. The future extension to Robina was quoted as being on time and on budget, which is great news for all of those commuters who live south of Helensvale. Noise barriers on this new route from Beenleigh to Robina have been a source of concern to a lot of constituents who live along the corridor. An assurance was given to continue the program of monitoring of construction where necessary. That assurance will most certainly be appreciated by those people who see the need for that program.

Queensland Transport regards the Pacific motorway and busway program as being very much on the agenda. The completion of both of those projects will most certainly be welcomed by many thousands of travellers, even though they have been a long time coming.

The introduction of speed cameras has received a lot of attention. I believe that the introduction of these cameras into Queensland should result in a significant reduction in our road toll and an estimated saving of some 7,900 bed days in our hospitals. The cost saving to our health and other related departments can be assessed as possibly being many millions of dollars. However, more importantly, I regard the saving of just one human life because of this initiative as making the introduction of speed cameras worthwhile. The new school transport safety package containing seven initiatives will be of great benefit. It will address the many concerns of parents of school children who use school transport. There are many more areas that I could cover but, because of the time allotted to me, I will stop there.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH
(Chatsworth) (3.15 p.m.): In speaking to the Estimates, I would like to concentrate on the Department of Public Works and Housing. I think that the Minister really did a very poor job in providing information to the committee and

answering the questions that were asked of him. The Minister seems to have this impression that he simply needs to open his mouth and say something—that that is okay. This morning, we saw the same thing occur. For about seven minutes, he stood in this place and simply raved on without answering the question at all. Then he sat down with a big smile on his face as though he had done well. The reality is that he was the only person who thought that he had done well. He reminds me a little bit of the king who wore no clothes and who told people that he looked good. Every time I see the Minister for Public Works and Housing get up and talk, that is who he reminds me of.

When I asked him the very first question in the Estimates, he said, "You do not know what you are talking about. We allocated \$17m more. I will ask Mr Waters to explain that a bit further." So Mr Waters said, "It is necessary to look at the whole equation and what we are talking about." He then went on to say, "In the last financial year, there was \$561m provided. In this financial year, there is \$534m., which is a reduction of only \$27m." So the Minister said to his public servant, "You explain how we are spending \$17m more this year." The public servant did not say, "Minister, I think that you are wrong, again", he just simply said, "I will explain to you what the figures are"—which he did—and then he said, "It is a reduction of only \$27m."

Then we go to the Program Statements and read the rubbish that the Minister gave us to read. Those Program Statements show that the department could not spend \$16m that was allocated for the purchase of land because of the depressed market conditions. Since I read the Program Statements, I have been talking to real estate agents and other people who are involved in the urban development industry. They have said to me, "Terry, you cannot be serious. Nobody would be so silly to say that you cannot spend money in depressed market conditions. That is the ideal time to buy real estate. That is the perfect time to buy real estate."

In two places in the Minister's Program Statements the justification for not spending money was not because there was a capital works freeze, it was because there were depressed market conditions. I ask everyone here to find a real estate agent, or a person who is involved in the property development industry who can tell me why, when prices are low and when the Government is trying to spend taxpayers' money, it is a bad time to buy. Here we have the king who wears no clothes. He probably believes the stuff that he

dished up to the committee in relation to that matter.

I refer now to the fact that the department is going to provide more houses this year. As we went through progressively one by one the number of houses that had been allocated last year—I had to take his department through them one by one—finally we found out that, in fact, 874 houses which were budgeted for in the last financial year were not provided. The money was there, but the houses were not provided. Yet the Minister releases statements that say, "We have done very well. It has been a great year, and we are going to have an even bigger year." Of course, the department can have a bigger year when it did not spend the money that was allocated to provide 874 homes for Queensland families last financial year and instead put it into its budget. So we had an officer of the Minister's department telling us that, this year, the department is going to allocate \$27m less for housing after the Labor Government had already funded 874 of those homes.

It is pretty easy to do that. It is also easy to see why the Minister could afford to give back \$114m of grant money to the Commonwealth. He was the first Minister ever to do that. It was unbelievable that the Minister would agree for that to happen. Once again, the Minister believes that he did well. If he believes that, he is the only person in Queensland who believes it. He has produced the worst ever result for people living in Housing Commission homes in Queensland. I suppose he goes to bed at night counting the houses that he believes that he is going to build. He certainly does not build them.

Time expired.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North) (3.20 p.m.): I have much pleasure in rising today to contribute to the debate in relation to the report on the Estimates of the budgets for the Department of Public Works and Housing and the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Estimates Committee F. Most of my comments will refer mainly to the Transport and Main Roads portfolio.

Firstly I will comment on some of the statements made by the Minister for Public Works and Housing during the hearing in relation to the estimated expenditure on community housing. The Minister indicated that spending on community housing is estimated to increase from \$35m in 1995-96 to \$110.5m in 1996-97. This amount, of course, is most welcome. It is very important that the Minister continues to hear the

thoughts of the many community steering committees which administer the funding in south-western Queensland. The Community Housing Commission is still in place and I ask the Minister, through that commission, to continue to listen to the many local authority representatives who serve on those committees throughout south-western and western Queensland. Those people have served on those committees for quite a few years and they are doing a pretty good job. They know their areas and the housing needs of the local communities. In the past, they have been accountable and honest in the administration of the funds. I simply ask the Minister to continue to listen to these people, their concerns and their suggestions.

In relation to the Estimates for the portfolio of Transport and Main Roads, I am pleased that the Government has committed itself to the expenditure of almost \$2 billion from the Consolidated Fund across Main Roads and Queensland Transport in 1996-97, including payments to Queensland Rail. As the Minister said at the hearing, this is a task which he approaches with great pride because the Transport portfolio is vital to the economic and social wellbeing of all communities in this State.

The committee also heard the Government's commitment to integration which will ensure that Main Roads, Queensland Transport and Queensland Rail will continue to work together to achieve the most viable transport solutions. I was particularly pleased to learn of the Government's pledge to conduct ongoing consultation with the community in relation to the draft integrated regional transport plan for south-east Queensland, which will continue over the next few weeks. As well as the community briefings in places such as Brisbane Ipswich, Maroochydore, Southport and my own electorate of Toowoomba, the integrated regional transport plan has been placed on the Internet and Queensland Transport information telephone lines are now available.

I note with interest some comments made by the Opposition members of the committee in their statement of reservations and, in particular, the reference to the disbanding of the road transport division of Q-Link. I fail to see the significance of this one sentence statement when, if Opposition members cared to look, this is clearly identified in coalition policy. It was in black and white before the 1995 State election and it is a direct response to the concerns of private transport operators who suffered for too long under the previous

Government because they were denied access to what clearly should be a private sector domain.

One of the very good initiatives that was highlighted and spoken about at length by the Minister during the hearing process was the Government's decision, announced in the Budget, to enhance the old Schoolsafe program. Under this budget, the Safest Program package will consist of Safest guidelines, Safest subsidy schemes, the Safe Routes to School Program, the School Crossing Supervisor scheme, Safest resource kits and Safest public information. These initiatives encapsulate the recommendations of the School Transport Safety Consultative Committee and will go a long way to addressing the many concerns of parents around the State, namely, the safety of their children going to and coming home from school.

I make mention of the announcement in the Budget, and subsequently through questioning during the Estimates hearing, of the introduction of speed cameras into Queensland. I know that there is still some concern in the community that they may be regarded as simply a revenue raising measure. I recall yesterday that the member for Gladstone raised the issue during her contribution to the debate on another Estimates report and in subsequent media statements. I recall the answer given by the Minister in the hearing at the time. He said that he believed that with the introduction of speed cameras—and I think that the member for Albert mentioned this—it is estimated that some 7,900 hospital bed days per year may be saved. More importantly, it is also estimated that speed cameras could save up to 70 lives on Queensland roads.

One of the most quotable quotes of the Estimates hearing came from the Minister who said that dead people do not have any problems; the maimed and injured lying in hospital beds around that State with their loved ones caring for them are the ones who have problems. I believe that all members of this House should take a bipartisan approach to the introduction of speed cameras. We should extol their virtues as a life saver and an initiative to reduce stress and trauma from horrific road accidents.

I congratulate both Ministers who appeared before the Estimates committee, particularly as it was the first time for both of them and as they had only been in their jobs for a relatively short period prior to the budgetary and Estimates procedures. I also

congratulate those on the research staff and my colleagues on the committee.

Time expired.

Ms BLIGH (South Brisbane) (3.25 p.m.): This was my first experience of Estimates committees and I found the process an interesting one. The Estimates process gives non-Government members an opportunity to explore the Budget papers and to get a better picture of the real story. That was not always the case.

In Estimates Committee F, one of the things that astounded me as a newcomer to the Estimates process was the inability of the Minister for Public Works and Housing to answer a single question from Government members, with the exception of one. I have never encountered somebody who could not answer their own dorothy dixers. That stood in stark contrast to the previous Minister for Administrative Services, the Honourable Glen Milliner, who in last year's Estimates committee took 109 questions, answered 106 himself, referred two to his public servants and took one on notice. That performance stands in stark contrast to the pathetic performance of the Minister for Public Works and Housing, who was unable to answer a single dorothy dixer from Government members.

Why someone would refuse to take the opportunity to give the good news is even more extraordinary. What was exposed in the Estimates process and in the Budget papers, as I have outlined previously in my discussion of the Budget, was, of course, the deceit of both the Treasurer and this Minister in relation to the capital works freeze. The Budget papers have revealed that the cost of that capital works freeze was a total of \$406m. The Minister used the opportunity to repeat the deceit that there was a \$240m black hole in the Budget, which has been exposed as another lie.

Estimates Committee F heard a number of statements from the Minister, but I guess the most extraordinary and the one that set the tone for the way that he has performed in his portfolio was early on, when he said—

"We were not prepared, at the very bottom of the trough of the building cycle, to continue with a multimillion-dollar Capital Works Program when subcontractors were dropping like flies."

Like the statements that the member for Chatsworth has alluded to, that statement begs a question about the nous of this Minister. If a Government is not prepared to put money into a Capital Works Program when

the building industry is at the bottom of its cycle, when indeed would it be prepared to do so? Would the Minister wait for the top of the cycle? Is that when he would act? The effect of that, of course, is to lose any opportunity for Government to have a counter-cyclical effect on the industry. It means that the Government is actually paying top dollars for labour, top dollars for material and top dollars for the capital works that they are seeking. That is the kind of business acumen that this Minister has brought to his portfolio.

As noted in the statement of reservations, on a number of occasions the Minister was obliged to, in fact, confirm the freeze. In one extraordinary case, he used Roma Street as an example of the basis on which the coalition Government had decided to freeze projects. I am sure that he now regrets the comments that he made to Estimates Committee F in relation to Roma Street, because he actually confirmed that the \$35m that had been set aside by the previous Labor Government to fund a green lung project for the inner city had been abandoned under his stewardship. He confirmed that the project had been revisited and that he was looking for a revenue neutral outcome which would be based on residential and commercial interests. Of course, one cannot get a revenue neutral outcome with the kind of broad public space that was envisaged by the previous Government. Revenue neutral can only be achieved when the Minister flogs off all the public land to his developer mates and they overdevelop the site as outlined in the proposals that were submitted by his department to the Brisbane City Council.

The Minister can squirm, the Minister can say what he likes, the Minister can blame every bureaucrat in his department, but the fact is that the project was due to be allocated \$35m in this Budget. It has only received \$500,000 for the next financial year, a sum which will buy nothing on that site. Nothing could be a clearer indication of the fact that the Government and the Minister have abandoned the project in its previous form, which was understood by the people of this State and the people of Brisbane to be a public space available to them.

Subsequent statements made by Councillor David Hinchliffe this morning have indicated that the Minister's attempt to squirm out of this will, in fact, be further exposed. The communication that his department sent, in a desperate attempt to seek to withdraw any plans and to deny any knowledge of them, was sent only after the Premier had received a phone call from the Lord Mayor, who made it

quite clear that the proposal was an intolerable level of development. He communicated that directly to the Department of Public Works and Housing. It was only then that alarm bells started to sound.

Mr CARROLL (Mansfield) (3.30 p.m.): When this Government went to the polls in 1995, it did so with a proposal to eight lane the transport links between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Within six weeks of attaining Government, we announced plans for a world-class motorway between Logan and Nerang, with six lanes from Nerang to the Gold Coast. That was a bigger and better plan than that which was mentioned in a letter to some of my constituents in the electorate of Mansfield on 16 January 1996 from the then Minister, Jim Elder, in which he spoke about upgrading the Pacific Highway to six lanes during the next four years.

Later, this Government announced plans to build busways and high-occupancy vehicle lanes between Logan and Brisbane City, thereby complementing its motorway decision. We have previously heard members opposite saying that busways were their idea, but the difference is that this Government is getting on with the job. Our Government has set aside funding to begin work on these projects. We acknowledge that the decision was not easy to make. It has meant some hardship to some people, but this Government has dealt with people fairly, compassionately and with understanding—something which will continue to be demonstrated. In doing so, this Government has received the support of people such as the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, VETO, the Conservation Council and community groups.

The \$520m busway plan is essential to encourage people on the south side of Brisbane to use public transport. At present, I am told there are about 21,000 passengers during peak hour each day who catch buses into and out of Brisbane City from the southern suburbs. Within 10 years of the completion of that busway project, the number of people using those buses will increase to about 48,000 passengers in peak hour each day, because of the quicker service that is planned. What this means is that bus travel times in peak hour for the 12-kilometre journey from the Mount Gravatt campus of Griffith University at Kessels Road to the city will improve from an average of about 38 minutes to 18 minutes. On average, in the future we expect buses to be about 40 per cent quicker. At present, bus services from the city to areas such as Logan take about 37 minutes, but that time should drop to about 20 minutes

during peak hour. We shall have fewer cars on the road and better public transport. I commend the Minister for Transport for bringing this excellent plan to us so quickly upon assuming office.

Reducing the level of air pollution from car exhausts will be important in ensuring that future generations, particularly in the City of Brisbane, have cleaner air. That is why Mr Keogh, then President of VETO, the man who signed an agreement with the Premier, said of the Government's proposal to solve transport problems in south-east Queensland—

"We have to come up with an integrated approach to public transport planning in south/east Queensland, which involves a combination of road modifications and public transport."

Subsequently, Lord Mayor Jim Soorley said this—

"I am pleased that the State Government has recognised busways are the solution to Brisbane's growing traffic problems and that two of the south east Freeways lanes will be dedicated to public transport."

While speaking of what people said, let us have a look at what members of the Labor Party have said. On 4 September, in this House the member for Woodridge, Mr D'Arcy, said that he still supports another route. I wonder whether he is not referring to a revived or resurrected south coast motorway. What is more, on the same day Mr D'Arcy said that it should be a toll road. The member for Woodridge, the member for Logan and the member for Waterford were very keen to keep any major traffic solution to the eastern side of the Pacific Highway; they certainly did not want it in their electorates.

A series of Ministers for Transport in the former Labor Government were very wishy-washy on the issue of where the main transport route would go. There was even a suggestion in a late answer to a question on notice from me last year—the answer was delivered on 21 December—which indicated that the then Minister had no idea of what the solution would be. The real problem for the people of the electorate of Mansfield was that, while the former Labor Government was toing and froing about whether to build a south coast motorway, it bought up over \$32.8m worth of real estate in the electorate of Mansfield and further south which now has to be put back on the market. The local real estate market has been ruined by that acquisition and the threat of the sale of those properties.

Time expired.

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (3.36 p.m.): A number of matters discussed in the report of Estimates Committee F concern me. One is the inability of the Minister to explain where the future funding for the extravagant and futile proposal to eight lane the least-used section of the Pacific Highway would come from after next June. Another was that the lifting of all of the toll on the Sunshine Motorway was bound to impact on the lifespan of the tolls on the Gateway and southern motorways. Only in the USA and Italy are important ring-roads such as these subject to tolls.

To relieve the pressure on Brisbane roads, particularly for heavy transport, it is essential that the tolls on these important roads be lifted as soon as possible. When public transport is available as an option, it is quite legitimate to impose a toll on new motorways which only duplicate existing roads, such as the Sunshine Motorway from the Bruce Highway to Mooloolaba and Maroochydore, and also on any motorways to the Gold Coast or Caloundra which may be built in future, as a means of putting a brake on fossil fuel use.

I particularly wish to draw attention to the need to improve the present arterial road system in Brisbane, which was not catered for. I ask that funds be provided for grade separation where major ring-roads cross the radials. I cite Mains and Kessels Roads, Macgregor and Gympie and Beams Roads at Carseldine, and also Beaudesert and Browns Plains Roads, work which we had proposed and which the Main Roads Department is now moving to construct.

The replacement of level crossings is also a crucial issue which must be attended to, and none is more pressing than the Coopers Plains level crossing, on the grounds of both congestion and safety. The upgrading of Beaudesert Road is long overdue. I urge the Minister to give his attention to that matter. Beaudesert Road is the old highway to Sydney and one day will return to this role as the Gold Coast becomes out of bounds to through heavy transport.

I hope that the Transport Department makes the decision quickly on the foreseen need for a third rail line from Salisbury to Beenleigh, which will become a certainty if Expo is to come to the Coomera area in a few years' time. At present, there are only two tracks in the area, and that is not satisfactory. It is causing problems for local residents, who are in doubt about what will happen to their properties.

Another problem is that only \$8m is provided in the Estimates this year for busways. This is a totally inadequate amount. Unless the construction of busways is commenced immediately, we will not see the sorts of improvements that everyone is talking about. The member for Mansfield spoke in glowing terms about how the Government is doing something about busways. For the information of the honourable member, I point out that all the Government is doing is putting \$8m in the budget for design and planning—nothing for construction. That is just not good enough. Everyone knows that it is necessary to put in busways right now, not in the future.

I was very pleased to hear the Minister speaking about restricting third-party access to Queensland Rail. That is one of the most disastrous suggestions that I have ever heard of in my time in the political arena and in public life. I concur with the Minister's belief that third-party access to Queensland Rail should be denied. I hope that he finds a solution to that problem. What a disaster third-party access would be! Public transport is not a business; it is a service. Until the Governments of Australia wake up to that fact and accept it, we will see a ridiculous expansion into Australia of the Thatcherism, Reaganomics and the Damoclean swords we have seen overseas. We have to accept that there are environmental imperatives as well as economic truths. We must reduce the use of fossil fuel and see that there is less pollution and ozone damage.

Time expired.

Hon. R. T. CONNOR (Nerang—Minister for Public Works and Housing) (3.41 p.m.): First I would like to congratulate the honourable member for Aspley on his chairmanship of Estimates Committee F. I take this opportunity to place on record my appreciation and thanks to the senior officers of the Department of Public Works and Housing for the open and professional manner in which they informed the committee about the details of various program areas. I would also like to thank the Hansard staff.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr CONNOR: In response to the honourable member—as I interjected earlier, I can read just as easily as the previous Minister could. Since we were moving to the Federal model, I felt that as much as possible the public servants should be given the opportunity to answer questions under friendly fire. I felt that was only fair to them. Wherever

possible, I directed such questions to them and took the unfriendly fire myself.

I want to respond to some of the comments by the member for Chatsworth. I note that he is not in the Chamber, so I will go easy on him. It was quite obvious that he was totally unprepared for this debate, and he did not speak to his reservations contained in the report. He obviously has a deficient memory on what actually happened during the hearing.

Mr Perrett: A very selective memory.

Mr CONNOR: A very selective memory. As a result, he descended to the gutter and made personal attacks. I might remind the former Minister that he held that position for eight months. If the number of commencements was only half, why is it that he does not take at least two-thirds of the blame?

In relation to the housing portfolio, I note that this year we will spend more than the previous Government did last year and the year before. That is the reality of it. The member for Chatsworth can toss around figures of \$115m or whatever he likes, but the fact is that this year we will spend more than was spent last year and the year before that. We are also targeting the longest waiting lists, and we are using case management and a number of other methods to do so. I have no doubt that we will secure a better outcome for public sector tenants than did the previous Government.

In relation to the member for Brisbane South—

Mr T. B. Sullivan: South Brisbane.

Mr CONNOR: South Brisbane—if the member wants to be pedantic. I guess what she should be called is "the mistress for half-truths", because she did the same thing as she did this morning and quoted only half a statement. The member failed to point out that, in responding to questions about capital works, I said that I was not prepared to continue down the path followed by the former Government, which saw subcontractors going under after the collapse of contractors such as G. J. Constructions. That is why we now require QBSA checks: so that we do not have quadruple bankrupts doing our business and causing the downfall of subcontractors.

As to the member's comments about the \$35m for the Roma Street redevelopment—it was unfunded. The former Government may have done some projections, but there was no funding in its Budget. The \$35m was not there. It was not in the 1995-96 Budget or in

the Forward Estimates. If it was funded, where was the money? It was not in the Budget.

Returning to the contents of the report—the statements regarding my refusal to guarantee the intake of 90 apprentices for Q-Build are inaccurate. What I did say was that I am doing my very best to recruit as many as I can, but because of the uncertainty surrounding the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement and because of the client department's unknown requirements, I cannot give a guarantee that 90 apprentices will be employed. However, I will do everything I can to reach that figure and to exceed it if possible.

As to the allegation that I was deliberately trying to——

Time expired.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay) (3.46 p.m.): I rise to speak on the report of Estimates Committee F. I will confine my remarks to the Transport and Main Roads portfolio. Firstly, I convey my thanks to the research staff, the Hansard staff, the parliamentary attendants, all public servants and my parliamentary colleagues who were involved in the Estimates process. The Estimates committee hearing into the Transport and Main Roads portfolio reinforced my view that the coalition Budget is a Budget of deceit and broken promises.

The broken promise delivered to the people of Mackay in the Budget is the scrapping of the \$8m allocated by the former Goss Labor Government for the construction of the marina at the Mackay Harbour and the associated redevelopment. The Minister had promised the people of Mackay that the coalition Government would honour the former Labor Government's commitment to this project. Indeed, at a meeting in May this year with the Minister, the Mayor of Mackay, Mr Gordon White, the Chairman of the Mackay Port Authority, Mr Ron Searle, port authority member Mr John Taylor and myself, the Minister reaffirmed his commitment and indicated again that funding would be made available to this project as long as the port authority would contribute its funding up front. The chairman of the port authority indicated the authority's willingness to commit its contribution up front and has confirmed that in writing.

To say that the people of Mackay were dismayed when they learned that the coalition had broken its promise by excluding funding from this year's Budget is an understatement. The project was seen by the people of Mackay as a catalyst for creating huge employment during the construction phase and ongoing

employment for people in tourism with the development of a resort/hotel complex which could accommodate up to 250 people and which would attract the lower end of the convention market. In fact, the Mackay Port Authority—the owner of the Mackay Airport—has approved the upgrading of the airport to take wide-body aircraft in anticipation that the marina and resort project will go ahead.

Even though the Minister had since indicated his continuing support, his response during questioning in the Estimates committee hearing has still not done anything to allay our fears. The Minister said—

"The reason that funding has not been carried over is that there are other important areas within the budget of Queensland Transport and Main Roads that we do recognise have to go ahead."

The Minister went on to indicate that he was still committed to the project; however, he could not guarantee funding in the 1997-98 budget, which would allow construction to commence within six months.

The local assessment committee made a recommendation to the Minister on 25 June 1996 on who the preferred developers of the marina and resort complex should be. This decision has been held up because the Minister has been unable to put the funding package together. Would-be developers have told me that further delays in putting together a funding package could jeopardise their willingness to invest in this great project. When questioned about funding delays, the Minister responded by saying—

"No-one is going to wait around while they wait for somebody to make a decision. If I was in the position of one of these developers and I was waiting for somebody to make a decision on where the funds were coming from, I would certainly get itchy feet and be looking for somewhere else to go."

This response has not given any encouragement to these developers. I just hope that if the Minister is successful in getting a funding package together, the developers will still be interested in the project.

Another concern to the people of Mackay is the possible sale of the Mackay Airport. As I mentioned earlier, the Mackay Airport is owned by the Mackay Port Authority. The Minister would not give a guarantee that the airport would not be sold. He asserted that the airport was not part of the Mackay Port Authority's core business and that the matter was under investigation. The Mackay Airport

has always been part of the local community and has always worked to ensure that Mackay was effectively promoted. Since local ownership in 1989 we have seen tremendous passenger growth from 130,436 passengers per year to 285,758 passengers in 1995-96. The port authority has built a new passenger terminal which is the envy of a lot of provincial cities.

The people of Mackay know what a tremendous job the port authority does in promoting Mackay and would be appalled at the thought that the ownership of the airport could move from local ownership to ownership by a foreign company whose board decisions affecting the operation and the general economic wellbeing of Mackay could be made in a boardroom as far away as Paris, Tokyo or New York. I call on the Minister to oppose vigorously the idea of selling off the Mackay Airport and obtain a funding package as soon as possible so that the Mackay marina development can become a reality. This will go some way in restoring his credibility and the credibility of his Government with the people of Mackay.

Time expired.

Hon. V. G. JOHNSON (Gregory—Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (3.51 p.m.): In rising to summarise Estimates Committee F relating to Queensland Transport and Main Roads, I put on record my sincere appreciation and thanks to the Chairman of Estimates Committee F, Mr John Goss, member for Aspley, the deputy chairperson, the Honourable Jim Elder, member for Capalaba, the other members, Mr Bill Baumann, member for Albert, Ms Anna Bligh, member for South Brisbane, Mr Graham Healy, member for Toowoomba North, the Honourable Terence Mackenroth, member for Chatsworth, research director, Mr Rob Hansen, research officer, Mr Rob McBride, and executive assistant, Ms Tania Jackman. I also place on record my sincere appreciation to my departmental heads and officers of the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Queensland Rail.

The National Competition Policy and how it affects the agenda of Queensland Rail has been bandied around this State for the seven or eight months that we have been in Government. Honourable members should remember that it was the Labor administration that put the third-party access agenda into the public arena and that the National Competition Policy was signed by both the former Labor Government in Canberra and the former Labor Government in Queensland. From day one, I

have said that the railways in this State have to make up ground in the coal and mineral lines. They have a five-year moratorium for that, and this Government will be doing everything in its power to make sure that Queensland Rail is the best railway in this State and this nation and that, at the end of five years, we will not have to be fighting third-party access. The members on the other side of the Chamber are the ones who created this dilemma. I can assure them that, as a result of our negotiations and our understanding of this network, this Government is going to build a greater and better railway.

There are many issues that I could mention. This Government has given a commitment to the northern line upgrade. Labor said that we would cut it. We are upgrading the central line. We are spending \$14m at Drummond. We have continued the allocation of \$560m to complete the upgrade of the northern line this year, and the \$52m allocation to the tilt-train. We have also allocated \$18m towards new signalling so that the tilt-train can be put in place by the middle of next year. These are all issues on which this Government is delivering, despite what has been said by members on the other side of the Chamber.

Passenger rail safety is another issue on which we have delivered and on which we will continue to deliver. We will eradicate and eliminate that scum from the urban system in Brisbane who terrorise patrons. That is high on the agenda of this Government, and as Minister for Transport and Main Roads I will make sure that I eliminate that element. I also want to mention the deplorable state of the rolling stock in the urban system in Brisbane. Those opposite did not have the vision to order new rolling stock.

I want to refer to the \$877m being spent on our Roads Program. That is \$140m more than the Labor Government spent. Included in that is \$108m towards the \$630m-odd for the upgrade of the Pacific Motorway. Whilst those opposite harp about that, that is the policy that this Government took to the people on 15 July last year and that is the policy on which we were elected to Government. We will deliver that motorway to the people of Queensland.

There are numerous other issues to mention, such as the \$190m Federal allocation. The member for Mackay referred to the lack of funding for the Mackay marina and a few other matters relating to his electorate. I am aware of what he had to say to the railway workers at Sarina, but I will come back to that

and I will give him the mail. I hope that he has a long memory.

I want to refer also to speed cameras. My colleague the member for Toowoomba North dwelt on that. This Government is about road safety and about saving lives. It is not about creating another forum for collecting funds to promote its initiatives. It is about saving Queenslanders from road fatalities. The Integrated Regional Transport Plan which was introduced by the Labor Government and put in place by us is in draft form. We will be putting that in place, and we will be addressing what is best for the south-east corner of this State. Whilst the planning for the IRTP will address the south-east corner, we will also be looking at the whole of the State. We will be doing it right for everybody in Queensland. We will not be paying lip-service to the south-east corner of this State in the way that the Labor Government did.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee) (3.56 p.m.): I am disappointed that the Minister for Public Works and Housing had other commitments and that he had to leave the Chamber because I wished to take issue with him in relation to several matters about public housing. One of the more worrying aspects of the current debate about the proposed changes in public housing reforms is the amount of uncertainty and fear that has been created by the current Minister. To date, at least four ministerial statements have been made about the current negotiations at the Commonwealth/State housing negotiation level and they have done nothing to clarify the issues that are of concern to tenants. If anything, they have created more uncertainty and more fear within the community.

Further confusion was created by many of the Minister's answers to questions raised in the Estimates committee hearings, and I will deal with some of those in more detail shortly. I think it is important to outline the specific fears of public housing tenants and, indeed, future tenants. They are concerned about whether their rents will rise, whether their tenure in public housing is secure, whether the department will continue to provide adequate funding to build or purchase new housing stock, whether adequate funding will be provided for the maintenance of existing properties and, further, whether the public housing stock itself will be privatised, as is reported to be happening in New Zealand. I believe that this is the secret agenda of the Government, and it is clearly outlined in many respects in the FitzGerald Commission of Audit.

None of these issues has been clarified by the State Housing Minister since the commencement of this debate and, if anything, he has fuelled the uncertainty and fears that exist in the community. Last week, the member for Chermside, the member for Sandgate and I conducted a public meeting in the suburb of Zillmere specifically to talk about the current reforms in public housing. It was attended by almost 150 people and was addressed by the Opposition Housing spokesman, Terry Mackenroth. Those tenants raised very grave concerns about possible rent increases and, in particular, the levels of subsidy that would be provided under the new arrangements that are being discussed. One of the fears that was discussed was that a potential 25 per cent increase in public housing rents is on the cards. In some respects, that is confirmed by statements made by the Minister in his Estimates committee responses. I refer to a response to a question raised by Mr Mackenroth in which the Minister said—

"We have found some difficult circumstances in Queensland as well. We have not worked out an average, but we have identified quite a big proportion of people who would be paying significantly more if they were caught up in that. We went up to Darwin and we got an in-writing commitment from the Prime Minister that existing public housing tenants would be no worse off. However, how long does that grandfathering last for?"

So the Minister himself is creating and in fact fuelling the uncertainty about rent increases by failing to give a clear and unequivocal answer to the issue that was raised by Mr Mackenroth that people faced a potential 25 per cent increase in their rents. The Minister should be giving an ironclad guarantee that no public housing tenant will be detrimentally affected as a result of the proposed changes and he should be putting in place mechanisms to ensure that that is the case.

Apart from the concern about rent, a range of other matters was raised at the public housing meeting. I want to outline very quickly some of the issues that were resolved unanimously in some resolutions that were passed at that meeting. Tenants resolved unanimously to escalate their campaign against proposed changes and called for, firstly, a three-year moratorium on reforms to public housing to enable a full social impact study to be undertaken; secondly, for the Prime Minister to ensure that public housing tenants would not be financially

disadvantaged by any proposed changes; and, thirdly, for the Premier and State Housing Minister to refuse to sign any agreement that would financially disadvantage tenants. I would like to table a copy of the resolutions that were passed at that public meeting.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee G

Report No. 1

The CHAIRMAN: The question is—

"That Report No. 1 of Estimates Committee G be adopted."

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh) (4 p.m.): Unfortunately, I must advise the House that the members for Mount Coot-tha and Capalaba transformed the Health Estimates committee hearing from what should have been a normal hearing into a very difficult operation. The committee's proceedings were disrupted by continuous interjections, and the Opposition members I have named made it virtually impossible to conduct the full Health segment of the hearings in a responsible and orderly manner. Families, Youth and Community Care presented no problems during the afternoon.

Ministerial staff, public officials, parliamentary staff and others who were present at the morning's proceedings would agree that the behaviour displayed by these two members was deplorable, well below the standard required for conduct of parliamentary business, and would certainly be unacceptable in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly. The members for Mount Coot-tha and Capalaba abused the committee process by constantly interrupting the Minister and public officials, frequently talking over the Minister and public officials—and sometimes even talking over each other—interjecting and interfering during Government questions and generally behaving in a most discourteous fashion.

In its report, the committee suggests that there should be disciplinary powers to deal with disruptive behaviour by members who persistently ignore the chairman's rulings and calls for order. The Chair does not have any means of penalising recalcitrant members or suspending them as individuals or ejecting them from the hearing. The Chair has no option other than to suspend the hearing, yet frequent suspensions would have the effect of reducing time for questioning and thus reducing the committee's effectiveness.

The disruptive and destabilising behaviour of these members was worse than the Opposition normally tries on in the Parliament every sitting day during question time, but at least Mr Speaker can exert some control in the Chamber and deal with breaches of Standing Orders. A less tolerant chairman would have completely suspended the hearing of Health Estimates—closed it down entirely. I can assure the House that I seriously considered doing just that. However, this course of action would have interfered with the required finalisation of the Budget process.

Honourable members with a sense of respect for the traditions of Parliament will be shocked when they peruse the Hansard record. The members at fault should publicly apologise to Hansard. It is simply not fair to treat Hansard in this way. The behaviour of these members was an abuse of Parliament and its customs and usages. Hansard should not be put in a position of having to approach the Chair and ask for protection. Hansard staff should not be almost reduced to tears.

Furthermore, I believe there was a concentrated effort to attract media attention and media coverage. In other words, it was designed as a media circus, and it failed miserably. A whole morning's grandstanding did not achieve one single scrap of political mileage. All it did was show up those two non-Government members in the eyes of those who were watching the monitors, and particularly the departmental officers who were present. It is a sad indictment on a shadow Minister when one overhears, as I did, one public official say to another, "Fancy having her as your Minister."

The committee report makes reference to questions on notice, as does the non-Government members' statement of reservations. The Opposition provided numerous multifaceted questions of a type that would not be accepted as daily questions on notice within the parliamentary context. The Opposition is critical of the Minister for Health in respect of his responses to these questions. Criticism of the Minister's responses to questions on notice cannot be sustained in view of the complexity of the questions submitted by the Opposition. I refer to section 20 of Sessional Orders. The questions were extremely complicated—"onerous" is the operative word. Such multifaceted questions must be considered to be numerous individual questions.

As the Hansard record clearly shows, the two Opposition members I have named indulged themselves in a complete abuse of

the parliamentary process and stand condemned for their contempt of Parliament and its customs. It was deplorable behaviour. But they lost ground, they lost respect, and they completely lost the plot.

I take this opportunity to thank the Government members of Estimates Committee G, as well as the member for Kurwongbah, for their cooperation and assistance in dealing with the Health Estimates. As the shadow Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, the member for Kurwongbah has initiated bringing down a statement of reservation on that portfolio and obviously does not agree with the Minister in many respects. Nevertheless, the four-hour proceedings of Families, Youth and Community Care were conducted with dignity and decorum and without any of the high drama attendant on large segments of the Health hearings.

I also place on record my thanks to research director Les Dunne and his staff, Belinda Noakes and Maureen Barnes, for the exemplary performance of their duties in respect of Estimates Committee G.

Time expired.

Mrs EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha) (4.06 p.m.): The Estimates hearings into the Health budget made a mockery of open, accountable Government. In a display of the utmost arrogance, the Minister refused to answer questions on the most basic health issues. How can the Minister say that budgets for hospitals have increased by so many millions and then say that he does not know what the hospital budgets are? Just what is he hiding? How can he ask any rational person—or even members of his own back bench—to swallow his lines on cutting waiting lists or improving surgery throughputs when he refuses to give the basic numbers? What is he hiding? Perhaps the fact that about 1,000 fewer operations were done at PA Hospital this year than last year! I am happy to provide those numbers if the Minister cannot.

At almost every major hospital in Queensland the doctors are speaking out—saying publicly—that his budget increases are phoney. In Cairns they say he cannot even add up. He claims to have increased the budget by \$4m, but it is now \$3m less than last year's. At Townsville, Rockhampton, Brisbane and the Gold Coast they have publicly all said the same thing—the Minister's figures are wrong. He has even announced \$1.2m for Kirwan neonatal cots, but that was allocated last year. They are already there. Faced with these facts—all

issued by his own department—that showed a discrepancy of \$175m—a trifle!

Then came the biggest blooper—a mistake in his major budget press release. The Minister came out with the best blooper that I have heard in this Chamber. It is a pity we did not have it on video. Of his press release, he said, "The numbers are right, it's the words that are wrong." He said "hospital" when he should have said "district". A minor detail! It changed the entire meaning of the press release and revealed the major problem the Minister has in sorting out his own creation—the health districts. He stressed the major hospitals—Princess Alexandra Hospital, Royal Brisbane Hospital, the Prince Charles Hospital, Gold Coast Hospital, Townsville Hospital, Toowoomba Hospital, Cairns Hospital, Rockhampton Hospital, Ipswich Hospital and Nambour Hospital—saying "hospital" eight times in one paragraph. He later claimed, "Oh dear, I meant 'district', not 'hospital'." This was a blatant example of the Minister misleading the committee and being caught out.

In answering questions from Government members, the Minister skited that those hospitals had received their budgets in August. I accept that. I believe that, because that was when people started ringing me about them. Then he proceeded to repeatedly tell the committee that he did not know if they had indicative budgets, or what they were. I ask you, Mr Chairman: is that not contempt of Parliament of the most deliberate and gross form? The Minister repeatedly interchanged "hospital" and "district" as if they were one and the same. I could not keep count of the number of times he did this. This point is critical, because it is repeated over and over again in his press releases as the Minister tries to convince hospitals that they have more money when they know that they have less than they needed to treat their patients last year. He tries to convince them that somehow the district budget is the same as the hospital budget.

I have had to point out that nowhere in the media coverage of the budget did the Minister reveal the new secret hospital tax of 5 per cent on capital works and equipment to be taken out of each year's recurrent budget. That is used to operate, to treat the sick, to pay doctors and nurses. That is right—any new building to replace the old and inefficient hospital will incur a penalty for being built under a National Party and not as planned under a Labor Government. So Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and the Gold Coast will pay for the Minister's

pork-barrelling promises at Robina, Caloundra, Noosa and Beaudesert.

The Minister refused to allow any satisfactory answers on these outrageous plans to cut back the hospitals' service delivery by such devious means. He continually gagged the poor, hapless bureaucrat responsible and owes him an apology. But even more embarrassed was the earnest young Dr Cleary, who had so obviously prepared answers to questions on notice regarding waiting lists and surgery activity, only to have the Minister refuse to give them to the committee. How embarrassed he was, poor chap! No wonder the morale of central office of Queensland Health is so rock-bottom as to be almost dysfunctional—and the officers have my full sympathy. In spite of the clear intentions of the Minister, there were a lot of interesting revelations as well. The Director of Capital Works admitted that many of the items included in so-called "Capital Works blow-out" were not included in the Labor Government's Capital Works program submission to Cabinet.

Time expired.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore) (4.11 p.m.): It is interesting to follow the member who just resumed her seat, because it is she who has helped to bring this House into ill repute. In the four years that I have been a member of this House, I have witnessed what is euphemistically called robust debate. I do not believe in a tame Parliament or Parliaments that fail to tackle difficult and contentious issues, but what is acceptable parliamentary behaviour? What are the limits? One would hope that one's personal moral compass would make that clear, as it does for the majority of members in this Chamber. Members can fulfil their democratic duties of diligent service and scrutiny without selling out their personal standards.

In the Legislative Assembly, powers are invested in the Speaker that allow him or her to remove unruly members from the Chamber, but those powers are not vested in Estimates committee chairmen. I commend our Madam Chair, the member for Burleigh, Judy Gamin, for her ability to keep cool under pressure and do a sterling job under very difficult circumstances. However, it is clear to me that the lack of powers for a chairman to discipline Estimates committee members for unruly and unparliamentary behaviour was totally abused by Labor members. The member for Kurwongbah was a notable exception among those Labor members. The behaviour of the member for Capalaba, Jim Elder, and member for Mount Coot-tha, Wendy Edmond, had to

be seen to be believed. Their appalling and unparliamentary performance had Hansard pleading for protection.

Mr Elder: Nonsense! I followed that up and it's untrue.

Miss SIMPSON: Is the honourable member saying that that is untrue?

Mr Elder: I followed it up and that's untrue.

Miss SIMPSON: Notes were coming to us—

Mr Elder: I followed it up and it's untrue.

Miss SIMPSON: I currently am addressing a Chairman who has the powers to remove members if they are unparliamentary and unruly.

The interjections that I took from that particular member were actually almost impossible to put down by Hansard because he and the member for Mount Coot-tha kept talking over the top of each other. At one point during the time allocated to Government members I counted some seven interjections on an answer I was receiving from the Minister for Health.

A Government member: A disgrace.

Miss SIMPSON: That was an absolute disgrace. Unfortunately, perhaps the written record does not really show the full extent of how you did abuse parliamentary privilege, because the parliamentary record does not record the times—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Maroochydore should refer to other members by their electorate or title.

Miss SIMPSON:—when the member for Capalaba and the member for Mount Coot-tha were virtually screaming and shouting at people across the table. The performance was an absolute embarrassment. The truth is that the behaviour of a few members can bring the whole Assembly into disrepute. It is expected in our democratic system that Labor members will not agree with all Government policies. Of course there will be disagreements; that is their right. However, the member for Kurwongbah as an Opposition member managed to raise issues without losing her dignity. Why then did the member for Capalaba and the member for Mount Coot-tha have to drag Parliament into the gutter? As I mentioned, even during the time allocated for Government members to ask questions and receive answers, an extraordinary number of interruptions from Opposition members occurred. As I said, there were actually seven interjections in one answer.

The two Labor shadow Ministers also treated public servants with gross contempt in the way that they were badgering them and demanding answers. We all have the right to ask questions and expect answers, but the manner in which the member for Capalaba and the member for Mount Coot-tha undertook that was a disgrace. Thus I strongly support the committee recommendation on page 9 of Estimate Committee G's report, where we recommend greater powers for Estimate committee chairmen to discipline members. I commend that recommendation to the Committee. I find no pleasure in singling out two members for their unruly and disruptive antics. However, the shame they brought on themselves unfortunately taints all of us by association, and I find that personally offensive. It is also disturbing for the health of the parliamentary processes and how the public views this place.

However, I was pleased that there were many positive aspects that did come out in the Estimates process as far as the quite sizeable increase in the Health budget, and particularly in the quarantining of mental health funds, is concerned. That is most welcome and most overdue. Some \$1.64m additional—or \$2m per annum—has been allocated to commission additional acute in-patient beds at Nambour General Hospital.

Time expired.

Mrs WOODGATE (Kurwongbah) (4.16 p.m.): I will confine my remarks to the portfolio of Families, Youth and Community Services. I must say that it was most disappointing and concerning for me to find that the welfare portfolio has not been shielded from the budget cutting process. All of us in this place must surely agree that the core business of that department should be to ensure the development of social support services and community networks that are responsive to the needs of all Queenslanders.

There are so many areas of concern in this department's budget, for example, the massive increases in adoption fees. It is just not good enough for the Minister to talk about recognition and support of families and family life while at the same time making it virtually impossible, or very difficult, for an average-income family to be able to adopt a child. The massive fee hike for adoption, both locally and overseas, announced in this Budget, certainly contradicts the Government's supposed emphasis on supporting families. The rise in fees from \$443 to \$3,700 for a local adoption and from \$694 to \$5,200 for intercountry adoption effective from Tuesday of last week

is prohibitive and has been introduced with no consultation with any parent support groups or any forewarning.

The fee for intercountry adoption should not be so much higher than that for local adoptions. It should be the reverse, as intercountry adoptive parents must pay all the costs in the country they are adopting from, which would include all Government and/or agency fees, legal fees, court costs and foster care for their child or children. For local adoptions, the department has the responsibility for both sides of the adoption process, that is, the birth parents and adoptive parents, whereas for intercountry adoption the department has the responsibility for the adoptive parents' part in the process and the adoptive parents pay for the rest.

Further, the intercountry process is generally much shorter. It is about two to three years from initial application. For local adoptions it is approximately eight years from initial application. It follows that the ongoing administrative costs of general adoptions would be greater. Maybe there is a hidden agenda to discourage intercountry adoption, as I said to the Minister at the Estimates committee hearings. That view is heightened by the Treasurer's response on talkback radio a few weeks ago that the fees were designed to "encourage people to adopt locally". To me that indicates a most uncaring attitude and total ignorance of the emotional pain of the large number of infertile couples who are unable to adopt locally because of the lengthy waiting period of at least eight years, and the very restrictive age requirements.

Of course, that is not the only area of concern to me. We could talk all day of the shortcomings in the disability section. Nowhere in the Budget papers could I find any commitment by the Government to honour Mr Borbidge's pre-election promise to spend \$34m a year for three years on the disability sector. It just was not there. Let us consider the rhetoric and the reality. The Budget papers state—

"Substantial new funding will provide a range of extra support services to people with disabilities."

However, reading between the lines reveals a different story. The rhetoric is \$8m this year, and an ongoing amount of \$4m to assist 44 people to leave Challinor and Basil Stafford; the reality is that the Minister admitted under questioning that those 44 people include the 24 people who have already left the institutions. These funds are only a fraction of the funds allocated by the previous

Government for institutional reform. The rhetoric is that funding of \$8.6m over three years has been provided to help support the families of people with disabilities; the reality is that the Unmet Needs Campaign asked for an additional \$95m recurrent. The \$8.6m is welcome; however, it is just a drop in the bucket. The new money of \$8.6m for unmet needs will be targeted to meet some of the specific needs of ageing carers of people with disabilities, and parents of young children with disabilities. What about lifestyle support services for individuals? What about those people who want to leave home? Also, there is no mention of post-school options continuing.

Perhaps to me one of the most disturbing aspects of these Estimates was the inability of the director-general to answer any questions I put to him. Earlier this year, I questioned why that department, which has had a huge amount of its portfolio shifted to other departments—the Office of the Public Trustee, Ethnic Affairs, youth detention centres and certain juvenile justice functions—would need the services of a deputy director-general. But having sat through some hours of these Estimates, it became quite clear to me: I do not believe the director-general is up to the job. He could not even answer the dorothy dixers put up to him by Government members and lost the pages. As the member for Capalaba said at the time, "He got his coloured pages wrong."

As the Minister was so critical of the previous director-general, Ms Jacki Byrne, when he organises jobs for the boys he should at least ensure that the boy is competent. After all, taxpayers have a right to expect that when a public servant is paid a salary package of approximately \$150,000 per annum, they should get value for money.

Time expired.

Mr WOOLMER (Springwood) (4.21 p.m.): I rise to participate in this debate on Estimates Committee G. In relation to Estimates committees and it being my first time participating in an Estimates committee, I did not really know what to expect. I suppose I went in wearing rose-coloured glasses. I believe that the process of conducting Estimates committees is of good value because it allows for scrutiny of the budgets of the departments and it allows for a far more open system than there would be if Estimates committees did not exist. I think that it is a necessary review mechanism of the processes of budgets. However, I will temper that

comment by saying that the process needs definite improvements.

I would like to register my thanks to the staff who supported Estimates Committee G—Les Dunne, Belinda Noakes and Maureen Barnes—for their efficient work. It was a pleasure to work with them. I would also like to extend my thanks to the parliamentary staff. The attendants did their usual good-quality job. They were in a most difficult situation on the day and they blended in very well. That is when one knows that they are doing a good job. I would also like to extend my personal thanks to the Hansard staff. That day was a rather heated affair and it was above and beyond the call of duty. Even our cartoon hero Dilbert would have had some difficulties coping with that day. They would have been stressed out. It was a marvellous effort.

At the end of the process, what did we achieve? The Estimates relating to the Health portfolio commenced in the morning. It started out badly, deteriorated rapidly and got far worse. Mr Elder and Mrs Edmond put on a disgraceful performance—I should say the member for Capalaba the member for Mount Coot-tha.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Springwood will refer to other members by their electorates.

Mr WOOLMER: Mr Chairman, I did. I corrected myself. However, during the entire time that was available to the Minister—not just during the Opposition's time for questions but also during the Government's time for questions—those members continually interrupted and interjected. To say that they were rude would be an understatement. I have no doubt whatsoever that if they had displayed that type of behaviour in this Chamber, they would have been watching the proceedings from the outside. They wasted at least 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the time available for intelligent questioning and discussion.

So what did we really find out? I suppose we found out that the Government has increased the Health budget by \$312m to over \$3 billion for the first time. The member for Capalaba and the member for Mount Coot-tha found out that exactly what was in the Budget papers was exactly what was in the Budget papers. An amount of \$143m has been allocated for residential care and \$430m has been allocated to community health and disability services. There will be 554 extra nurses, 60 extra doctors and \$11.1m for the QE II Hospital. If the member cares to read the Budget papers—

Mr Elder: Give me one hospital budget.

Mr WOOLMER: I just said that \$11.1m has been allocated for the QE II Hospital. The waiting lists—and this is one of the fallacies; if the member knew what was in the district, he would know that that said "in the district"—have been cut. We heard that again this morning.

The Minister for Health conducted himself in a terrific manner in front of that Estimates committee under the most trying circumstances. There is a 6 per cent increase in the budget to \$200m for mental health services. The department's reduced administrative costs have also released a lot of money that can go straight back into the delivery of core health services. We have record capital works budgets throughout Queensland, and that relates to the hospitals that are near and dear to me, the Logan Hospital and the QE II Hospital. Extra GMOs and a director to coordinate their activity are being appointed. A coordinator is being appointed at the Logan Hospital as well, which is very much needed.

I know that the member for Chermside is going to get up and have a belt in a minute, but the Government has also cleared all the Category 1 long-wait heart patients on the waiting list at Prince Charles Hospital—something that his Government could not do. The Government has addressed the core issues, confronted those problems, and fixed them up.

The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care had a great time during the Estimates committee as well. After we got through the rudeness of the questions of the member for Kurwongbah, who, for the first 10 minutes of that Estimates committee, tried to relate some personal payment deal of some sort between Shaftesbury and the director-general—and it is in the Hansard record——

Mrs WOODGATE: I rise to a point of order. I find it most offensive that the member said that I was rude. I was asking legitimate questions, and I ask that the member withdraw those remarks.

Mr WOOLMER: I withdraw. After the member for Kurwongbah tried to assert that there were some sort of collusive practices involving Shaftesbury and discovered that those claims were unfounded——

Time expired.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.26 p.m.): I actually felt sorry for the Chair of this committee because Mr Horan, the Minister for

Health, placed her in a very invidious position. At the end of the day, the member for Burleigh could not come to grips with that and accordingly her decision-making ability suffered. The member for Burleigh tried to blame the member for Mount Coot-tha and me for the disruption during the Health Estimates but went on to say that the Estimates for the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care went well. Now, I am not sure if the member was present—I suspect that she was; when I looked to the right she was the only person sitting there—but she might have happened to notice that I participated in that hearing as well. In fact, I participated the whole day. The difference with that hearing was that I was treated with some courtesy by the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. At least he endeavoured to answer the questions and at least he actually outlined his programs.

In relation to the disruption—the common thread right through the disruption to the Health Estimates was the Minister for Health. He was the common denominator, and the member for Burleigh was unable to control him. I thought that the Estimates of the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, Mr Lingard, went pretty smoothly. In fact, if the Government members were a bit concerned about losing some of their allotted time for questions, they should remember that they asked the questions and it was the Minister who took interjections from the Opposition; it was the Minister who debated the point with the Opposition during Government members' question time, not us. The Minister was taking up the Government members' time by answering Opposition members' interjections. He was taking up the time of Government members.

I followed up the member's allegations about Hansard. A week ago she said that they were in tears. Today the member said that they were almost in tears. The people to whom I have spoken said that they did not take any offence at all—another beat-up from the member trying to excuse the inability of the chair to manage that Estimates committee hearing.

I support totally the sentiments of the shadow Minister for Health who said that the performance of the Minister for Health was the most disgraceful. I sat on a number of Estimate committees and sat in on all of the hearings. The performance of the Minister for Health was the most disgraceful of all the Ministers whom I saw. The Minister thinks that he can trick Queenslanders into believing that there has been a massive injection into

Health, but he cannot answer a simple question. It took him three hours to get to the point—that he had misled the people of Queensland in a press release. He got the hospital budgets wrong. As the shadow Minister said, the figures were right but "Gee whiz, I got the name wrong. They were not hospitals, they were hospital districts." In other words, in over three hours of quizzing, the Minister could not give the Estimates committee one hospital budget. The Minister's performance was a massive fraud and a massive con trick on the people of Queensland.

I heard the member for Burleigh say that some staff members were worried about the performance of the shadow Minister. Let me say to the member for Burleigh that I still have a lot of contacts in Health and, too right, they are worried about the performance of the Minister for Health. If anyone came out of that Estimates committee looking rough around the edges, it was certainly the Minister for Health. He had every right to be embarrassed because he was an embarrassment.

Mr Woolmer interjected.

Mr ELDER: The first words of *Waltzing Matilda* spring to mind when I think of the member for Springwood—"Oncer". That is how he will end up.

It was embarrassing that the Minister took up three hours of the time of the Estimates committee hearing before he actually admitted that he was wrong and that he had misled the committee. With the pressure that the Minister put on his bureaucrats not to answer questions and to slide, no wonder it took three hours of cross-examination to try to get one element of truth out of that committee! The member for Springwood is right: Estimates committees should be open, they should be transparent and they should be accountable. Ministers should be put on tap and asked to explain their budgets. All the Ministers did that except for the Minister for Health. The member for Springwood should remember that line: "Oncer".

Mr Woolmer interjected.

Mr ELDER: The Minister for Health could not explain it. It showed once and for all to his department and once and for all to the people of Queensland his inability. He is long on rhetoric, but he is short on detail. His inability was there for everyone to see. The Minister has not been able to explain. He has very little idea of the intricacies of his department. That was very evident in the Estimates committees. I thought that the

Minister knew something about the portfolio; I was wrong.

Time expired.

Mrs WILSON (Mulgrave) (4.30 p.m.): This is the first time that I have been involved in an Estimates committee, and I am glad that the one I attended was not the norm. I congratulate the Chair, the committee members and the departmental officers, and I certainly endorse the comments of the Chair on the behaviour of the members for Capalaba and Mount Coot-tha. I found their behaviour and the way that they delivered their questions to the departmental officers disgraceful. I certainly hope that that is the last time that that sort of thing happens. Having said that, I turn to the issues themselves.

The major focus of the Government in this area is on supporting and strengthening families. The Reverend Male, the Director-General of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, talked about the curtain of care for families in Queensland. That is certainly what this department is about.

In this context, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care has developed the Family and Individual Support Program which allocates funds to help approved organisations provide a wide range of support services for individuals, families and the broader community. While there is no denying that many families need assistance, the main goal of this program is to help families and individuals become self-reliant, and that is as it should be.

Under the FISP initiative, the family support service aims to strengthen families by providing help and support before problems become insurmountable. In the current financial year, 28 family support services are being established in target areas across Queensland, with more than \$1m allocated to establish more of these services in the next financial year. The services will provide direct counselling and support for families, as well as information and advice regarding parental skills. To ensure a grassroots practical approach, family support workers will be attached to existing community-based organisations. While these community-based organisations may vary in type and location, they all have one thing in common: they are closer to the people and to Government agencies and are more responsive to local needs. Therefore, they are able to deliver the services more effectively.

It is important that the family support services be easily accessible to local people and provide a non-threatening environment

where people can feel relaxed. The services will offer information and resources to family members, skilled counselling, referral to specialised services and other forms of practical help. There will be an emphasis on early intervention to try to avoid relatively minor problems developing into much bigger and more expansive social issues. This could include conflict between a young person and other family members, which has the potential to result in such things as youth homelessness, drug taking or criminal activity. It is believed that family support workers will also play an important role in helping to reduce child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and family breakdown. The fact that family support workers liaise closely with existing services and organisations in the community will enable them to quickly identify particular issues facing local parents and families.

The first two family support services have already been established with the sponsorship of community organisations throughout Queensland. Another six are to be established this financial year. Approximately \$1m has been committed to this initiative so far. While the family support services is an important initiative which underlies the Government's recognition of the vital role that strong secure families play in building a caring society, it is important to draw attention to the other services being provided under family and individual support programs.

In the 1996-97 budget, \$10.5m in recurrent funding is available for allocation to 178 community-based services, including 75 neighbourhood centres. In allocating the funding, the Government, through the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, has acknowledged the social impact that occurrences such as drought can have on a community. A sum of \$210,000 has been allocated to help FISP services in rural and remote areas respond to increased demands resulting from rural hardship and the increased cost of delivering services in these areas. A sum of \$126,000 was allocated under the Rural Family Support Program to provide short-term financial help, information, counselling, referral and assistance to families and communities. The department has also appointed a social planner in south-west Queensland to undertake an assessment of the social impact of drought on communities in these areas.

However, urban and provincial areas have not been overlooked and \$188,000 has been provided to enable FISP services to purchase essential equipment or to meet extraordinary

expenses in supporting children and families experiencing hardship. Almost \$400,000 has been provided in recurrent funding to enable all FISP services to employ administrative and organisational support. The demands for funding and support under the FISP programs are considerable, and the department is currently considering a report which will be used to establish future priorities and guide the future directions of the program.

In making provisions for a wide range of support services to families and individuals in communities across the State, we also recognise the need to provide adequate facilities from which these services can be provided effectively.

Time expired.

Hon. K. E. De LACY (Cairns) (4.35 p.m.) I agree with the member for Capalaba that the Health budget is a fraud. It is a budget of deceit and it is the kind of budget which will come back and bite the Minister.

The first example of deceit, of course, occurred when the Minister put out a press release stating that funding had increased by 11.6 per cent. It had, in fact, increased by 8.1 per cent over last year's actual spending. When talking about recurrent spending, the Minister has a habit of comparing it with last year's budget, and when he talks about capital spending, he compares it with last year's actuals which were down because of the freeze on capital works. That is the kind of deceit that the Minister has been involved in. As he continues to weave this web of deceit, he will find that the person who gets caught in it will be the Minister himself.

The best example of how that will happen is the skiting press release about the 11.6 per cent increase in Health spending. All of the hospital staff around Queensland have started to ask, "11.6 per cent? Where is it?" It may have taken three hours to get nothing out of the Minister about individual budgets for hospitals, but I assure the Minister that we are getting them individually. I happen to have a copy of the Cairns Health District indicative budget. In 1995-96, the actual spending was \$97.5m. The Budget for 1996-97 provides \$93.4m.

Mr Elder: Is that an 11.5 per cent increase?

Mr De LACY: It is a 4 per cent reduction. I can tell honourable members that nurses and the doctors in Cairns are actually seething. I am aware that there are still some unresolved funding issues, but they have told

me that if all of those issues are settled in their favour—in other words, the best possible scenario—they will get \$98m, which is a 0.5 per cent increase on last year's funding.

The population of Cairns is growing at 4 per cent and inflation is running at 3 per cent. Therefore, if anything less than 7 per cent is provided, we are going backwards. One can understand why people are angry when the Minister was running around Cairns last week saying, "We have increased spending by \$4m." He takes off \$3m and calls it \$4m on. Either he cannot tell red from black—

Ms Bligh: Or up from down, or left from right.

Mr De LACY: But he can say black is white.

Mr Elder: Do you think it is a case of the right hand not knowing what the far right hand is doing?

Mr De LACY: That is right, although they are both on the right side, that is for sure. Many programs in Cairns have been either abolished or slashed under this budget. Those abolished include programs for workers in the sex industry and young people at risk, the population health unit and day surgery funding. Programs slashed include the Home Support Scheme, and programs for oral health, AIDS funding, aged funding, ambulatory care reform, breast cancer screening, national mental health funding, palliative care funding and post acute funding.

When the Minister was merely the member for Toowoomba South, he was going to play merry hell. I remember him standing on this side of the House during the Budget debate and going red in the face, talking about the productivity dividend. "The Labor tax!" he thundered, "A tax on health!" What do we call it these days? Is it the Horan tax or the National Party tax? He has a new one, the capital charge, which is a 5 per cent tax on recurrent funding for every dollar that is spent in capital. This is a new and special one—the Horan tax. The Minister was the greatest shroud waver and ambulance chaser in the history of Queensland politics. He was going to do all sorts of things in Opposition and now the whole house is starting to collapse around him like a pack of cards. The rumour is that he is now seeking another portfolio because he cannot handle the heat.

On two other issues the Minister has betrayed the people of Cairns in relation to the redevelopment. Free car parking and full day occupational child care were commitments I gave when I was Treasurer. I said that we

would fix up security, car parking and child care in the redevelopment. That commitment has been betrayed by the Minister and he will not get away it. The staff and the patients at the Cairns Base Hospital will not pay for their car parking.

Hon. M. J. HORAN (Toowoomba South—Minister for Health) (4.41 p.m.): At the outset, I thank the Queensland Health staff involved in the Estimates committee hearing, and particularly the parliamentary staff. From the Government's point of view, a lot of good, practical questions were asked that gave some real purpose to the Estimates. Answers to questions showed how the \$312m increase in the Health budget was being spent. The spending was broken down into programs.

We displayed how Surgery on Time was being funded, operated and managed. We spoke about the staffing increases, in particular that there were 900 extra staff. We spoke about how we funded the Dental Program, the funding for which was pulled out by the Commonwealth Government. As to community and mental health—we showed how we funded the unfunded and empty wards left by the previous Government. We gave the details of individual funding packages for Cairns, Redcliffe, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. We gave details of the \$2.1 billion in capital works funding. We inherited a massive \$1.2 billion black hole from the previous Government. Its promises were not funded. We were able to demonstrate that we have provided \$2.1 billion in cash for building projects, in addition to \$270m for minor works. We spoke about immunisation, Government medical officers and Project 300.

But what did we hear from the Opposition? Opposition members walked into that Estimates hearing determined to have a street brawl and determined to engage in a publicity stunt. Right from the outset they wanted to have a street brawl. They wanted to be belligerent and bullying of the staff. They wanted to yell, shout and talk over everyone. Right from the outset, that is what they set out to do. But they discovered that this Minister will stand up for Health staff. Queensland Health staff were appalled. The things they told me about the behaviour of the former Labor Government were absolutely eye opening.

The real problem with the member for Mount Coot-tha and the member for Capalaba is that they are absolutely devastated that the financial mess and administrative chaos that we have inherited has been turned around in six months. We have paid out the hospital budget overruns and we gave them a clean

slate from 1 July. We have turned around the financial mess. We have put in place good people. Not only that, we have exposed the former Government and the member for Capalaba in particular for the black hole that they left, their budget overruns, unfunded enterprise bargaining, overruns in growth funding, and the unfunded workers' compensation scheme. The honourable member for Capalaba ran out of the Health portfolio after only six months; he could not get out fast enough.

The dissenting report that Opposition members have put up is not worth the paper on which it is written. For example, they talked about there being insufficient departmental officers in attendance. We provided double the number that Labor provided in the previous year—20 compared with 10 in the previous year. They talked about our not being prepared to answer all 10 questions on notice. On a conservative estimate, those 10 questions on notice contained 72 parts. What a fraud and a farce! Opposition members talk about having respect for the institution of Parliament, yet they asked 10 questions containing about 72 parts. One question had 15 parts relating to 15 separate hospitals. That is an example of the disrespect that members opposite have for this Parliament and the Estimates committee process. They also said—

Mr ELDER: I rise to a point of order. There was no disrespect. I find those remarks unparliamentary. I want them withdrawn.

Mr HORAN: I withdraw.

Mr ELDER: The questions were passed by the committee. The Minister did not have a right to determine what questions the committee could ask.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister has withdrawn.

Mr HORAN: A further example is that, within the dissenting report, Opposition members said that there were no strategies for improving the dreadful financial mess and the budget overruns left by the former Government. They did not even look at the answer to question 10, which listed about four or five very important strategic financial moves, performance agreements and so on, to fix up the mess that we inherited. I do not think I could say enough about the mess that we have inherited in Queensland Health. We exposed that mess at that Estimates committee hearing. The Opposition had regional health budgets, but never hospital budgets. We have been able to provide

indicative district budgets. The honourable member for Capalaba, as a former Health Minister, knows that those hospital and community health budgets will be determined over the next few months. Those budgets will be broken down, and an extra \$100m in Commonwealth funds and incentive programs will be distributed. All in all, it was an appalling performance by the Opposition.

Time expired.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN (Chermside) (4.46 p.m.): The most disturbing feature of the hearings of Estimates Committee G was the pathetic performance of the Minister for Health, who demonstrated a contempt for this Parliament and the people of Queensland. The Health Minister's opening statement set the tone of confrontation and half-truths. From the very first question, the Minister refused to abide by the regulations which his Government established for the conduct of these hearings.

We all know that the Minister discusses policy matters, but the Minister prefaced almost all Opposition budget questions with an uninvited policy statement. The shadow Minister wanted budget information, that is, figures, specific costs and amounts, but the Minister refused to let the public servants answer those questions. It saddens me to say that I was disappointed with the rulings by the Chair, the member for Burleigh, whom I generally regard as a fair and reasonable person. But pages 439 and following of the Hansard transcript record what I hope will be a rare poor performance by the member for Burleigh. Making the Minister abide by the parliamentary rules would have led to a more productive hearing. The shadow Minister wanted facts and figures, but 15 of the first 20 minutes consisted of policy statements by the Minister.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: I rise to a point of order. I have been goaded by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The disrespect to and criticism of the Chair is unparliamentary and it should not be permitted.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: What a waste of time!

When the committee adjourned to discuss the Chairman's ruling, the Minister even went to the rear of the Chamber to join the members of the committee. He would not even accept that he was not a member of the committee. He had to be told to go back to the front, where he should have been. Worse was to come.

When the shadow Minister tried to find out funding allocations concerning waiting lists, the Minister's tactics were revealed. A public servant, Dr Cleary, thought that the shadow Minister had been provided with the information. What he did not know was that the Health Minister had withheld information from the committee. The Minister claimed that he could not provide the information because the multiple questions were too onerous to answer. The questions concerned a table of figures which would have been in his waiting lists brief. Indeed, this very day in Parliament the Minister revealed that the waiting list figures are signed off every month. He could have provided the information, but he refused to. Who can believe a Minister who says that he has a good approach to the Surgery on Time Program, yet says that he does not have the basic figures for patients on waiting lists per category for the major hospitals? How does he tackle a waiting list program when he cannot even provide that information?

The Minister was deceitful in telling the committee that was too onerous a task. Even today he said that he signs off on those figures on a monthly basis. This was in stark contrast to his prepared answers to Government questions; he had all the figures needed to answer their questions. As well, the Health Minister refused to let the CEOs from major hospitals in the Brisbane area even appear before the committee. What a shameful performance from the pretender to the Borbidge throne!

Although not as bad as the Minister for Health, the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care held the committee in contempt in respect of one major aspect. He believed that it was his prerogative to control who answered the questions asked at the hearing. He did not even know that this Parliament had decided that public servants could be asked questions by committee members. He should at least know the basic rules. Another stark contrast was the performance of the two directors-general. Dr Stable had a grasp of his department, had figures at his fingertips and could handle questions on and without notice with great professionalism. He knew which public servants in his department to direct specific questions to. On the other hand, I am sorry to say that Reverend Male displayed a lack of knowledge and competence that was breathtaking.

There is something on which I do agree with many members opposite, that is, the hearings of Estimate Committee G were a disaster. But it is the Minister for Health who

should shoulder the majority of the blame for the failure of this committee to let the people of Queensland see how the coalition Government was either spending or not spending their money. A greater control of the committee would have ensured that the Minister would have had to abide by the rules that this Parliament passed. The Minister deliberately chose not to provide information to questions on notice and yet had the information to answer questions from Government members.

The Minister told us today that that information is available on a monthly basis. He deceived the committee. He tried to deceive this Parliament and he tried to deceive the people of Queensland. But the Minister will not get away with it, because we on this side of the Chamber will remind the people that he was deceitful and dishonest and that he did not let the people of Queensland see how the Health budget was being spent. He should be condemned for that, and he will be condemned by the people of Queensland.

Hon K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care) (4.51 p.m.): On behalf of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, I thank everyone involved in the Estimates hearings, particularly the members of the committee. I note some of the concerns expressed in the reservations section of the report, and I note also some of the comments that have been made today.

Quite honestly, I was concerned about the very first question which was asked of the director-general—who has been appointed for only six or seven months—in which he was asked how many disabled people there are in Queensland. I do not think anyone could honestly answer how many disabled people there are in Queensland. It depends on one's interpretation of the word "disabled". That was a very unfair question. It was the first question asked. In my view, even the member for Kurwongbah was not very proud of that particular question.

As the director-general has focused on the curtain of care, that was one thing the department was able to emphasise right the way through the Estimates hearing. Everyone knows that the director-general, Reverend Allan Male, has been very determined in providing a curtain of care and placing family support workers across Queensland. Our first budget indicates that 22 family support workers will be appointed right across Queensland. Another six are to be added almost immediately, followed by another 22,

making for a total of 50 family support workers right across Queensland. This develops our theme of early intervention with young people—early intervention in that we are not going to wait until children reach the stage of committing an offence. We want to act early so that we can intervene aggressively into the family situation. That is where these 50 family support workers will come into their own. I will be saying to those workers that they must intervene in the family situation. They must go in with home-making programs; they must go in with parenting programs. Clearly, that is the initial focus of the department in this new period.

However, to be realistic, if a family does reach the irretrievable stage, we must put in place other systems. That is why \$12.4m has been allocated to the Foster Care Program. There will be a special emphasis on the early assessment of children who come into foster care programs, and priority will be given to the payment of people who act as foster care parents. As an example, foster parents currently receive \$72 per week to care for a 6-year-old child. A foster family will now receive up to \$168 per week to assist them to care for such a child. The second measure is funding of \$9.6m for the Juvenile Justice Program to pick up young people who are in need of care. That program—particularly the Residential Care Program—is a very important one.

An important step which we have taken in Queensland and which I hope to see go through the Parliament within one or two weeks is the establishment of the position of a Children's Commissioner. I urge the shadow Minister to give bipartisan support to that legislation. I believe that it is very important that we provide for the people of Queensland a person to whom they can go with their concerns and their problems on any aspect of the services provided for children. If it is that people feel aggrieved by the Department of Families or anyone else, they can appeal to the commissioner for a ruling. The commissioner will also revisit the Sturgess report and similar reports, especially those covering paedophilia and child abuse.

I mentioned this morning that \$18.2m will come from the Federal Government for the Youth Suicide Program. My department will certainly add to that funding. I know that the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education will join in a cross-departmental push to do something about this terrible problem which is sweeping our community. As to youth homelessness—the Prime Minister now has a special task force, and specific programs will be implemented in Queensland

under the Homeless Program. I will expand the Domestic Violence Program to assist the elderly and children and men who are either victims or perpetrators of domestic violence. The Seniors Card is yet another initiative.

As to adoption fees—I believe that The Hague Convention will have an influence on our fees. It might enforce on Australia that we go through the Family Court. At this stage, I will wait for a decision from The Hague Convention before I implement the fees for foreign adoption. I believe that that is only fair. I would hate to implement a certain fee and then find that The Hague Convention says, "There will be an extra cost on top of that." I give this Parliament an assurance that I will hold off those costs until the outcomes of The Hague Convention are known.

Aboriginal and Islander affairs did not get much emphasis during the hearing, but I have certainly allocated extra money in that area.

Time expired.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove) (4.56 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in this debate. I want to talk about people with disabilities, particularly the families of those people. I noted that the Minister and, before him, the member for Mulgrave talked about the curtain of care. If we are honest about what is happening to those families, we would have to accept that the curtain of care does not cover too many of them. Concerns have been expressed to me from three groups in particular. The first is the elderly parents of people with disabilities. They worry about what is going to happen to the person they are caring for, who normally is a son or a daughter. The second group is the parents of young disabled people, who are concerned about their children's education. The third group is the individuals who have expressed a real desire to live in the community. I note that the Budget provides \$8.6m over three years to provide support for those people. The two issues that we need to discuss are accommodation and respite care. I have become involved with a respite care centre in my electorate run by the Uniting Church. It really concerns them that they have to play God on a daily basis by rationing a resource that is just too scarce. They have to say, "I am sorry, but you can only have one day." That presents a difficulty for parents who want to go to work or who want to have some quality of life of their own.

The major issue I want to discuss is the institutional reform process. When I took my sabbatical leave from this place from 1986 to 1989, I was involved with the Human Rights

Commission. During that time, I learned one fundamental thing: institutional care does not work. It is not what people in that community want. A community-based alternative is by far their preferred option. I acknowledge that to some degree the institutional reform process that was put in place by the previous Labor Government was not perfect. People could say—and rightly so—that some of the processes needed improving. Unfortunately, that impacted on a lot of families out there, because they became quite fearful of the process. However, I am going to use the rest of the time I have available to argue that we do need to return to the previous Labor Government's position, although it could be improved.

Since the new Government came to office, we have had the reversal of the decision to close the Challinor and Basil Stafford centres. In my view, we are wasting money in this budget on upgrading those outmoded, dehumanising forms of accommodation. We have seen the disbanding of the teams set up to undertake implementation of that process. What has happened is that many families out there had assurances that individual residents in these centres would actually have the choice to live in the community. The current Minister has said, "Yes, I agree with you if that is what you want", but that is not matched by the level of funding available.

I know funding is difficult. I know it is not an easy task but, given what we know, we should not allow institutions such as Challinor and Basil Stafford to remain open. We had the coronial inquest into the death of a resident in the Maryborough disabled person's ward which called for the immediate upgrade or closure of that ward. We had the CJC inquiry into the Basil Stafford Centre which revealed instances of individual and systemic abuse and neglect and which recommended that it be closed. The recent ABC *Four Corners* program that looked at the Challinor Centre similarly showed that abuse and neglect is, unfortunately, part of the culture of those places. We need to ensure that we find places for these people within a community setting. Many people are concerned about that. Under the Budget, only 44 people out of the 256 living in the Challinor and Basil Stafford centres will be assisted to move out into the community. When we know that so many of them want to live in the community, who chooses which of those people go?

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bills reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bills, on motion of Mrs Sheldon, by leave, read a third time.

KENO BILL

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (5.03 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to provide for the conduct of certain keno games, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER read a message from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mrs Sheldon, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (5.04 p.m.): I move—

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

The Government is presenting this Bill to regulate and control the expansion of the game of Keno outside of casinos. The Bill has been prepared on the basis of the drafting instructions approved by the previous Government and there have been only relatively minor changes to these requirements during the drafting process. This is largely because the Bill is based on Queensland's proven Casino Control and Gaming Machine Acts. In fact, while the Bill is quite large, my speech will be short as the majority of the provisions of the Bill are not new in terms of Queensland gaming legislation, nor is the game of Keno itself.

Keno has been available in Queensland since the opening of the first casino on the Gold Coast in 1985 and is currently authorised by law to be played in all four Queensland casinos licensed under the Casino Control Act. It is a game available in the majority of other

Australian States through various outlets such as casinos, clubs, hotels and lottery agencies. While the expansion of this game outside of casinos will create only a small increase of activity for Treasury's Office of Gaming Regulation, it will require specific legislation to ensure its operation is conducted to the very high standard which has become synonymous with gaming regulation in this State.

The legislation will enable the game of Keno currently played in licensed casinos to be played throughout the State and conducted by a licensed operator through authorised outlets such as TABs, hotels and clubs. The Bill does not specify the operator, as this will be the subject of agreements made pursuant to the Act, once passed. Various Queensland gaming venues have been seeking the expansion of this game beyond casinos for a number of years. This expansion will provide a supplementary gaming activity for clubs, hotels and TAB patrons and will assist these establishments in the maintenance of their competitiveness.

Keno gaming is designed to be relaxed, enjoyable entertainment and is generally played as an accessory activity rather than a primary focus. Specifically for clubs and hotels, it provides an alternative entertainment form to gaming machines, one which is more social in nature as it can be played while patrons enjoy other facilities.

I am well aware of the view amongst many, both inside this House and in the community generally, that there are enough opportunities for public gambling presently available. In response to this view, I would make three points. Firstly, as I have already indicated, this legislation had its source with the previous Labor Government. In fact, approval to draft this very piece of legislation was granted by the previous Government late in 1995. Secondly, I would note that while Keno will effectively provide another game for club, hotel and TAB patrons, it will not expand the range of sites at which people can gamble. Clubs and hotels already have gaming machines and the TAB patron is already there to bet. Thirdly, this Government has resolved that community support functions will be the beneficiary of revenue from Keno. This will be achieved on the same basis as established under the Gaming Machine Act via the existing Charities and Rehabilitation Fund and the Sport and Recreation Fund. It is from these sources that funding is provided to a wide range of community activities, including direct support via the Break Even program for problem gamblers. While it will be some years before the Government returns from Keno are

maximised, Jupiters revenue estimates suggest that the funds made available from this source could be as high as \$30m.

I turn now to the provisions of the Bill. Part 1 defines particular terms used in the Bill and these are self-explanatory. Similarly, the purpose of Part 2 of the Bill is readily apparent in enabling the game of Keno to be conducted as a lawful game throughout the State. The third part provides for the entering into an agreement with the proposed licensee, setting out the terms and conditions of the operation of Keno.

Provision is also made to allow investigations into the suitability of the proposed Keno licensee and any person associated with their proposed Keno operations or management, and authorises the issue of a Keno licence. Investigations may be made during the term of the licence to ensure the continued suitability of the licensee and associated persons. A Keno licence remains in force until it is cancelled, surrendered or terminated in accordance with the Keno agreement or following exhaustive show cause procedures. The licence may only be cancelled or suspended if the ground is serious and the integrity of the operation of Keno may be jeopardised or the public interest adversely affected.

Where a cancellation or suspension action is taken, the position of players and Keno agents is protected by providing a mechanism for the appointment of an administrator to conduct the operations under the licence. Decisions and determinations of the Governor in Council and the Minister in relation to the Keno licence, or persons with an interest or potential interest in the Keno licence, are final and may not be reviewed by any court. While this measure may appear to be strong, it is required to ensure the integrity of the game and is consistent with the practices which have been incorporated in gaming practices in Queensland and other Australian jurisdictions for in excess of a decade.

Part 4 of the Bill contains a comprehensive licensing regime for employees of the Keno licensee, however, allows for an exemption for a person from holding a Keno licence where their functions are only minor. Similarly to the Casino Control and Gaming Machine Acts, an applicant for an employee licence will be thoroughly checked to ensure that a high standard of integrity is maintained. They will be required to have their photograph and fingerprints taken and to lodge an application form to provide

information so that the necessary investigations may be conducted.

The chief executive may also investigate a licensed Keno employee to determine if the person remains a suitable person, however, such investigation can only be made if it is believed that the employee's circumstances have changed or if the investigation is conducted under a specific program which may only be undertaken once within a two-year period. If the chief executive believes a ground exists to suspend or cancel a Keno employee licence, the holder of the licence must be issued with a notice to show cause as to why action should not be taken with respect to the cancellation or suspension of the licence. If it is considered that the matter is not of such a serious nature, the employee may be censured or directed to rectify the matter. Where a ground exists to suspend or cancel, the licence may be suspended at the same time as the show cause, if it is believed, in the public interest or to ensure the integrity of gaming, that an immediate suspension is necessary.

Part 5 allows the Keno licensee, by use of standard commercial agreement, to engage agents in prescribed categories of sites to conduct the game of Keno. The proposed types of outlets include clubs, hotels, the TAB and casinos and for each of these categories the standard form of agreement is to be approved. These agents are only outlets for the game and will not be required to be directly licensed by the State, however, various controls will exist to ensure the integrity of the conduct of the game by any agent. Although the engagement of agents is commercial matter for the licensee, powers of investigation and inspection will be granted in respect of agents and the sites from which the game is operated. The chief executive will be able to show cause to the agent and the Keno licensee as to why the agency agreement should not be terminated.

Part 6 covers State taxation and licence fee issues and requires the Keno licensee to pay a tax based upon a percentage of gross revenue and a licence fee, which amounts are as determined by the State and the licensee in the Keno agreement. Part 7 provides that the system of internal controls and administrative and accounting procedures for the operation and conduct of Keno must be approved by the chief executive. The Keno licensee and its agents are required to work in accordance with these controls and procedures. The keeping of records and accounts and the auditing of the books,

accounts and financial statements of operations are also covered by this part.

Part 8 requires approval of the Minister of any ancillary agreements under which a person receives a benefit from the conduct of Keno. All aspects relating to the operation of the game by the Keno licensee and their agents such as the Keno rules, time and place of operation, use of approved Keno equipment, advertising and complaints are covered in detail.

Part 9 empowers existing Office of Gaming Regulation inspectors to undertake inspectorial functions in relation to the operation of the game. The powers conferred on inspectors by this part are a consolidation of those powers conferred on inspectors by the Casino Control Act 1982, Gaming Machine Act 1991 and the Art Unions and Public Amusements Act 1992. The Bill also provides for the Minister to issue directions relating to the management, supervision or control of a part of the Keno licensee's or agent's operations.

Part 10 covers legal proceedings and are self-explanatory. Part 11 provides a right of appeal to the Magistrates Court by the Keno licensee and appointed agents in relation to the chief executive's decision to direct the termination of an agency agreement or subagents appointment. The right of appeal for the Keno licensee and Keno employees is also available, in relation to a decision to suspend or cancel a Keno employee licence. There are a limited number of decisions by the chief executive which do not have rights of appeal, but judicial review rights apply.

Part 12 of the Bill contains various general provisions which are self-explanatory. Part 13 provides for consequential amendment to the Casino Control Act 1982, Gaming Machine Act 1991 and the Art Unions and Public Amusements Act 1992 to allow the Office of Gaming Regulation to use information gained under one gaming Act for a purpose under another gaming Act.

The consequential amendment to the Liquor Act 1992 is required to allow the conduct and playing of Keno on licensed premises, and the Racing and Betting Act 1980 amendment empowers the TAB to enter into a Keno agency agreement to operate the Keno game.

In conclusion, the requirements of the Bill are not new, they are drawn from Queensland's other gaming legislation utilised by the Office of Gaming Regulation and I am confident that these regulatory controls and administrative procedures will ensure the

highest standard of Keno operations. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hamill, adjourned.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.14 p.m.): by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Criminal Justice Act 1989 and the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.15 p.m.): I move—

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

When the Government was considering various matters in relation to the establishment of a commission of inquiry into particular issues involving the Criminal Justice Commission, it sought advice from the Solicitor-General regarding the amenability of the Criminal Justice Commission to such a commission of inquiry. The confidentiality provisions presently contained in section 132 of the Criminal Justice Act were seen as a matter to be addressed in this context. The conclusion reached by the Solicitor-General was expressed in the following terms—

"A commission of inquiry set up under the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950 does not possess the power to obtain information held by the Criminal Justice Commission or to compel the Criminal Justice Commission or its officers to give evidence to it.

Specific legislation would be necessary to achieve that result."

This legislation implements the recommendations put forward by the Solicitor-General in that advice.

In addition, senior counsel appointed to assist the commission of inquiry came forward with a number of suggestions to ensure that

the legislation will enable the commission to work effectively and efficiently. Their proposals will enhance the information-gathering functions of the commission to guarantee this will be achieved. It should also be pointed out that it was their suggestion that confidentiality requirements be imposed on all persons associated with the commission of inquiry as a demonstration of the fact that the commission will adopt the highest standards in undertaking their allotted task.

In summary, then, it must be said that if a commission of inquiry, established to examine certain matters pertaining to the Criminal Justice Commission, does not have the power to access information held by the Criminal Justice Commission or to compel the commission or its officers to give evidence before it, that commission of inquiry would be hampered in its operations. This legislation, therefore, merely seeks to ensure that a commission of inquiry established to look at matters of this kind can be armed with the necessary powers to ensure that it is as effective as possible. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Foley, adjourned.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL

Resumption of Committee

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

Debate resumed from 11 September (see p. 2780).

Clause 22, continuing—

Ms BLIGH (5.18 p.m.): When this debate was adjourned, we were discussing clause 22. I had moved an amendment, which the Premier indicated he would accept, but he had some concerns about the wording as proposed in my amendment. At that stage I undertook to have discussions in the intervening period with the Premier's officers. I have since done that. A subsequent amendment has been put forward by the Premier. It is amendment 5A on the Premier's list, which has been circulated.

I support the amendment as proposed. I had a number of concerns about the amendment. As currently put forward, the amendment satisfies the purpose that I was originally seeking to achieve. It was not as great a concern after the amendments to clause 21 clarified the scope of the Bill. However, it remained a concern which I thought required clarification. I congratulate

the Premier on his wisdom in accepting my proposition. I take this opportunity to thank his officers for their efforts—in the intervening weeks since we last discussed this—in drafting the amendment which is before us and which has been circulated. I believe that it successfully addresses the concerns that I outlined and the Premier's reservations about the form in which those concerns were originally put.

Mr BORBIDGE: I thank the honourable member for her cooperation. I now formally move the following amendment—

"At page 21, after line 17—

insert—

'(4) However, a regulation can not reduce an employee's remuneration.

'(5) Subsection (4) does not apply to a reduction arising out of a change in the person's employment sought by the person.

'(6) in this section—

"remuneration" means total remuneration including entitlements.'"

As the honourable member indicated, members may recall that, when this matter was last debated on 11 September, we were considering an amendment to clause 22 proposed by the honourable member. At that time there was some debate with respect to the member's proposed amendment and the potential for it to open up a legal minefield or possible industrial disputation. Members may also recall that at the time I explained the rationale for clause 22B—that it is the mechanism to apply a raft of rights and entitlements such as merit selection processes, right to appeal to the commissioner for either promotion or disciplinary appeals, or an entitlement to be offered a voluntary early retirement package in accordance with the standard for staffing options to manage organisational change for employees in public sector units.

I listed the public sector units currently covered by some of those PSM standards—some 25 units, which included the Queensland Corrective Services Commission, the Queensland Fire Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service and regional health authorities. The member for South Brisbane accepted that there may be some difficulties that might arise in relation to the proposed wording. We undertook to seek further advice of the Parliamentary Counsel and reword her proposed amendment to both lessen the likelihood of litigation and to reflect the outcome that she was seeking.

The amendment I am now proposing ensures that a regulation cannot reduce an employee's remuneration. "Remuneration" is specifically defined both at this clause and at an amendment I propose to make to clause 70. For both of these clauses, clause 22 and clause 70, remuneration means total remuneration, including entitlements. Such a definition is based on the definition at section 40 of the Industrial Relations Act. The amendment includes a proviso by the inclusion of subclause 5 which states that subclause 4 does not apply to a reduction arising out of a change in a person's employment if such a change is sought by that person. For example, if an employee in one of the public sector units mentioned previously is being dealt with under the standard for staffing options to manage organisational change and that employee seeks or accepts redeployment to a lower classified position in accordance with that standard, then clearly the employees' remuneration will be impacted. Another example may be where an employee in a public sector unit applies for appointment within a department. In those circumstances the employee would be remunerated in accordance with the rates applying in the department.

I thank the honourable member for South Brisbane for her cooperation in this regard. I acknowledge the intent of the original amendment proposed by the honourable member. As I said at the time, I would be happy to accept an amendment on the basis of further consideration of the wording and in consideration of the fact that we are both trying to achieve the same outcome. I thank the honourable member for her cooperation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 22, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 23 to 32, as read, agreed to.

Clause 33—

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

"At page 28, line 19, 'prescribed entitlements'—

omit, insert—

'reserved matters'."

This amendment deals with a typographical error previously referred to in my second-reading speech.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 33, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 34—

Mr BORBIDGE (5.24 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 29, line 7, 'prescribed entitlements'—

omit, insert—

'reserved matters'.

At page 29, line 18, 'prescribed entitlement'—

omit, insert—

'reserved matter'."

Amendments 7 and 8 correct typographical errors referred to in my second-reading speech.

Amendments agreed to.

Ms BLIGH: I move the following amendment—

"At page 29, lines 25 and 26, 'Act, the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977*—

omit, insert—

'or another Act'."

The purpose of this clause is to provide a general power for the Minister for Industrial Relations and the Public Service Commissioner to make binding directives over the conditions of employment of public servants. The power to make binding regulations over the conditions of service of public servants previously resided with the Governor in Council in the regulation-making power provided to that office under the Public Service Management and Employment Act 1988. By this legislation, that power is to be put into the hands of the Industrial Relations Minister and, to a lesser extent, the Public Service Commissioner.

From discussions with the Premier's officers, I understand that those directives will be similar to PSMC standards and to a large part will actually cover a number of the issues currently covered by PSMC standards. However, PSMC standards cannot override other Acts. The limitation that prevented them from doing so is currently contained in section 4.15 of the Public Sector Management Commission Act amended and brought up to date by amendment to the Financial Administration and Audit Act amendment number 24, 1996, which currently reads that if there is an inconsistency between a standard and that Act, another Act or a financial management standard made under the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977, that Act, the other Act or the financial

management standard prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.

Words have been taken from that clause and inserted into the Public Service Bill but the words "or another Act" have been left out. In my view, the omission of those words runs the risk that directives could be made regarding a number of items. I will give some examples to clarify my point. For example, directives could be made by the Minister for Industrial Relations that are related to items such as the taking of annual leave, which could arguably contravene the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act or be inconsistent with them. There is no guidance in the Public Service Bill as to which should prevail. Equally, directives could be made by the Public Service Commissioner with no reference to a Minister, Cabinet or the Governor in Council regarding items such as recruitment and selection provisions and processes which are inconsistent with or contravene the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. The proposed changes, for example, to the definition of "merit" contained at clause 78 of the Bill would give some cause for concern in that regard. The new definition of "merit" will include provision that personal attributes relevant to the position can be taken into account. In my view, that contains at least some scope for directives made in relation to what personal qualities might entail to be inconsistent with or contravene the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act.

It would be in the interests of clarity to spell out that it is not the intention of the Government through this clause that directives that have been made without reference to Cabinet or a Minister could override Acts which have been made by this Parliament. Essentially, this Bill concentrates more powers away from, as I said before, the Governor in Council and into the hands of an individual Minister. The Industrial Relations Minister through this clause is being given the power to effectively evade the Act for which he is responsible, that is, the Industrial Relations Act, in respect of those employees for whom he has responsibility, that is, public servants. In my view, the inclusion of the words "or any other Act" will provide an extra safety mechanism and should be acceptable to the Government. I see no reason why those words have been excluded. I would like some clarification from the Premier as to why those words are being excluded.

Mr BORBIDGE: In respect of the two amendments to clause 34 proposed by the honourable member, I will deal with them one at a time. With one the Government has no

difficulty. As to the other one—as certain information is made available, the honourable member will see why we do have some difficulty with it. In regard to item 4, the first amendment to clause 34—my advice with respect to that proposed amendment is that the wording is superfluous and adds nothing to the Bill.

Clause 34 (2) describes the matters about which the commissioner may issue directives and guidelines. Subclause 2(d) prescribes that the commissioner may issue directives and guidelines about any matter that under this or another Act is required or permitted to be prescribed by the commissioner by directive or guideline. Therefore, the Parliament will determine which matters under another Act may be prescribed by the commissioner.

Furthermore, clause 52 prescribes that the chief executive officers, in discharging their responsibilities under this Act or another Act, must comply with all relevant laws, industrial determinations and directives. The amendment is not inconsistent with what I have just said. Although it is argued that it is superfluous and adds nothing to the Bill, I will accept the proposed amendment moved by the member for South Brisbane. I will offer further comments in respect of item 5 when that is formally dealt with by the Committee.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the Premier for accepting the amendment. However, I make the point that, in relation to clause 52, which sets out how chief executives should discharge their responsibilities—perhaps we will have more opportunity when debating the next proposed amendment to discuss this matter—my concern is that, although it specifies that chief executive officers must in discharging their duties comply with relevant laws, industrial determinations and directives, it is not made clear how chief executive officers would discharge their duties where an industrial determination, a law or directive were inconsistent with each other. What I am seeking to do does in fact clarify that to some extent. Similarly, my next amendment seeks to do that. So we can debate the meaning, intent and clarity of clause 52 during the debate on the next proposed amendment. I thank the Premier for accepting my amendment.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: I would like to add something that goes to the first comment that the Premier made when he spoke about this matter in which he said that his advice suggests that the inclusion of the words that the Opposition spokesperson seeks to be included are superfluous. I point out to him

that the clause as it is drafted contains superfluous words. Those words are the words "subordinate legislation". Section 7 of the Acts Interpretation Act would advise him that those words are not required. It states that a citation of an Act includes the citation of subordinate legislation made under that Act.

I think that what the Opposition spokesman is seeking to do in relation to this amendment is to perhaps provide a safety net. That certainly would not hurt. Unless the Premier is able to advise the Parliament of any contrary intention that he may have, it certainly would not hurt to include the words that the member for South Brisbane has sought to be included.

Mr Borbidge: We are accepting the amendment.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: Then I accept that the Premier is accepting the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Ms BLIGH: I move the following amendment—

"At page 29, after line 28—

insert—

'(7) In addition, if a directive or guideline is inconsistent with, and provides less favourable employment conditions than an award or industrial agreement under the *Industrial Relations Act 1990*, the award or industrial agreement prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.'

It is generally the case that in the public sector, awards or agreements made under the Industrial Relations Act are made by consent between the unions involved, the employees and the Government as the employer. Those mechanisms for regulating employment are generally done by consent. They are the result of negotiation and they generally represent a consensus between all parties.

In my view, providing a power for a single commissioner to unilaterally override the provisions of any of those consensual agreements threatens to undermine the very basis of the employment relationship between the Government and Public Service employees. In my view, if it is not the intention of the Government to allow a directive or guideline to override the provision of an award or an industrial agreement, then the Government should be prepared to accept this amendment because it merely seeks to clarify the relationship between directives, awards and industrial agreements.

There are a number of places in this Bill where awards and industrial agreements are mentioned. I do not believe that the way in which they are currently configured clarifies the issue sufficiently. As I outlined earlier, in clause 52 chief executive officers are directed that, in discharging their responsibilities, they must comply with all relevant laws, industrial determinations and directives and have regard to all relevant guidelines. In relation to clause 52(b), it is not clear where there is an inconsistency between a law, for example, the Anti-Discrimination Act, an industrial determination, for example, a provision of an award or an industrial agreement, and/or a directive made by either the Industrial Relations Minister or the Public Service Commissioner. So there is no direction given to chief executive officers about how to manage inconsistencies where they may occur.

I turn to clause 117, which states that Public Service employees are employees for the purpose of the Industrial Relations Act. Clearly, the Industrial Relations Act applies to Public Service employees. However, as a clause, that does nothing to clarify what should happen in the event of an inconsistency between agreements or awards made under that Act and directives as provided for in clause 34.

However, probably of most concern is clause 118, which provides for instances where there are inconsistencies between directives and industrial agreements. Firstly, the effect of this clause is to provide that it applies to a directive only if a regulation declares that it is a directive to which this clause applies. That is an incredibly messy way to go about regulating public sector employment. It means that where the Government is seeking to issue a directive that may or may not be inconsistent, it has to come before the Parliament and a regulation must be passed to allow a Public Service Commissioner or the Minister for Industrial Relations to issue such a directive.

Secondly, clause 118(2) provides that only where a directive has been outlined in regulations to be such a directive will the inconsistency be such where the agreement to the industrial agreement will prevail. I think that it is quite clear in clause 118 that it is arguably the intention of the Government to allow directives to be made which may in fact be inconsistent with industrial agreements and awards made under the Industrial Relations Act which are not subject to the regulation outlined in clause 118(1). The effect of that is that it will have a Public Service Commissioner

acting on his or her own to issue a directive without reference to a Minister, Cabinet, Governor in Council or the Parliament.

That will have the effect of overriding, undermining, changing or altering a clause or provision of an industrial agreement or award which has been developed by consensual negotiation between the industrial parties. I think that is something to be avoided. As I said, if it is not the intention of the Government to use directives in this way or to allow Public Service Commissioners to use their power in that way—in the way in which they issue directives and the way in which directives are used in relation to industrial agreements—then I urge the Government to accept this amendment and to clarify the issue.

Mr BORBIDGE: I believe that the amendment that the honourable member seeks to make to clause 34 under item 5 is either based on a mistaken premise or deliberately hypocritical. At this stage, I will opt for the former. When one first looks at the amendment, which is intended to prevent a directive or guideline undercutting an award, I think that most people would say that that is a matter worthy of support. In fairness to the honourable member, that was my first reaction.

However, subsequent advice is that the amendment proposed by the honourable member is directly contrary to section 519 of the Industrial Relations Act. I will read into *Hansard* what section 519 provides, because it is of direct relevance to this amendment. It states—

"If an award, industrial agreement, certified agreement, enterprise flexibility agreement or other decision of the Industrial Court of the Industrial Commission is in force in relation to a matter in respect of which an Act, other than this Act—

(a) prescribes a means by which that matter must, or may, be determined; and

(b) does not prescribe to the effect that in determining that matter any relevant award or decision of the commission or industrial agreement, certified agreement, enterprise flexibility agreement or enterprise flexibility agreement must be observed, or complied with; and

a determination made in relation to that matter in accordance with that other Act is inconsistent with any

such award, industrial agreement, certified agreement, enterprise flexibility agreement, or other decision, the determination prevails to the extent of the inconsistency and, to that extent, the award, agreement, or decision ceases to have operation."

Honourable members can now see that the Labor Party, when in Government, specifically provided in the Industrial Relations Act that determinations made under the Public Service Management and Employment Act could override awards, industrial agreements, certified agreements, enterprise flexibility agreements and decisions of the Industrial Court or Commission. For the information of honourable members, I point out that the effect of determinations on the Public Service has been to enhance conditions of public servants. For decades, Governments have always had the right to set certain employment conditions through their own legislation. The Public Service Bill in this respect simply seeks to retain the status quo.

I point out to the honourable member that, if she wishes to pursue this amendment, she should be aware that she would be seeking to overturn a law which was introduced by the Labor Party in 1990 and which has remained in force until this day. I then pose the questions: why shift the goal posts? Why has the Opposition not circulated an amendment amending section 519 or repealing it? I think I know the answer to those questions, which is that perhaps the provisions of section 519 have been overlooked by the honourable member. I ask the honourable member: how does the proposed amendment fit in with section 519? What effect will it have on that section? Does the Opposition now wish to reject this section, which it introduced when in Government in 1990?

Ms BLIGH: I was aware of section 519. I had forgotten that I had proposed the amendment in the event that the previous amendment, which has just been accepted, was not accepted. If the previous amendment was not accepted, the effect of an application of section 519 may well have been in doubt.

However, in the light of section 519 and what the Premier has just said, could the Premier clarify the effect of that on clause 118, which provides, as I have already outlined, for the inconsistency between directives and industrial agreements? It provides the capacity for a regulation to declare that a directive is covered in that way, but if a regulation is not made which covers the directive, I presume

that section 519 applies. I am acting on the basis that section 519 would apply. Therefore, what is the purpose of the regulation-making power in clause 118? What circumstances does the Premier envisage that it would cover?

Mr BORBIDGE: Clause 118 deals with enterprise bargaining agreements to be negotiated between employers and employees.

Ms BLIGH: I do not have section 519 of the Industrial Relations Act in front of me, but I recall that it covers enterprise agreements and enterprise flexibility agreements. Therefore, I am not sure why the regulation-making power in clause 118 is necessary.

Mr BORBIDGE: Obviously, there can always be negotiation between employers and employees, but my advice is that the concerns of the honourable member are covered and that it is the requirement of the other clause that she referred to.

Mr WELLS: I remain concerned about the Premier's opposition to the amendment proposed by the member for South Brisbane. I take on board what he says about section 519 of the Industrial Relations Act. I draw his attention to the fact that the amendment proposed by the honourable member for South Brisbane is not only consistent with section 519 of the Industrial Relations Act—

Mr Borbidge: It is in conflict.

Mr WELLS: It is consistent with it; indeed, it is a subset of it. In view of the fact that there is a principle of statutory interpretation—which the Honourable the Premier knows very well—that an earlier statute is interpreted in the light of a later statute, the omission of these principles from this particular section might be read by a court as having the effect of reading down section 519 of the Industrial Relations Act. In other words, I am putting to the Premier that if we do not put in words along the lines of those suggested by the honourable member for South Brisbane, then it may very well be that we will dilute the effectiveness of section 519 of the Industrial Relations Act. I ask the Premier: is that a concern for him and will he give the matter further consideration, specifically in light of that principle of statutory interpretation that a later Act takes precedence over and reads down an earlier Act?

Mr BORBIDGE: I am advised that clause 118 is consistent with an amendment that was drafted by the previous Government. Therefore, basically what is envisaged is that

the amendments drafted by the previous Government, or the impact of them, will continue in place. I refer to the Goss Government's enterprise bargaining agreement which allowed agencies the option to vary conditions and the quantum of some determinations—things such as meal allowances for overtime, appointment and transfer expenses, travelling and relieving allowances and motor vehicle allowances. In respect of the particular inquiries in regard to clause 118—it is consistent with an amendment drafted by the previous Government to cover those particular possibilities.

Amendment (Ms Bligh) negated.

Clause 34, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 35 to 37, as read, agreed to.

Clause 38—

Ms BLIGH (5.48 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 30, after line 17—

insert—

'(2) The Governor in Council may appoint a person as commissioner only if satisfied the person has extensive knowledge and experience in 1 or more of the following areas—

- (a) management of organisations within the public sector of any government or in private enterprise;
- (b) academic pursuit, teaching and publication of knowledge about public policy or public administration;
- (c) human resource management;
- (d) industrial relations;
- (e) application of equity and merit principles.

'Disqualification for appointment as commissioner

'38A. A person is not qualified to be appointed or continue as commissioner if the person—

- (a) is an undischarged bankrupt or is taking advantage of the laws in force relating to bankrupt or insolvent debtors; or
- (b) is convicted in Queensland of an indictable offence (whether on indictment or summarily) or is convicted elsewhere in respect of an act or omission that, if it

occurred in Queensland, would constitute an indictable offence; or

- (c) is a patient within the meaning of the *Mental Health Act 1974*.

'Advertisement for selection of commissioner

'38B.(1) The Premier must advertise notice of the Premier's intention to select a person for recommendation for appointment as commissioner.

'(2) The notice must be advertised nationally and must call for applications from suitably qualified persons to be considered for selection.'."

The amendment provides for the insertion of a number of provisions which I will not read through, but which basically provide a set of qualifications and disqualifications for the appointment of the Public Service Commissioner and a requirement for the position to be advertised.

Clause 38 actually relates to the appointment of the newly created office of Public Service Commissioner. The amendments seek to restore a range of provisions which were contained in the previous Public Sector Management Commission Act which related to the qualifications, disqualifications and requirements to advertise the positions of what were a number of commissioners under the previous Act. The new and increased powers of the newly created position of Public Service Commissioner include the power to make directives which, as we have just been discussing, are significant, widespread and wide reaching. They also include the power to make guidelines and the power to exercise significantly increased appeal and review powers without reference to any other commissioner—as was the case with the previous construction of the PSMC—without reference to Ministers, or Cabinet in many cases, and without any requirement for parliamentary scrutiny. The commissioner can have substantial influence on the employment of public sector workers. The State is the largest single employer of workers in Queensland and it has an obligation to ensure that the occupant of the office of Public Service Commissioner is appointed on an accountable basis. It is imperative that the appointment to that office be scrupulous and, in my view, Parliament should be prepared to place some conditions on the qualifications and disqualifications and the requirement to advertise for the position.

I think that the widely increased powers that I have just spoken about are indicative of a number of concerns that I have had about this Bill all along, which I have spoken about at some length. I take this opportunity to refer to some of the comments that have been made by members of this Parliament on the Public Service Bill. During the debate on the Public Service Bill the last time we had the opportunity to discuss it, there was some criticism about the length of time that non-Government members took to discuss the title of the Bill. It was important that non-Government members took the opportunity to debate at some length, during the discussion of the title of the Bill, the documents—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Is the member speaking to clause 38?

Ms BLIGH: I am talking about the powers of the Public Service Commissioner, and this amendment does relate to that. Opposition members took the opportunity to discuss in broad detail a particularly significant document that the Premier had failed to table. Any discussion on that was warranted, so there was no filibustering on this side of the Chamber.

As I said, the Queensland Public Service is the largest employer in the State. It is important that we get it right. It is important to the employees that we treat officers such as the Public Service Commissioner with a great deal of scrutiny and accountability. It is important to the public administration of this State that we do likewise. It may not be important to those people who have criticised the length of debate on this Bill that the rights and conditions of employees of the State are protected, but I would like to make it clear that it is important to me and to the Opposition, and I will not be shirking my responsibilities in this debate to discuss that matter fully.

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner is absolutely central to the changes to public sector administration that the Premier is seeking in the Public Service Bill. The powers which reside in the newly created office are significantly increased on those which previously resided with public sector commissioners. There are powers, as I have outlined in discussions on the previous amendments, which previously resided only with the Governor in Council or with the Minister being put into the hands of a single commissioner. It is more important than ever that the appointment to that office be absolutely scrupulous and one on which the Parliament itself places some conditions.

The conditions which I have outlined are those conditions which resided in the previous legislation, the Public Sector Management Commission Act. If honourable members look at the conditions, they will see that they are reasonable. They require that the qualifications for appointment to that position be in fairly broad terms. They require a knowledge of human resource management, industrial relations, management of organisations within the public sector and so on. I would have thought they are not onerous hurdles for anybody whom any member in this Chamber would like to see appointed to such a powerful and important position.

Similarly, a disqualification for appointment as commissioner spells out that a person should not hold the position and should cease the appointment. The person is not qualified to be appointed and cannot continue in the appointment if he or she is an undischarged bankrupt, is convicted in Queensland of an indictable offence or is a patient within the meaning of the Mental Health Act. I would have thought that the provisions contained in this amendment are important safeguards which ought to receive the support of all members of this Chamber. In my view, it would be a real mistake if we failed to take the opportunity to ensure that the Public Service Commissioner could be removed from office if that person met any of the criteria I have just outlined.

Lastly, the requirement proposed in the amendment that would constitute a new clause 38B provides that the Premier must advertise notice of his intention to select a person for recommendation for appointment as commissioner. The notice must be advertised nationally and must call for applications from suitably qualified persons to be considered for selection. If we are seriously interested in getting the best person into a job which will regulate and determine the employment conditions of potentially all of the employees of the State, I believe that is the minimum that should be required. That is what the Parliament should require, and I urge members to support the amendment.

Mr BORBIDGE: I presume this is the Coaldrake amendment. Each of the proposed clauses amending the Bill is a direct steal from sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 of the Public Sector Management Commission Act, yet the Opposition has the gall to criticise this Government and to say that it is heading back to the future. Everyone knows, and certainly the Public Service of Queensland knows, what a disaster the PSMC was with respect to the management of the Queensland Public

Service, and every Queensland public servant would have a dim view of the effect of the Coaldrake regime on the Queensland Public Service.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: What the member is seeking to reintroduce into this Chamber is the Coaldrake clause so that the Opposition can go back to the future and wreak havoc on the Public Service like it did last time.

Clause 78 of the Bill prescribes for the first time a definition of "merit" in legislation for the appointment of all Public Service employees, including the Commissioner of the Public Service. In addition, clause 77 of the Bill provides an obligation on the employing authority to advertise the intention of appointing someone to perform duties as an officer. Because the PSMC Act is primarily concerned with the establishment of the commission, there was no clause specifically in that Act dealing with the general application of advertising Public Service positions. As the Bill will combine these two bases of legislation—the PSMC Act and the PSM&E Act—the appointment on merit and the advertisement of vacancies will cover all vacancies in the Queensland Public Service. It is therefore unnecessary to have special provisions for selection of the Commissioner of the Public Service as proposed by the Opposition. So the amendments moved by the honourable member are unnecessary, because merit selection procedures are already enshrined in clause 78, and public advertising of positions is set out in clause 77.

The curious way that the PSMC Act was drafted in this respect served only to give undue weight to the selection of academics, such as Dr Peter Coaldrake, to head the Public Service. I think it is bad public policy that the Governor in Council could select a person to head the Public Service solely on the basis of—and I quote from the honourable member's amendment—"academic pursuit, teaching and publication of knowledge about public policy or public administration". I can just imagine the doozeys who would walk through the door! In other words, a person with no experience—

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: No, under what the honourable member is proposing, a person—

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member should calm down. She has been pretty cooperative tonight. She should just

calm down a bit. Under what the honourable member is proposing, a person with no experience in the work force at all but who could write a good job application and who has published a few articles in obscure academic journals, possibly in Canada, New Zealand, Africa, Afghanistan or anywhere else in the world, could be appointed to head the Public Service. We all know that the past six years of Labor almost destroyed the Public Service, and from this amendment it is clear that the honourable member has learned nothing from this and is giving us a back to the future amendment to consider—a back to Dr Peter Coaldrake amendment. Peter Coaldrake has gone. We do not want him back; the Public Service does not want him back; the people of Queensland do not want him back.

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: In responding to the matters raised by the honourable member for South Brisbane, the Honourable the Premier referred to clause 78 and said that it enshrines in legislation for the first time the principles of merit selection. It might do that, but it does so only to this extent, and it is to this extent that the Premier is misleading the Chamber.

Progress reported.

ANTI-ASIAN COMMENTS

Mr PALASZCZUK (Inala) (6 p.m.): I move—

"In view of the concerns raised by the Queensland Graingrowers' Association, the Tourism Taskforce and the Tourism Council of Australia, this House calls on the Premier to show moral leadership and disassociate his Government from the anti-Asian comments of Mrs Pauline Hanson, the Member for Greenslopes, and the public show of support for Mrs Hanson by the Minister for Emergency Services and the Government Deputy Whip."

On rising to speak to this motion, I ask all members to consider the program goal for the Bureau of Ethnic Affairs, which 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."

Australia has been, and I believe still is, a tolerant society, with the issue of race not being used as a tool to alienate one group of Australians from another. As a migrant who

arrived in Australia from war-torn Europe with his parents and brother, I have never heard anything but praise for this great country from my parents, who have made Australia their home. Together with other migrants, we settled in at the Wacol Migrant Hostel and then moved on to settle in surrounding areas. We have, as have other migrants, contributed to the economic, cultural and religious interests of Australia. My eldest daughter has just returned from London after studying for her master's degree at the London School of Economics. She is certainly going to be a great contributor to the business community of Australia in years to come.

However, one of the difficulties I encountered growing up as a young boy in Australia was the jibes from others concerning the strange spelling of my name and my ethnic origins. But this quickly ended as I made good, lifelong friends and links with other fellow Australians in my community. However, I must point out that when I was elected to the Parliament of Queensland, I suffered two attacks on my ethnic origins by two members of Parliament. One was from a former Transport Minister, and the other was from a former Minister for Ethnic Affairs—adults who should have known better. I know how it feels emotionally to be attacked in such a manner, especially if one has lived in this country for practically all one's life and been accepted for who one is an Australian. Those two former Ministers should have known better. One was the former Transport Minister, Don Lane, and the other was the former Minister for Ethnic Affairs, Mrs Yvonne Chapman, who I understand is now the Mayor of Pine Rivers.

As I said in this House yesterday in the debate on the Estimate committee reports, the Goss Government did much in Government to foster economic and cultural ties with Asian countries. These initiatives promoted a greater understanding between our country and our near neighbours. I know how important the area of trading relations with our Asian neighbours is to my electorate. With a very large industrial estate and the thousands of jobs it creates, many in the direct manufacture of goods for export to Asian countries, I am aware of what a downturn in exports to Asian countries would do to my electorate. The electorate of the Federal member for Oxley borders mine. Many people in her electorate are also engaged in those manufacturing industries and those businesses that export to Asian countries. If the member for Oxley is intending to represent all of her electorate, she should take into

account what I have said in this place this evening.

As the shadow Minister for Natural Resources and with my extensive consultation with primary producers, I also know how a downturn in exports will affect our rural communities. It would devastate them. In fact, I was amazed at the destinations to which much of our primary production is sent. Take meat, for example. It goes to Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Wool goes to China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Malaysia. Our fisheries products go to Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. Sugar goes to Singapore. Cotton goes to Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, China, Thailand and Vietnam. When one looks at the list I have just quoted, it is little wonder that Ian Macfarlane of the Graingrowers Association has come out so strongly for the Prime Minister to take a lead in the debate generated by the Federal member for Oxley. Honourable members should consider whether it is important to trade with Asian countries, accept jobs as a result of such trade and accept the standard of living that such trade brings. Therefore, it is now a matter of urgency that the Premier and his Government should show some moral courage in dissociating themselves from the anti-Asian comments made by the Federal member for Oxley and the members on the other side of this House.

I turn now to the area of tourism, which generates substantial income in the electorate of the Premier and also that of the Minister for Tourism. Yesterday, the Tourism Task Force, one of Australia's peak tourism bodies, expressed its concern about the rising level of racial intolerance in the community and the effect it is having on the tourism industry. Task force representatives outlined cases on the Gold Coast where Japanese tourists have been both physically and verbally abused simply because they chose Queensland in which to spend their money and have a good time. The comments by the Federal member for Oxley cannot be directly blamed for the actions of those on the coast who committed these disgraceful acts. However, there can be little doubt that her outspoken criticism of Asian immigration has contributed to a growing climate of intolerance from which these types of abuses result.

But the most worrying aspect of this issue has been the absolute silence from both the Premier and the Minister for Tourism. The Premier is the member for the largest and fastest growing tourism centre in this State. As the member for Surfers Paradise, he represents every business owner, tourism

operator, hotel and motel owner in his electorate. The Premier has a duty to make his position clear with respect to the comments of Ms Hanson and stick up for the industry on which the vast majority of voters in his electorate rely. It should be kept in mind that nearly 400,000 Japanese holiday-makers spend time in Queensland each year. If Ms Hanson is given a free run by the Premier, this State has an enormous amount to lose. Each year over 264,000 Japanese tourists spend time on the Gold Coast alone, spending on average \$340 a day on accommodation, food and entertainment. What kind of message does it send when just around the corner from the electorate of the Premier we have the member for Southport wining and dining Ms Hanson? What kind of message does it send when the member for Greenslopes carries on about hepatitis in the Aboriginal and Asian communities? What kind of message does it send when the member for Mansfield publicly embraces both Ms Hanson and her intolerant comments? How can this Government condone that sort of behaviour when it adds to the public perception that this Government approves of Ms Hanson's opinions?

The Premier had the guts to pull Mr Veivers into line when he got carried away and attacked Aboriginal people on the coast and spoke out about the gay tourism industry. Why is the Premier silent now? It would seem this Government is selective in which ethnic and minority groups it is willing to see attacked by Government members. The Minister for Emergency Services can be demoted for getting stuck into the gay community but he is free to promote the views of people such as Pauline Hanson. If just one Japanese tour group were to cancel its trip to Queensland as a result of reports about the treatment dished out to Asian visitors on the Gold Coast, it would cost us a mint. Just one group of 30 Japanese tourists staying for five days and spending \$340 per day contributes \$51,000 to the Queensland economy, and that does not even include spending on airfares.

If the Queensland Government does not gather the intestinal fortitude to stand up against the views espoused by Ms Hanson, the effect on the Queensland tourism industry could rival the infamous pilots strike of the late 1980s. I thought the Minister for Tourism was going to do the right thing on this issue when he told Estimates Committee D that he would be coming out publicly in support of the tourism industry and against the views of Ms Hanson. Unfortunately, the National and Liberal Party machines have obviously told him to keep his head down, for we have heard

nothing. Let me quote Mr Davidson's statement to the committee—

"Like you I have concerns with the statements expressed by the Federal member for Oxley . . . I think we need to put to rest the fears and concerns this creates and the impact this has"—

had—

"not just on our Asian tourists but also our Asian residents."

The Minister's silence has been deafening. The Minister should give us an assurance that he is not going to do nothing and say nothing on this issue when, by his own admission and from the comments of the Tourism Task Force, it is clear that Ms Hanson is hurting our second-largest industry. The Sunshine Coast is one of this State's fastest growing and most popular tourism destinations, and yet once again the member for Noosa, like the Premier, has refused to protect the tourism industry from the likes of Ms Hanson.

Time expired.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich) (6.10 p.m.): I second the motion. I am disturbed that we have seen a succession of Liberal and National Party members associate themselves with the controversial member for Oxley, Mrs Pauline Hanson. By feting Mrs Hanson, these conservative politicians are seeking to attract support from those sections of the community who share her views even though the official policy of their parties opposes those attitudes.

Mrs Hanson's views have received widespread publicity both at home and abroad, and they deserve serious debate. They deserve to be refuted by using the facts and not slogans. While Mrs Hanson's attacks on Aboriginal health, education and welfare programs are misguided in the extreme, she has said that the colour of one's skin does not mean that a person is disadvantaged. With that part I agree. There are many disadvantaged people in our community. There are those who cannot find a job. There are those whose quality of life is impaired because of physical or intellectual disabilities. There are those who are disadvantaged because of where they live.

There can be no doubt that indigenous Australians as a group represent the most disadvantaged group in Australian society. Indigenous Australians have been dispossessed—they have suffered and continue to suffer discrimination. Before 1967, they were not even included in the census! As a group, indigenous Australians have a shorter

life expectancy than other Australians. They are less likely to have completed school, they are less likely to have gone to university and they are less likely to be found in positions of power and authority in Australian society.

Mrs Hanson professes a desire for equality, but there can be no equality in Australian society if we tolerate such disadvantage on the part of any group within our community. Australians pride themselves as being a people who believe in a fair go. We believe in supporting those in need. We provide financial support through pensions and family payments to those who, by virtue of their age, disability or family circumstances are economically disadvantaged. We provide support through concessional fares, rate rebates and power rebates to assist those who are economically or socially disadvantaged. We provide for universal access to our health and education systems to help overcome the social and economic circumstances which would otherwise restrict or deny access to these basic services. I believe that the vast majority of Australians would not want their society to be any other way.

I say to Mrs Hanson that I do not receive a family allowance, but I do not begrudge those who do. If we want an Australian society in which people have equal access to share in our nation's wealth, in which people regardless of their gender, race or creed are truly equals, then we must work to root out disadvantage by every means at our disposal.

Not content with her divisive comments directed at indigenous Australians, Mrs Hanson's rejection of multiculturalism has further divided our community. She has claimed that the abolition of multiculturalism will "allow those from ethnic backgrounds to join mainstream Australia." I ask: who here does not have an ethnic background? After all, Australia is one of the great immigrant nations of the world. I am a proud Australian. Both my wife and I can point to five generations of our family living on this continent. Yet that does not stop me celebrating the culture of my ancestors. Yes, I do enjoy a pint of Guinness at the Irish Club, and yes, I do enjoy trying to sing a Welsh hymn in the language of my forebears. I am proud of my ethnic background; I am proud of the fact that Australia has provided a welcome to generations of immigrants, and I trust that notwithstanding the efforts of Mrs Hanson and her ilk, Australia will continue to welcome those who seek to embrace this country and its traditions as their own.

Whether we or our ancestors came from Asia or Europe is of little consequence—we are all Australians: Vietnamese Australians, German Australians, Italian Australians, Chinese Australians, Irish Australians, the list goes on and on. Australian society has been enriched by the contribution of our citizens, whether they were born here or whether they have chosen to be a part of our nation. Australians should not be beguiled by the simplistic but emotive rhetoric of those who would deny our ethnic origins and who seek to fan xenophobic and at times racist sentiments in Australian society.

Australia is a multicultural society, and Australia has a moral responsibility to play a constructive role in world affairs. Australia reaches out to the rest of the world, both socially and economically. Geographically, we are a part of the Asia/Pacific region. We share this part of the world with neighbours who, like Australians, have diverse ethnic and cultural traditions.

Mrs Hanson thinks that Asian Australians "have their own culture and religion, that they form ghettos and do not assimilate." Let me inform her that they are not a homogenous group, they are as culturally diverse as other Australians. Their religious beliefs are as diverse as those of other Australians and areas such as West End and Darra are not ghettos. But the great bond that they have with other Australians is that they, too, are Australians.

There are a range of extremist groups in Australian society that have exploited the debate which has raged around the comments made by Mrs Hanson and others. There are those who believe in what I call the gravity theory in foreign policy, that is, all of those people who live up there ultimately must come down here. In the 1880s it was the Russians, in the 1950s it was the Chinese! Frankly, it is about time that those Australians who genuinely believe in a fair go stood up and were counted.

I believe in a tolerant and cooperative society. I believe that Australia is unique in having a community which is diverse but in which the contribution of its citizens is valued regardless of their race, colour or creed. I believe that these fine traditions are worth defending against the attacks of those who profess equality but preach intolerance and discrimination and whose words and deeds seem to be designed to turn one Australian against another.

Time expired.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'Council of Australia', insert—

'about recent anti-Asian comments, this House notes the major contribution of Queensland's ethnic communities to the economic and social development of the State and further, that this House recognises the importance of strengthening our trade and investment links with Asia.' "

Therefore, the amended motion will read—

"In view of the concerns raised by the Queensland Graingrowers' Association, the Tourism Taskforce and the Tourism Council of Australia about recent anti-Asian comments, this House notes the major contribution of Queensland's ethnic communities to the economic and social development of the State and further, that this House recognises the importance of strengthening our trade and investment links with Asia."

The Queensland community today is very different from that of the past. It is a community that celebrates the enriching of life by people—increasingly Australian born—whose cultures are drawn from outside the formerly established mode. It is a community that is outward looking, thoroughly engaged with the wider world and undeniably more vibrant and vital because of this. These are things to celebrate. These are elements of life from which everyone benefits.

The Queensland Graingrowers Association, the Tourism Council of Australia and the Tourism Task Force have raised concerns about recent anti-Asian comments that have surfaced in the public domain and the impact those comments are having on our trading relationship with Asia. On 19 October, I will lead a delegation to Shanghai in China which will see the Queensland Government open a trade and investment office in that province. The decision to open a trade and investment office in Shanghai is further proof of the maturing relationship between our State and the wider Asian community. This Government has worked hard to strengthen these ties. As Premier, I have already visited Indonesia and met with President Suharto. I have visited Japan and Korea to meet with leaders of business and Government.

The many cultures represented in today's Queensland have contributed mightily to the

economic and social development of this State. They continue to do so and they will long continue to do so. This process will continue because right-thinking, sensible Queenslanders recognise worth, value communal contribution and will not have a bar of bad behaviour. Australia is a marvellously egalitarian society. We have to work to keep it that way. Every society changes over time, but certain precepts are sacrosanct. Our society is now multicultural. This is a boon at home. It is also a benefit abroad. Queensland and Australia must recognise the importance of strengthening trade and investment links with the vital economies of Asia. Wearing blinkers is no way to focus that vision.

Hon. D. J. SLACK (Burnett—Minister for Economic Development and Trade and Minister Assisting the Premier) (6.17 p.m.): I have much pleasure in seconding the amendment. Members should consider this matter in a positive light. I say to the members opposite that the way that they are presenting this issue is not helping trade issues nor building closer relationships with our neighbours, and I have been closely associated with those matters over a long period.

There is no question in my mind that there has been much overreaction in the community and from members opposite about this issue. Talking about it is only adding fuel to any fire that may be out there about any damage that may be done by misinterpretation of what the community may feel about the subject. Political correctness is one problem we face when dealing with these types of issues. There is an overreaction in the community to political correctness which does not help anybody. There is no doubt, and I will put it on the record here, that any racist or racially offensive statements are not condoned by this party or me. I am not going to make any judgments, but I do respect the rights of people to put their points of view.

Opposition members should bear in mind that they are referring to statements made by an independent member who incidentally won a Labor Party held seat. I think that the Labor Party has overreacted to these statements but, on the advice I have received, that reaction has not been reflected overseas.

Let us look on the positive side of what has happened. As the Premier has said, we are engaging in very considerable trade expansion with all the countries to the north of us—the Asian countries. There is mutual cooperation between us in the establishment of our sister-State relationships with Central

Java, Shanghai and Saitama in Japan. We are building on that. We are receiving delegations from those areas. As the Premier said correctly, we are opening an office in Shanghai. He and I will be visiting that office next week.

What has been put forward as an amendment is the positive side of what the Queensland Government is doing. We recognise the importance of strengthening our trade and investment links. Yesterday, I answered a question from the member for Mundungburra on the issue of Korea Zinc. We have had very close, fruitful negotiations with Korea Zinc over a period. This has led to investment in Queensland of many millions of dollars. Queensland is going to benefit immensely from those negotiations.

Our trade with the countries to the north of us has increased dramatically in the last few years. I shall give members some figures. The Japanese trade is worth \$4 billion; trade with South Korea, over \$1 billion; India, \$617m; the United States is fourth now; Taiwan, \$590m; New Zealand is next; and Indonesia, \$491m—all building dramatically. There is no doubt that the tourism trade between our State and the countries to the north of us is increasing dramatically.

We have also had cultural exchanges, and they are increasing. We have education exchanges, and they are increasing—all with the support and help of this Government. We have bipartisan support for this. I do not think there is any point in being negative about these particular issues. We should go forth in a positive manner.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank) (6.23 p.m.): I rise tonight to support the call for the Premier of Queensland to stand up and be counted and speak out against the growing anti-Asian and anti-Aboriginal sentiments that are being expressed by the member for Oxley, Ms Pauline Hanson, and others. In doing so, I formally request that the amendment moved by the Premier, which states in part "Queensland's ethnic communities", be amended so that after the word "ethnic" the words "and indigenous" be inserted.

Mr BORBIDGE: For the benefit of the honourable member, I am happy to accept that. The only reason it was not included in the amendment was that it was not in the original motion.

Mr ROBERTSON: I appreciate that, and I thank the Premier for his cooperation. However, in expressing these concerns about

the comments of Ms Hanson and others, I also express my concern and dismay at the comments made by the previous speaker, the Minister for Economic Development and Trade, particularly in relation to an answer to a question on notice tabled by me last month. The question I asked the Minister related to the potential for statements made by the member for Oxley to impact on Queensland's trade relations in Asia. Instead of a considered and accurate reply, the Minister chose to question my motives for asking such a question and said—

"I am disappointed in the mischievous raising of this issue by the honourable member. He is attempting to make connections that do not exist . . ."

With this, the Minister has demonstrated how out of touch he is, because his answer came at the same time as his own Federal leader, the Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, stated—

"Asian media coverage of the controversial views of the Independent parliamentarian, was not helpful in promoting Australia's exports to the region."

Despite this admission, our Minister, after allegedly checking with our overseas offices, was apparently not aware of any reports in the Asian media on comments made by the member for Oxley. Obviously the Minister is either poorly advised or he has his head in the sand because, as was reported in yesterday's *Courier-Mail*, Ms Hanson's comments have been reported in a number of overseas media outlets, including the *Asia Times*, and newspapers in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. In spite of the Minister's criticism of me, it appears that I also have the support of the Graingrowers Association, which has expressed its concern that a resurgence of anti-Asian sentiment could harm exports to the Asian region. The head of the Tourism Council of Australia, Bruce Baird, said—

"Reported comments on Asian immigration have caused concern among tourism operators and do nothing for Australia's image overseas."

The Minister's answer to my question demonstrates a lack of concern about potential damage to our trade relationships in Asia and incompetence in being unaware that media outlets have reported Hanson's disgraceful and factually incorrect slurs. It is time that the Minister spent less time engaging in pithy point scoring and concentrated on defending our trade interests in the Asian region. In raising these concerns,

I claim the support of the Graingrowers Association, the Tourism Council of Australia and the Deputy Prime Minister. I wonder whether the Minister can claim the same level of support.

Because of the ineptness of the Minister and the inappropriate activities of other members of the Liberal and National Parties, the Premier of this State has an even greater responsibility to show leadership on this issue. The Premier must show leadership in refuting the factually incorrect and offensive statements made by the member for Oxley against Australians of Aboriginal and Asian descent. The Premier must also show leadership in calling for Queenslanders to show tolerance and understanding towards each other. The Premier must show leadership to defend our vital trade relationships with our Asian neighbours which are so important to our economic prosperity and employment growth. And most of all, the Premier must show leadership within the Liberal and National Parties to discipline those members such as the Minister for Sport, Mr Veivers, the member for Mansfield, Mr Carroll, and the member for Greenslopes, Mr Radke, for their offensive comments and actions against fellow Queenslanders. Need I remind the Premier that, when he took office earlier this year, he stated that his Government would be one for all Queenslanders? Well, this is the time that the Premier can prove it.

There has been an understandable reluctance by many of us to publicly respond to the statements of the member for Oxley and others. Many of us thought it more appropriate to ignore her offensive and untruthful remarks, hoping that the furore would die down and that the media spotlight would move on. Unfortunately, this has not occurred. And with every passing day the outbursts of Ms Hanson and her supporters grow louder and more extreme. Those of us who reject their misinformed views can remain silent no longer. I for one am proud to stand up in this place and in my electorate and state my position—a position which, as a migrant to this country, I feel deeply about.

I will finish by letting the Premier know about a now very famous quote. The quote goes, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." It is time for good men and women to do something—speak out and reject these anti-Asian sentiments.

Time expired.

Hon. B. W. DAVIDSON (Noosa—Minister for Tourism, Small Business and

Industry) (6.28 p.m.): I rise to speak on this amendment this evening because of the crucial importance of the issues raised. This Government recognises fully the enormous contribution made to Queensland by Asian communities, and particularly the continued and growing importance of Asian markets to Queensland's tourism industry. I shall speak specifically about tourism for a moment.

Predicted growth in the Asia/Pacific region over the coming decade offers Queensland its greatest-ever opportunities to develop its tourism industry. It is forecast that, by 2010, the gross domestic product of the Asia/Pacific region will be higher than that of North America. This economic growth will result in higher disposable income and, as a result, a propensity to travel. The International Air Transport Association estimates that the Asia/Pacific's share of world scheduled air passengers will grow from 35 per cent in 1993 to more than 50 per cent by the year 2010. As virtually the only Western destination within short-haul distance of these major growth markets, Queensland is ideally positioned to grab a very significant share of this enormously valuable travel market. Even now, Asian visitors inject hundreds of millions of dollars into the State economy and into the coffers of thousands of Queensland businesses every year. In 1995 alone, visitors from Asia spent \$677.228m in Queensland. The importance of this economic impact in terms of business and employment growth is plain to see.

Let us take a look at these key markets. In 1995, Queensland received 109,000 visitors from Korea—up 77 per cent on the previous year; 73,000 visitors from Singapore—up 20 per cent on the previous year; 51,000 visitors from Hong Kong—up 10 per cent on the previous year; 26,000 visitors from Malaysia—up 42 per cent on the previous year; 25,000 visitors from Indonesia—up 65 per cent on the previous year; and 565,000 visitors from Japan—up 6 per cent on the previous year. Growth rates are extraordinary and, with appropriate attention to marketing and product development, should continue. Let me assure the people of Queensland that this Government has made a strong commitment to putting significant resources into marketing Queensland as a tourism destination for Asia.

The Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation currently operates offices in five key Asian cities—more than any other State tourism office. Those offices are in Singapore, Taiwan, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong. I have visited all of those offices, bar one, and am

committed to ensuring they are appropriately resourced. Wherever appropriate opportunities arise, the QTTC will be positioned to open additional offices in emerging Asian markets.

I would also like to highlight the valuable contributions made to Queensland's business sector by Asian communities. Much of the vibrancy and diversity of Queensland business life in recent years can be attributed to the establishment of Asian businesses. The voice of Asian business in Queensland is being heard. I have personally appointed a respected Brisbane businessman, Michael Choi, to the Small Business Council, which, as all members of this House are aware, I established two weeks ago. I was absolutely delighted that Michael Choi accepted that position.

Queensland's relationship with its Asian neighbours in terms of export opportunities is also recognised. The Information Industries Board recently led a contingent of 30 Queensland companies to the massive COMDEX trade show in Singapore. Attendance at that show alone is expected to generate in excess of \$9.4m in exports over the next 12 months, and \$64m over the next five years.

Today, I launched the Queensland Processed Food Directory, which will enable 250 Queensland food processors to gain valuable exposure to Asian markets. Processed food imports alone into Asia are expected to grow by \$160 billion over the next six years. Queensland intends to get its slice of the action. We recognise clearly the benefits of open and free exchange of trade, culture and friendship between near neighbours.

After this issue was raised in the Estimates committee, I wrote to Pauline Hanson inviting her to a briefing on the importance of Asians to the tourism industry. I have yet to receive a reply. I am hoping that she will accept my invitation to receive a briefing from officers from my department and the QTTC so that we can be certain that she is aware of the importance of the Asian tourism industry and visitors from Asia into Queensland for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Ms SPENCE (Mount Gravatt) (6.33 p.m.): Tonight, we have heard from three Government Ministers who have avoided the topic we are here to debate. The Government's contribution has been most disappointing and reveals its unwillingness to face up to the topic at hand, that is, the damage done by the comments of the

member for Oxley. Ms Hanson's intemperate remarks have caused a great deal of damage to the social fabric in this State, but Government Ministers will not even talk about it.

Ms Hanson's criticisms of Aborigines and Asian people are based on her own fear and ignorance of people who are different from herself. No doubt, some Australians share her prejudices. I do not believe her comments reflect the thoughts of the majority of Australians. Any fair assessment of Ms Hanson's comments with respect to Asians would judge them to be ill informed and offensive. She tells us that Asians accept welfare benefits and live in ghettos. That is plainly rubbish. Asian people contribute enormously to the economic and cultural activity of this State.

The figures from our own State Department of Economic Development and Trade reveal that 12 months after arrival, 55 per cent of Taiwanese who have settled in Queensland are engaged in business and 82 per cent of those businesses are new. Those businesses employ on average 4.9 persons per business. They invest an average of \$190,000 in each business and 68 per cent of them are involved in exports. Ms Hanson also claims that Chinese people live in ghettos. How wrong can she be? In my electorate, the Chinese live in half-million-dollar houses. In fact, in the suburb of Robertson in my electorate, the Chinese have just built 24 new houses and the cost of those houses ranges from \$1.5m to \$4.5m—hardly ghettos! Not only do Chinese people build and buy expensive houses but also they take extraordinary pride in their gardens and the general appearance of those houses. What the Pauline Hansons of the world fail to realise is the wealth the Chinese community brings to this State and the wealth its members create by bringing their money, enterprise, energy and business acumen to this State.

Another myth proclaimed by Ms Hanson is that the Chinese do not assimilate. That is the most insulting and untrue statement of all. I challenge her to come to school fetes and functions in my electorate to see Chinese parents and children participating in all ranges of activities. Yesterday I wrote to Pauline Hanson to invite her to meet with a panel from the ethnic community in my electorate. They asked me to do that because they are genuinely concerned at the growing racism their children are experiencing at schools. They want to sit down quietly with her and present her with some facts. I respect their

good intentions and I hope Ms Hanson takes up that offer.

I do not respect the actions of the Liberal member for Mansfield, Frank Carroll, who kissed Pauline Hanson and applauded her 45-minute racist speech to the local branch of the National Party. The slogan "A vote for a Liberal is a vote for a National" appears truer than ever, because the Liberal member for Mansfield regularly attends the meetings of the local National Party. The Liberal member for Mansfield by his actions has endorsed Ms Hanson's divisive intemperate views.

I do not respect the Liberal member for Greenslopes, who recently claimed that Asian children are responsible for a hepatitis problem at the MacGregor schools. That was a racist, foolish and wrong statement. I do not respect the National Party Minister Mick Veivers, who feted Pauline Hanson at his recent cocktail party.

I support the motion moved by the Labor Party tonight calling on the Premier and the Leader of the Liberal Party to show some leadership over this issue and dissociate themselves from the anti-Asian comments made by Ms Hanson and the actions of the Liberal and National Party members of Parliament in this House. One cannot stand up in this House and say positive things about Asian migrants and migration generally and then go into the community and agree with racists who would support the Pauline Hansons of the world. We will let those people know what the members opposite are about.

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (6.38 p.m.): One of the interesting facets of this debate is that, apparently, members opposite are trying to curb the right of an individual in this nation and State to express a view. We have just heard the honourable member who spoke most recently try to suggest that others cannot express their views. She has expressed a view. I happen to disagree with many of the things she said, but I will forever support her right to say those things. That applies right across this State. I think it is a tragedy that members such as the member for Mount Gravatt seek to heat up the fervour around a debate that is fundamental to our society.

I live in an area where there is an enormous mix of Australians. They have all sorts of backgrounds: Chinese, Albanian, Greek, Italian, South Sea Islander——

Mr Palaszczuk: Polish?

Mr STONEMAN:—Polish—they are great people—Russians; in fact, the whole mix. I will focus on two components of this

debate. Firstly, I will deal with the historical partnership with people of non-Anglo-Saxon extraction in the development of this nation and of Queensland in particular. Living in the community that I do and representing it and the broader community across north Queensland, I have not received one call into my office from any person of non-Anglo-Saxon background who has expressed outrage. They are getting on with their lives and accepting that those comments are part of free speech. Just recently, I visited the Torres Strait islands, and not one person raised the issue. They were more interested in getting on with the issues of life than they were in responding to the sort of hysteria that honourable members opposite would raise.

The other matter that I wish to raise is the increasing recognition of the mutual benefit, dynamic trade and cultural interface between Queensland and South East Asia in particular. In Australia, I believe that in almost every town there is a Chinese family. Every person who has grown up in Australia has had contact with a Chinese family. There is an enormous amount of goodwill between the Chinese and the Australian communities.

I must say that my children went to school with people of all racial mixes. There never was and there never will be a problem in that regard. Italians, Greeks, Albanians, Maltese, South Sea Islanders—all of those people have formed an enormous partnership in the coastal development of this State. The sugar industry would not be what it is without the mix of people whom we have been able to attract to it. They have been embraced by our culture in Australia. We have all received enormous benefits from broadening our cultural understanding. The food services that have developed are part and parcel of it. However, that does not diminish the right of an individual to take a different view, and I respect the right of members opposite to take that view.

Recently I led a trade delegation comprised of members of all parties to South East Asia—Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China. I must say that not once at any stage did any of the members of the delegation or any of the people to whom we spoke focus for even one minute on whether or not the people of those countries would be welcome in Australia, welcome to engage in trade and welcome to engage in communications. There was not one instance. As the Honourable Minister for Economic Development and Trade mentioned, recently I have had dealings with Koreans. There is an enormous amount of goodwill between Korea and Australia. As the Honourable Minister for

Tourism said, the impact of trade and the impact of tourism between China, Japan, Korea and Australia is going to increase. It brings enormous benefits. However, that does not mean that people in those countries are not able to say in those countries that they see deficiencies in us, and vice versa in this nation.

So I say to the House that the Opposition is trying to create an hysterical springboard from which it can make more cheap mileage in the media. It does no good for our trade or for our nation.

Time expired.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove) (6.43 p.m.): I am pleased to join in this debate. What we have heard from the four Government members who have spoken is that the Hanson debate has not happened and that it is not what people read in major newspapers throughout Australia. For example, a headline in the *Australian* states that the Hanson debate has damaged us at home and abroad. It damages us at home because it creates anxiety in people that minorities will become scapegoats. Asians have been attacked. Because of the comments by Pauline Hanson, people are voicing their racist views. Yet all we hear from members opposite is that people have a right to express their views and that they have a right to freedom of speech. They think that if we in this country say that Asians are good people, and if we trade with them and say that we need them, this issue will go away. What absolute nonsense!

The Minister for Tourism has actually written to Mrs Hanson to inform her of the importance of tourism to Australia. She is a member of the Federal Parliament, yet she needs to be informed about the importance of tourism to Australia. I will read into *Hansard* what she said in Federal Parliament—

"I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished."

She wants to abolish the policy of multiculturalism. Pauline Hanson stated further—

"I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians . . .

They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate . . . A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united."

Pauline Hanson goes on to quote Arthur Calwell—

". . . Calwell said:

'Do we want or need any of these people here? I am one red-blooded Australian who says no.' "

She goes on to state—

"I have no hesitation in echoing the words of Arthur Calwell."

Does that mean that we are going to export all the Asians in this country? In relation to our immigration policy, what is this speech saying? I think that it has been long held that Australia's immigration policy is non-discriminatory. However, Pauline Hanson is not saying that at all. She talks about assimilation. How does that relate to a person such as I who migrated to Australia when I was 10? Do I have to assimilate? I want to belong; I want to contribute; I want to play a role in the social, economic, cultural and political fabric of this, my adopted nation. I am an Australian first, but I am entitled to my culture. I am part of the difference and diversity which makes this country richer. If I were Asian, I would feel very threatened. In her speech, Pauline Hanson referred to ghettos and said that we cannot have multiculturalism. How can we become monocultural? What nonsense that is! What sheer, arrant nonsense it is that we can become monocultural!

Of the four Government members who have spoken in this debate, none of them has mentioned anything that Pauline Hanson has said. We have had an irrational and an intolerant speech from a member of Parliament that is causing Australia great harm overseas. It is hurting Australia's trade with other countries. People in tourism, and members of the Graingrowers Association are saying that. Yet no member opposite accepts that reality. We cannot say to Asian people in this country that they cannot have their culture and religion! Should we all become Anglicans? Should Australia become a part of Britannia located in the southern hemisphere? We are allowed to have freedom of speech, but all we hear from members opposite is their belief that people have the freedom to express this absolute nonsense.

I conclude by saying that it is very important for our political leaders to denounce racial intolerance and to defend the non-discriminatory character of Australia's immigration policy. It is important for us to value the contributions and the rights of all Australian citizens, be they of European or Asian origin. It is also imperative for our political leaders to at all times clearly repudiate any individual, such as Pauline Hanson, or groups such as Australians Against Further

Immigration, who challenge these fundamental principles.

The failure of Premier Borbidge and his Ministers to take any positive, clear and unequivocal action on the ill-informed and prejudiced views of the member for Oxley, Pauline Hanson, is reprehensible. I believe that the Premier, Mr Veivers, the Minister for Trade—all of those people opposite—should all stand condemned because none of them have the guts to say that the debate that is going on in the community is causing us great harm. I do not believe that any member opposite can wear the mantle of leadership with any morality at all. It is about time we understood that Australia has benefited from a bipartisan policy on immigration. However, we are seeing the reluctance of members opposite to restate that policy. They are cowards and they have no moral courage. In not one speech of Government members in this debate was the name Pauline Hanson mentioned. They are scared of doing so. I think that is intolerable.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr FOURAS: I say to Mr Veivers that the issue will not go away. Australia will suffer in terms of tourism and trade and also this great country in which we live will suffer socially and culturally.

Time expired.

Mr CARROLL (Mansfield) (6.48 p.m.): I support the amended motion before the House. This debate began as a transparent bucket job on Government members actively attempted by Opposition members, but it has backfired. Government members have negotiated with the member for Gladstone to turn a cheap motion brought to this Parliament this morning into a positive and encouraging resolution, which I believe will find favour with all honourable members.

The member for Inala endeavours to launch his motion out of feigned concern for grain growers. I was mentioned in the original motion because I attended a Mansfield National Party branch dinner meeting. Those meetings are held every two months at the very hospitable Sunnybank Hotel. Over the past five years, I have attended most of them. That branch of the larger coalition party in this State is active and its work is significant in the electorate of Mansfield. I attend its public dinner functions as part of my responsibility to know what are the issues that concern thinking constituents for whom I am responsible.

The provocation for the recent attacks on me in this House and also at recent social

events in the electorate and in an adjoining electorate by some Labor members and some Labor city councillors simply because I moved a vote of thanks on behalf of the organisers and guests at a particular National Party dinner for an interesting guest speaker has a more sinister cause. Those members and councillors have dismayed south siders and the people of the electorate of Mansfield who know me. The venomous and baseless attacks come from a Labor Party which is sensitive over my forthright inquiry and statements in the recent past about the serious local issues of lack of action by the Brisbane City Council on the Upper Mount Gravatt regional business centre development control plan, on the conservation measures and, more especially, the positive and receptive approaches by me along with the Federal member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave, the State member for Springwood, the Federal member for Griffith and the Liberal Party Lord Mayoral candidate, Bob Mills, to seek to enhance social, cultural and economic relationships with not only more recent migrants to Australia but also the nations from which these people emigrated. What has really annoyed the Labor Party has been my readiness to ensure that the honourable Mayor Chen from Taipai City Government last week could meet with our Deputy Prime Minister when in Brisbane for a mayors' conference. Opposition members seem to be feeling the heat and are desperate to use any opportunity to try to make a fuss in this House.

A more serious concern I have with the kind of motion brought on tonight by the Opposition is its sinister attempt to provoke interracial conflict from any possible community event or sentence spoken. It is a cheap trick and Opposition members ought to be ashamed of themselves. I have no doubt that solid, working-class Labor Party supporters are disgusted by such transparent manoeuvrings. The truth is that the Opposition has nothing positive to say. Even the motion before the House tonight had to be rewritten for them.

This Government's recognition of the important relationship mentioned in the motion before us can be seen in the Queensland Budget. That Budget was finally passed by the Parliament today. One example of that recognition is the provision of \$100,000 for the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, which will be recurrent for three years. That funding is designed to improve the ability of that council to fulfil its function as the key ethnic community body in this State. The trade, charitable, religious, sporting and

cultural groups of people mentioned in the amended motion receive plenty of attention from Government Ministers and backbenchers.

I have been pleased to attend important trade meetings and cultural, religious and social events in and about the electorate of Mansfield. There are a number of religious and cultural groups from all backgrounds in the electorate. I have visited our Sikh temple for important community events. Several times I have been pleased to attend events at the Chung Tian Buddhist Temple at Priestdale, just south of the electorate of Mansfield, as I have the Jewish community centre in the electorate.

I resist Opposition attempts to wallow in the provocative acceleration of an artificial debate which has been constructed on a few sentences by an Independent member of the Federal Parliament. I encourage honourable members to support the amended motion before the House.

Mr SPEAKER: The question was that Mr Palaszczuk's motion be agreed to. It has been proposed that the question be amended by omitting all words after "Australia" and inserting "about recent anti-Asian comments notes the major contribution of Queensland's ethnic and indigenous communities to the economic and social development of the State and further that this House recognises the importance of strengthening our trade and investment links with Asia".

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

AYES, 43—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Campbell, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Goss W. K., Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, McElligott, McGrady, Mackenroth, Milliner, Mulherin, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Welford, Wells, Woodgate *Tellers:* Livingstone, Sullivan T. B.

NOES, 44—Baumann, Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Cunningham, Davidson, Elliott, FitzGerald, Gamin, Gilmore, Goss J. N., Grice, Harper, Healy, Hegarty, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, McCauley, Malone, Mitchell, Perrett, Quinn, Radke, Rowell, Santoro, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Stephan, Stoneman, Tanti, Veivers, Warwick, Watson, Wilson, Woolmer *Tellers:* Springborg, Carroll

Resolved in the **negative**.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (7.01 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (7.01 p.m.): Recently in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin*, Health Minister Mike Horan, when talking about waiting lists, said—

"Time is the critical measure. We want to reduce the amount of time people wait for their elective surgery."

The Minister has been promising buckets of money for south-east Queensland, the south coast and the Gold Coast, but he is offering nothing for people in the bush. Minister Horan is making a great hero of himself in the media by talking about cutting waiting time for elective surgery. This morning we heard him in this place giving himself a big rap. Let me tell the House that, for people in the bush, Surgery on Time is "surgery some time" under Horan.

A woman from my electorate—who I am not prepared to name to protect her privacy—has travelled to Brisbane and been prepared for surgery twice in seven days. However, because the surgeon ran out of allotted surgery hours, the woman was forced to return home to central Queensland. The surgeon advised her to go home until her condition deteriorates to such an extent that surgery must be carried out. This lady is a surgery yoyo under Minister Horan's Surgery on Time Program. She knows, because of her ongoing condition, that Mr Horan's claims are rubbish. I quote from a letter from this woman—

"In 1970 following a diagnosis of bowel cancer I was operated on and given a ileostomy.

Since 1992 I have been experiencing some discomfort with the ileo this being due to it breaking down and being unable to digest red meats. I changed to a vegetarian diet which did assist in reducing the pain for a while.

Early this year the pain returned with distension of the lower abdomen. The local G.P. on the 26th May referred me to see the flying surgeon.

June 15. The flying surgeon diagnosed a ruptured ileum and refers me to see a colo-rectal surgeon at the R.B.H.

August 19. Dr. Stitz confirms diagnosis and schedules me for surgery for reconstruction of the ileostomy.

September 9. I am admitted to R.B.H. and put on a fluid diet, on Tuesday the 10th I am prepared for theatre and wait until 5.30 pm only to be told theatre hours have been exceeded for the day and they will try to fit me in on Wednesday. Lunchtime arrives and I am told that I am rescheduled for the 17th.

Now I know how a prisoner on death row must have felt receiving a last minute reprieve only to be told later that he is still to be executed.

September 16th. Once again admitted and put on fluid diet and the next day sit around all day only to be told once more theatre hours have been exceeded.

. . . I now sink into depression but luckily a very competent nurse manages to get me over this hurdle otherwise I would now be under psychiatric care.

In the bed next to me is a woman in her mid 70s who has been told her operation has been put off for the third time. She suffers an attack of Angina. Her daughter visiting looks to me and says, 'Mum will die before she has this operation'.

Later that day the resident surgeon visits me and says that he can re-schedule me for the following week but cannot guarantee that I will receive the operation. Budgetary constraints limit surgery hours as it costs \$1,000 an hour to keep theatre open.

His advise is that the mental trauma would be too much for me to cope with and to return home until the condition deteriorates to such an extent that surgery must be carried out.

Dr Stitz's original concept was to carry out the surgery early whilst it was to him a relatively simple procedure. If complications set in the procedure will be more difficult and will take much longer.

I live in DYSART which is 1,000 kilometres from BRISBANE and already regional health has expended \$800 in travel and accommodation assistance. When this condition deteriorates I will have to be medivaced at a cost involving several thousand dollars and will then use up more theatre hours causing other patients to go through this same process. Is this not false economy."

Mr Horan has had plenty to say. People once listened to him, but they are no longer doing so in the bush. The Minister is becoming a bit of a joke. Feedback to me from central Queensland is that Mr Horan has promised plenty but has delivered little. One thing coming through loudly and clearly to me is health workers' fear to talk to me as a member of Parliament. Word has come down from the top that they should keep quiet or they will lose their jobs. The Minister's use of standover tactics to keep health workers quiet will be remembered. I find it disgusting that, when I go into a Health facility to talk to health workers about budgets and so on, they are too scared to talk to me simply because they have been told that, if they open their mouths, they will be in trouble and lose their jobs. The Government should be spending more time caring for the health of people living in rural Queensland.

Bush and Grass Fires, Cape York

Mrs WILSON (Mulgrave) (7.05 p.m.): I take this opportunity to inform the House about the bush and grass fires which have devastated large areas of Cape York in the past month. I am told that tourist and visitors who pass through the area often light fires and leave them either unattended or do not put them out properly. The fires spread when there is a breeze and take over the whole area.

Last month, I received a call from the matron of the Laura Hospital, who told me about the fires and the involvement of the community. She was requesting assistance from the State Government to help put out the fires. She told me that some of the property owners in the cape had seen almost all of their feed land destroyed by the fires which had burned throughout the cape. The matron told me that local graziers were not able to cope with the fires and were desperately seeking assistance.

Mr Schwarten: You know your Government took \$2m off their budget.

Mrs WILSON: The honourable member should listen; I will tell him what happened. It is a frightening experience to witness the bushfires. Acres and acres of stockfeed are eaten up very quickly by flames. That is devastating for graziers, given the rural situation at the moment. I do not know what members opposite did when they were in Government, but they certainly did not help graziers and farmers. One of those graziers, Dorrie Wilson—and lest the other side think I am supporting one of my own, I point out that

Dorrie is not a relation—conducted television and radio interviews to highlight the plight that graziers were facing out in that vast country. Many head of stock had to be removed to safety.

In the interviews, Dorrie Wilson, who is in her seventies—and honourable members can imagine what stress she has been facing—said that her family had been battling bush and grass fires day and night and were almost at their wit's end. The family, along with others involved, were exhausted. I do not believe that city folk can comprehend what it is like to fight those bushfires; they do not experience it. The problem is that visitors from the city do not realise that what they leave behind can devastate bush people. For the families who become involved in trying to put out the bushfires and save their stock and land it is so stressful that many of them end up very ill indeed.

As soon as I received the phone call from the Laura Hospital, I passed these concerns on to staff at the office of the Minister for Emergency Services, Mick Veivers. Soon afterwards, I was informed that a rural fire inspector travelled to the area to investigate the fires and to assess whether further assistance was needed to fight them. The response was welcomed by Dorrie Wilson, who had spent long nights fighting the fires at Laura. When I rang the Laura Hospital, all I got was a recorded message telling me that she was out saving the town.

I understand that all landowners indicated to the fire inspector that they had sufficient resources to combat the fires which were burning in mostly inaccessible areas. The area is so vast that the property owners who have been fighting the fires for some weeks were informed that, even if an additional 500 firefighters with 50 vehicles were provided, the fire would still not have been able to be put out as there was insufficient water in the area. The problem is an inadequate access to water for fighting the fires.

Following the concerns being raised with me and further contact with the office of fellow far-north Queensland MP Tom Gilmore, the Department of Primary Industries was notified of concerns from local graziers about feeding their stock. In response to these concerns, the Department of Primary Industries forwarded application forms to the Laura Police Station so that struggling landowners in the area could apply for low-interest loans. These loans can be sought under the individual disaster stricken property scheme administered by Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority. To be

eligible to apply, property owners must fulfil a list of criteria and will need to have their property assessed by a DPI stock inspector. I urge any property owners in the area to contact the local police station to get appropriate forms and to arrange with the local stock inspectors to have their properties assessed.

It should be noted that the member for Cook seemed to have missed the whole incident, because at no stage did he comment on the issue or contact the relevant departments. Nero fiddled while Rome burned. I wonder where the member for Cook was. Was he fiddling? Why did they have to ring me and not—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mrs WILSON: That is not being nasty; it is a fact.

I commend the relevant Ministers for their prompt assistance in responding to the concerns of the people from Cape York and trust that these actions will lead to financial assistance heading that way. Maybe the honourable member will be ready next time. Graziers in the Cape York area face similar fire threats every year and have to conduct controlled burn-offs to protect their properties. There must be a concerted effort by visitors to the rural areas to consider the danger of lighting fires, especially when there has been little rain and the grass is very dry. Besides fires, the graziers have to fight cyclones, severe storms, flooding and other threats from mother nature. All we need now is some good rain. I am pleased to say that rain has fallen on certain parts of Queensland. That certainly will assist the farmers and will help in putting out some of those fires. I praise all the firefighters and volunteers who put in hours of their time during this time of difficulty.

Time expired.

Civilian Service Medal; Schizophrenia and Drug Use

Mr SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton) (7.10 p.m.): I rise tonight to address two subjects which are of concern to my constituents. The first of these is to do with the Civilian Service Medal being made available to employees who served with Queensland Rail during the Second World War. Honourable members will recall that in October 1994 the Federal Government established this medal. Its purpose was to honour and recognise the commitment and, indeed, the service of people who served on the home front in the difficult and arduous conditions of wartime

Australia. The medal was intended for those who endured above the ordinary conditions which prevailed in Australia during that time. For example, employees who worked on the North Australian Railway, which operated between Darwin and Budun and which ferried troops and munitions under threat of enemy attack, were a group of civilian workers who were singled out as being eligible to receive this medal.

Mr Johnson: What are you drinking there, Rob?

Mr SCHWARTEN: Water, mate. Similarly, members of the Civil Aliens Corps, the Red Cross, the Allied Works Council, the Department of Civil Aviation and Qantas staff who worked at airfields and on flying boats, the Australian Women's Land Army, the Civil Construction Corps and the Voluntary Aid Detachment were all entitled—and rightly so—to receive this medal.

However, I believe there is a grave injustice being done to our own employees who served Queensland Rail during the war. In truth, we would have to say that someone in Canberra has decided that our QR workers did not do enough during the Second World War to warrant this medal. I would have to say that whoever this person is they are totally ignorant of the facts. I hope that the Minister listens to this speech. One of my constituents, Mr Mick Nagle, has done a lot of research on this matter. With all the evidence he has produced, I cannot believe that this Canberra bureaucrat takes the view that he has.

In John Kerr's *Triumph of the Narrow Gauge—the History of the Queensland Railways* and a Channel 7 documentary on the subject presented by Frank Warrick on 23 and 30 July 1995, there is ample evidence of the effort put into turning the tide against the Japanese by QR employees. For example, Mick Nagle tells of the time Townsville was bombed while he was on a train loaded with bombs. Queensland Rail employees ran the troop trains which ferried the troops to the disembarkation points, then brought back the sick, wounded and dead. They carried POWs, ran hospital trains and worked 12-hour shifts without overtime, had four hours off, then came back to work to do it all again. The danger of attack from the enemy was, I would argue, as real as it was in the Northern Territory, yet there seems to be no recognition of it. I believe there is no reason why this medal cannot be issued, and I call for the Awards and National Symbols Head of the Federal Administrative Services Board, and

the relevant Minister, Mr Jull, to reverse their thinking on this issue.

As for Mr Jull—it is to be hoped that he, as a Queenslander, will understand the efforts put in by his fellow Queenslanders during that time of terrible conflict and do the right thing by them. It is simply unjust for our rail employees to be singled out from their Northern Territory compatriots in this way, and I ask Mr Jull to make the decision to stop this nonsense once and for all.

I now wish to turn to the area of schizophrenia and drug use. Every now and then, the mental illness called schizophrenia hits the headlines in association with some tragedy. Recent events in Tasmania are a prime example. Yet people with this illness are ordinary people, not monsters. One in every 100 children is expected to develop this illness before they reach the age of 25 years. Many of those affected are considered highly intelligent or creative. For their families, it is a tragic illness that can turn a loving child into a tormented adult.

The onset of this disease is terrifying for a young person. Strange voices ridicule them and tell them to do irrational things—voices from family members, the television, strangers, neighbours. In a case reported to me, a young person heard voices coming from the old retired couple next door which indicated they were planning to murder him. He thought, "Either I'm going mad or they really are planning to kill me." He scarcely slept for months and felt terrified for most of that time. He had psychotic episodes for three years, never speaking to anyone about them, before he was diagnosed. When he was asked later to describe schizophrenia, he said, "It's the scariest thing imaginable." During this phase of the illness, it is not uncommon for such young people to seek relief in drugs. Who really wants to face the fact that they are going mad? Many young Queenslanders are today staggering under this double load of schizophrenia and drug addiction. Is it any wonder that something like 1 in 10 persons suffering from schizophrenia commits suicide?

I am asking the Minister for Health to take just one small step: to immediately institute a program of drug rehabilitation especially geared for persons with schizophrenia. Reports coming to me suggest that existing drug rehabilitation programs are just too stressful for persons suffering from this disease. In a case brought to my attention recently, a young person committed suicide just six weeks into drug rehabilitation.

Time expired.

Whites Hill/Pine Mountain Reserve

Mr RADKE (Greenslopes) (7.15 p.m.): I want to voice my disappointment in the Brisbane City Council leaflet titled "What do you get for \$30 these days?" which has the intent of advertising to ratepayers how wonderfully the Brisbane City Council is managing bushland environmental issues. There is nothing environmentally wonderful in this advertising gimmick when the closest piece of bushland to the city—it is 4.5 kilometres from the CBD, I believe—the Whites Hill/Pine Mountain reserve, is left out, discarded and not even mentioned. What does this propaganda mean—

"The Council has helped keep our city green by:

buying 1,300 hectares of threatened bushland including 440 hectares of Australia's prime koala habitat in the south east area of the city;

protecting 17,000 hectares of bushland on 5,000 properties through Vegetation Protection Orders;

assisting 600 community-based Bushland Care Groups to take care of our bushland assets;

establishing Voluntary Conservation Agreements so land owners can choose to preserve bush areas on their properties; and

caring for and developing our bushland—we've removed 2,000 tonnes of rubbish, planted 750,000 trees, constructed 28 kilometres of walking tracks and trails and 20 kilometres of boundary fencing and built picnic grounds and a visitor information centre.

As a result, our beautiful forests and wetlands have been conserved as a permanent green belt through our suburbs.

Our bush and wetland reserves will continue to provide healthy homes for our native wildlife such as platypus, koalas, gliders, and a variety of frogs and lizards—as well as making sure there are places where the fish of Moreton Bay can breed."

The meaning is: these achievements are at the expense of a significant environmental area in the Greenslopes electorate. The Whites Hill/Pine Mountain reserve is very significant, as in a recent nature search fauna data was collected for the area which listed the short-

beaked echidna—*Tachyglossus acceleatus*—which is, according to the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994, "a common species of special cultural significance and requires regard for the management requirements needs to conserve existing population". I am advised that the short-beaked echidna has not been sighted for some time in Toohey Forest Park yet, even with the Brisbane City Council's green levy, it remains unprotected in the Whites Hill/Pine Mountain reserve.

I appreciate the tireless efforts of the Whites Hill/Pine Mountain Community Group and Councillor Michael Caltabiano towards protecting this significant area of bushland. I look forward to the day when the Whites Hill/Pine Mountain reserve is afforded official recognition, zoned as a conservation zone and protected for all my constituents to enjoy. The closest piece of bushland to the Brisbane City centre is significant. I call for its protection, the establishment of a community-based advisory group and, most importantly, public acknowledgment that the Whites Hill/Pine Mountain reserve does exist.

Public Transport

Mr ARDILL (Archerfield) (7.18 p.m.): Until the community, and particularly politicians, accept the simple truth that public transport is not a business but a public service—just as police, education, health, welfare, justice, defence forces and a multitude of other Government services are—we will continue to pay lip-service to and talk uselessly about reducing traffic, improving journey times, reducing pollution and noise problems and, most importantly, making travel and mobility safer, and we will not ameliorate nor solve any of those problems. I know that many members of this House agree with those statements, because they have said so to me.

The public transport services around Australia are under attack from the fools who promote that false religion, economic rationalism. I am not saying that private enterprise cannot provide some public transport services. In many cases, it can do it better—for example, taxis, some tourist services, some bus and coach services, and even competitive airlines. But railways are not in that group, and nor are most urban bus services. Nor should economic rationalism apply to coastal shipping. And that applies in the UK and even in the USA. Without Amtrak, there would be no passenger public transport and without State and local authority support, there would be much less public transport even in the USA.

I challenge members of Parliament. It is time that politicians stood up and said clearly that this lunacy of Hilmer competition and third-party access to public assets must cease. It is time that we told the bigoted, irrational, economic rationalist proponents that public assets must not be put at risk by allowing private individuals or private corporations interested only in the profit motive to pick off the only profitable section of transport and then make the rest of the operations non-viable.

Mr Johnson: Who brought it in?

Mrs McCauley: The Labor Party.

Mr ARDILL: I do not resile from the fact that the Labor Party has been involved in some States and Federally in—

Mr Johnson: In this State, too, my friend. Absolutely.

Mr ARDILL: Nonsense—not in this State.

No Government in Australia is free of blame in the arrant nonsense that has permeated public transport like a cancer, but one of the worst examples of economic lunacy is that put forward by the fools whom the present Government of Queensland employed to investigate the only State in Australia which has maintained a semblance of railway passenger network. Their report represents everything that is foolish and discredited in the US and UK systems and under Thatcherism and Reaganomics—everything that is now being disputed and opposed throughout western Europe.

What those people recommended was vertical splitting of all aspects of the system, the track to one company, signalling and communications to another, taking away the profitable bulk coal and minerals which subsidise urban passengers, splitting up individual urban lines and privatising them, retaining these lines for peak hour services only, and eliminating public ownership of buses in Brisbane and handing them over to private ownership for operation on the basis of the profit motive. At the same time, they make the illogical observation that more integration of fares and timetables should take place under the fragmented system that they otherwise propose. This is typical of irrational economic rationalism.

Every railway and transport operative in the civilised world speaks out against these proposals. As public representatives, we must stand up and be counted and we must say that this nonsense must not be allowed to continue. There are issues other than pure

economics which have to be considered. The environment cannot be protected under the sort of system that the idiots whom this Government employed—or at least this Treasurer employed—put forward.

Time expired.

Food Research

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (7.23 p.m.): Yesterday, I commented on rural Australia and its abilities. I mentioned the untapped resource of which many of us are aware, but there are still people who do not know about it. Julian Cribb of the CSIRO highlights this problem and the potential that we have to solve it. Cribb quoted the Director-General of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, who stated—

"The carnage wreaked by poverty and hunger is very often out of sight, out of mind, but the tragedy unfolding in the developed world will affect Australia and other industrialised nations, the widespread food insecurity in developing countries will threaten global security tomorrow."

The instability in the food-growing industries of our near northern neighbours had led to serious problems in their markets. Australians can take advantage of that and gain a share of those markets. Our producers are able to come up with the product that is required at a reasonable price. However, we must not leave that responsibility solely to those producers.

According to Cribb, Australia has a key role to play in negating that food insecurity. He states—

"We have agricultural scientists whose work, per capita, is more widely cited than any other in the world, who have recently supplied the leaders of no fewer than five of the world's international research centres as well as their scientific backbone."

Not many of us realise that we have that sort of expertise, and those of us who do tend to take their work for granted and to take it for granted that they will be around tomorrow and that they will continue to provide that expertise. However, that is not necessarily always the case. We have farmers who are internationally efficient and who are leaders in the adoption of sustainable farming practices and new technology, who follow a creed that is revolutionary by world standards and who want to improve their environment. The environment is an issue about which rural communities are very aware.

Based on this unique endowment, Australia has the capacity to become the world leader in sustainable agriculture. Food production systems are in place, but they need a good kick along. This knowledge is far better than gold, because we can use it now and we can use it in the future. There is a great amount of expertise in this country. Australia will not only sell the world produce of unsurpassed quality at competitive prices but also the knowledge of how to grow and process that produce. This country will advise the rest of the world on managing land in a sustainable fashion, the technology that is necessary to overcome pollution, new strains of crops and livestock, managerial skills, education, marketing communications—all the

things that rural Australia does so well. We take these things for granted, but we can use this expertise to help the rest of the world.

That is what Julian Cribb is saying, that is, that we have a tremendous amount of expertise in this country, but many Australians—even rural Australians—do not recognise that fact. I want to highlight the fact that we have this untapped resource which is going to help the rest of the world. Honourable members need only look at the USA. We should be encouraging its producers to keep on producing.

Time expired.

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m.