

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 1997

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have to inform the House that I have received from Her Excellency the Governor a letter in respect to assent to certain Bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the records of the Parliament—

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

13 June 1997

The Honourable N. J. Turner, MLA
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on 12 June 1997:

- * "A Bill for an Act to amend the Police Service Administration Act 1990"
- * "A Bill for an Act to rezone certain land in the City of Ipswich, and for related purposes".

The Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Leneen Forde
Governor

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Police Foot Patrol, Mackay

From **Mr Cooper** (3,988 petitioners) requesting the House to ensure that the Queensland Police (Mackay) provide a foot patrol throughout the city heart, both during the day and night time.

Forestry Depot, Salisbury

From **Mr Foley** (475 petitioners) requesting the House to ensure that the proposal to sell the Forestry Depot at 50 Evans Road, Salisbury be rejected.

Penalties and Sentences

From **Mr Laming** (111 petitioners) requesting the House to give longer sentences to criminals.

Introduction of "Megan's Law"

From **Mr Lingard** (555 petitioners) requesting the House to bring "Megan's Law" into Australia.

Eventide Nursing Home, Brighton

From **Mr Nuttall** (2,406 petitioners) requesting the House to instruct the Minister for Health and his department to rescind the decision to cut funding to Eventide Nursing Home, Brighton and to give a commitment to the residents, their families and the local community that the existing bed numbers will be maintained at Eventide. Further, that the quality of care currently being provided to the residents will be maintained.

Petitions received.

PAPERS TABLED DURING RECESS

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

6 June 1997—

Board of Trustees of the Ipswich Girls' Grammar School—Annual Report 1996

Late tabling statement from the Minister for Education regarding the 1996 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Ipswich Girls' Grammar School

20 June 1997—

Sunshine Coast University College—Annual Report 1996 (Volumes I and II)

Late tabling statement from the Minister for Education regarding the 1996 Annual Report of the Sunshine Coast University College

26 June 1997—

Trust Company of Australia Limited—Annual Report for the year ended 28 February 1997

27 June 1997—

Public Works Committee Report No. 38—The Provision of Infrastructure in Cape York.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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

Ambulance Service Act 1991—

Ambulance Service Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 146

Art Unions Act 1992—

Art Unions and Public Amusements Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 150

Associations Incorporation Act 1981—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971—

Auctioneers and Agents Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1997, No. 154

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

- Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955—
Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173
- Building Act 1975—
Fire Service Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 139
- Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991—
Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 187
- Business Names Act 1962—
Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173
- City of Brisbane Act 1924—
City of Brisbane Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 184
- Collections Act 1966—
Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173
- Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984—
Community Services (Aborigines) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1997, No. 143
- Criminal Law Amendment Act 1997—
Proclamation—certain provisions of the Act commence 1 July 1997, No. 152
- Dairy Industry Act 1993—
Dairy Industry (Market Milk Prices) Order (No. 1) 1997, No. 204
- Dental Act 1971—
Dental Amendment By-law (No. 1) 1997, No. 156
- Electoral Amendment Act 1997—
Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 1 July 1997, No. 134
- Electricity Act 1994—
Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1997, No. 157
Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1997, No. 179
- Electricity Amendment Act 1997—
Proclamation—certain provisions of the Act commence 26 June 1997, and the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence, 1 July 1997, No. 177
- Explosives Act 1952—
Department of Mines and Energy (Variation of Fees) Regulation 1997, No. 178
- Fair Trading Act 1989—
Fair Trading (Magic Bomb) Order 1997, No. 195
- Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977—
Financial Management Standard 1997, No. 141
- Fire and Rescue Authority Act 1990—
Fire Service Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 139
- Funeral Benefit Business Act 1982—
Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173
- Gaming Machine Amendment Act 1997—
Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 1 July 1997, No. 162
- Gas Act 1965—
Department of Mines and Energy (Variation of Fees) Regulation 1997, No. 178
Gas Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 140
- Government Owned Corporations Act 1993—
Government Owned Corporations (Application of FA and A Act Provisions) Regulation 1997, No. 170
Government Owned Corporations (QGC Restructure—Stage 2) Regulation 1997, No. 167
Government Owned Corporations (QTSC Restructure—Stage 2) Regulation 1997, No. 168
Government Owned Corporations (Subsidiaries) Regulation 1997, No. 169
- Griffith University Act 1971—
Griffith University (Queensland Conservatorium) Amendment Order (No. 1) 1997, No. 165
Griffith University (Advisory Council of the Queensland Conservatorium) Amendment Statute (No. 1) 1997, No. 198
Griffith University (Statute 2.5) Repeal Statute 1997, No. 192
- Hawkers Act 1984—
Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173
- Health Legislation Amendment Act (No. 2) 1996—
Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that are not in force commence 1 July 1997, No. 175
- Health Services Act 1991—
Health Services Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 164
- Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993—
Higher Education (General Provisions) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 199
- Industrial Relations Act 1990—
Industrial Court Amendment Rule (No. 1) 1997, No. 197
- Invasion of Privacy Act 1971—
Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173
- James Cook University of North Queensland Act 1970—
James Cook University of North Queensland (The Academic Board) Amendment Statute (No. 1) 1997, No. 193
- Justice and Other Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997—
Proclamation—certain provisions of the Act commence 20 June 1997, No. 155

Justices Act 1886—

Art Unions and Public Amusements
Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1)
1997, No. 150

Justices Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1997,
No. 153

Keno Act 1996—

Keno Regulation 1997, No. 149

Keno Rule 1997, No. 147

Keno Amendment Rule (No. 1) 1997, No. 160

Land Act 1994—

Land Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997,
No. 188

Land Sales Act 1984—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Liquor Act 1992—

Liquor Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997,
No. 174

Local Government Act 1993—

Local Government Amendment Regulation
(No. 1) 1997, No. 158

Local Government Amendment Regulation
(No. 2) 1997, No. 202

Medical Act 1939—

Medical Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997,
No. 176

Mineral Resources Act 1989—

Department of Mines and Energy (Variation of
Fees) Regulation 1997, No. 178

Miscellaneous Acts (Non-bank Financial Institutions)
Amendment Act 1997—

Proclamation—certain provisions of the Act
commence 1 July 1997, No. 163

Motor Vehicles Securities Act 1986—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Partnership (Limited Liability) Act 1988—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Pawnbrokers Act 1984—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Pay-roll Tax Act 1971—

Pay-roll Tax Amendment Regulation (No. 1)
1997, No. 166

Penalties and Sentences (Serious Violent Offences)
Amendment Act 1997—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act that
are not in force commence 1 July 1997,
No. 151

Petroleum Act 1923—

Petroleum (Entry Permission—Chevron Asiatic
Limited) Notice (No. 1) 1997, No. 205

Department of Mines and Energy (Variation of
Fees) Regulation 1997, No. 178

Plant Protection Act 1989—

Plant Protection Amendment Regulation
(No. 1) 1997, No. 137

Plant Protection (Banana Black Sigatoka)
Quarantine Notice 1997, No. 148

Plant Protection (Banana Black Sigatoka)
Quarantine Regulation 1997, No. 201

Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Act
(No. 2) 1996—

Proclamation—part 11 of the Act commences
4 July 1997, No. 200

Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Act
1997—

Proclamation—certain provisions of the Act
commence 27 June 1997, No. 180

Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act
1926—

Primary Producers' Organisation and
Marketing (Queensland Pork Producers'
Organisation) Amendment Regulation (No. 2)
1997, No. 145

Public Service Act 1996—

Public Service Regulation 1997, No. 203

Retirement Villages Act 1988—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

River Improvement Trust Act 1940—

Natural Resources Legislation Amendment
Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 159

Second-hand Dealers and Collectors Act 1984—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Security Providers Act 1993—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Stock Act 1915—

Stock Identification Amendment Regulation
(No. 1) 1997, No. 181

Sugar Industry Act 1991—

Direction given by the Minister for Primary
Industries to the Queensland Sugar
Corporation dated 5 June 1997

Sugar Industry Amendment Regulation (No. 1)
1997, No. 182

Sugar Industry Amendment Regulation (No. 2)
1997, No. 183

Sugar Industry (Assignment Grant)
Amendment Guideline (No. 1) 1997, No. 142

Superannuation (Government and Other
Employees) Act 1988—

Superannuation (Government and Other
Employees) Amendment of Articles Regulation
(No. 1) 1997, No. 144

Superannuation (State Public Sector) Act 1990—

Superannuation (State Public Sector)
Amendment of Deed Regulation (No. 3) 1997,
No. 171

Superannuation (State Public Sector)
Amendment Notice (No. 3) 1997, No. 196

Surveyors Act 1977—

Surveyors Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 190

Trade Measurement Administration Act 1990—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Trade Measurement Administration Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 172

Transport Infrastructure (Roads) Act 1990—

Transport Infrastructure (Roads) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 138

Travel Agents Act 1988—

Consumer Affairs (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 173

Water Resources Act 1989—

Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 159

Water Resources (Rates and Charges) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 189

Water Resources (Sugar Mill Assessments) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 191

WorkCover Queensland Act 1996—

WorkCover Queensland Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1997, No. 161 and Explanatory Notes for No. 161

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1997, No. 185

Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 1997, No. 186

Workplace Health and Safety (Hazardous Substances) Amendment Compliance Standard (No. 1) 1997, No. 194

Workplace Relations Act 1997—

Industrial Court Amendment Rule (No. 1) 1997, No. 197.

RESPONSES TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Clerk laid on the table of the House the following responses to parliamentary committee reports—

Response from the Minister for Environment (Mr Littleproud) to the report of the Public Works Committee entitled The Expansion of the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal;

Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Johnson) to the report of the Public Works Committee entitled Tilt Train Project.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Suncorp-Metway Ltd

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: It is with great concern that I rise today to address the politicking by the Leader of the Opposition over the proposed increase in fees and charges by Suncorp-Metway on two of its Metway accounts. I make this statement because I believe that the Leader of the Opposition has deliberately and cynically attempted to score cheap

political points with the people of Queensland and the member for Gladstone at the expense of the truth, and at the possible expense of new schools, new police stations and new hospitals. The hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition knows no bounds. He goes around the boardrooms of Brisbane telling business leaders that he will attack the merger in Opposition, but if he gained Government he would firmly support it and continue to sell down the Government share. That is what he is saying; he is an arch hypocrite.

Mr Beattie: That is not true.

Mrs SHELDON: I assure the honourable member that the people who rang me yesterday said that it is definitely true.

This week's exercise is just a continuation of the hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition. He has returned to the political arena after two weeks off and has immediately done what he has done best ever since he has entered politics: he has tried to grab a headline, regardless of the truth. But at what cost? What does the call of the Leader of the Opposition for the Government of Queensland to involve itself in the day-to-day running of Suncorp-Metway mean to the future of the Government's shareholding?

In one move, the Labor Party has shown every business in Queensland and every potential investor in this State that it can never be allowed to rule again in Queensland while Peter Beattie is its leader. In one move, the Labor Party would cost the Queensland people hundreds of millions of dollars in lost profits if the Government followed its advice and intervened. Hundreds of millions of dollars would be lost as the market responded to Government intervention and reassessed the share price of Suncorp-Metway. Honourable members should make no mistake: that would be the result if the coalition buckled to Labor's politicking and intervened.

Let me keep it simple for those opposite: if the market believed that the Government intervened in the day-to-day operation of Suncorp-Metway, it would dramatically cut the share price and that would dramatically reduce the return for all Queenslanders. For the sake of some short-term political mileage by the remade, but frighteningly familiar, Leader of the Opposition, Queenslanders could lose hundreds of millions of vital dollars for schools, roads, hospitals and police stations.

Let us look at Labor's stance on this issue. The Leader of the Opposition wants the State Government to intervene in the running of Suncorp-Metway and hold down proposed increases on two—that is right, two—Metway accounts. It says these increases are somehow the State Government's fault. Is the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that Metway would never have increased fees if it had not been merged with Suncorp and QIDC? Is the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that, had we allowed St George to take over Metway, fees would not have increased? If he is, he is a bigger fool than even I believed!

A statement released yesterday by Suncorp-Metway to clarify this issue states—

"Suncorp-Metway Ltd says that Opposition Leader, Peter Beattie, has made a number of inaccurate or misleading statements in relation to planned fee changes.

Group General Manager Retail Financial Services, Mr Greg Moynihan, said that contrary to Mr Beattie's press release, the fee changes apply only to Metway customers with certain accounts, and are part of the normal annual fee review undertaken by the Bank.

'As in previous years, Metway has reviewed fees with a view to removing cross-subsidies and providing a fairer allocation of costs amongst customers.'

'Whilst this has resulted in increases to some charges, others remain unaffected or have been reduced. The transaction charged for Visa purchases, for example, has been removed.'

'Customers can minimise or avoid fees by managing their accounts effectively,' Mr Moynihan said. 'Metway will provide customers with tips on how to avoid bank fees when it begins sending out details of the new fee structure next week.'

'Contrasting with claims made by Mr Beattie, pensioners continue to enjoy fee-free banking with the Metway Pensioner Savings Account.'

Therefore, Mr Hamill's mind should be put at rest! The statement continues—

"Whilst the political motive behind the Opposition Leader's comments can be understood, it is unfortunate that our customers have been unnecessarily alarmed. Suncorp-Metway would be happy to provide correct information to Mr Beattie and his office in the future', Mr Moynihan said."

For the edification of the Parliament, I table that to show what a shonk the Leader of the Opposition is!

In simple terms, the Leader of the Opposition, in a cynical and political move, is attempting to emulate Labor leaders of the past such as Bannon and Cain. If Peter Beattie is willing to intervene in the running of a bank to affect fees, will he also be willing to intervene, as his Labor colleague John Bannon did, to affect, say, interest rates in the lead-up to an election? What is next for the interventionist, social rationalist Peter Beattie?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will refer to the honourable member as "the honourable member for Brisbane Central".

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, Mr Speaker. What is clear from Mr Beattie's rhetoric is that he wants a State Bank. He wants to go down the path of John Cain, Joan Kirner and John Bannon to create a State Bank. Bannon forced the State Bank of South Australia to artificially hold down interest rates just before an election. The State Bank of South Australia debacle ended up costing that State \$3 billion. The State Bank of Victoria debacle ended up costing the Victorian taxpayer billions of dollars, all

because politicians like Mr Beattie wanted to interfere in the operations of a Government-owned bank and force it to make uncommercial decisions.

It is precisely to guard against this type of risk—the risk of political interference—that this Government moved to remove Suncorp and QIDC from Government control through the merger with Metway Bank. The message has been sent out. We have all tried to figure out exactly what social rationalism stood for and we now know: it stands for political expediency; it stands for doing anything, even the wrong thing, to grab a headline.

The people of Queensland and the Queensland business community should be very wary of the Labor Party under Peter Beattie, because it has all the hallmarks of a Bannon or Cain-led Labor Party.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer shall refer to the honourable member as "the honourable member" or "the Leader of the Opposition".

Mrs SHELDON: Sorry, Mr Speaker. I wish very briefly to detail some facts. This Government does not favour or support increases in bank fees.

Mr Hamill: What are you going to do about it?

Mr Borbidge: What did you do about it when Suncorp put up their fees and closed branches in the bush?

Mrs SHELDON: That is what happened when the honourable member opposite was in Government.

However, we also do not involve the Government in the internal workings of a publicly listed bank. Suncorp-Metway is reviewing fees and charges as part of its normal annual review. That is consistent with action taken by all other banks and, more recently, other credit providers, such as building societies. Contrary to the assertions of the Leader of the Opposition, the fees proposed to be charged are not out of line with those of other banks and building societies. In fact, Suncorp-Metway's account keeping fees are below those of the major banks.

Contrary to the assertions of the Opposition Leader, pensioners will not necessarily be impacted. Metway has a special account for pensioners—the Pension Savings Account—which allows pensioners to enjoy fee-free banking. While some charges have been increased, others have been unaffected or reduced. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition has conveniently ignored those. Contrary to the assertions of the Opposition Leader, the merger of Suncorp, QIDC and Metway has benefited people in rural and regional Queensland.

Mrs Bird interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: The member should listen to this.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: The Opposition really does not want to know about this, does it? In particular, 10 regional centres which had only a QIDC office, or no Suncorp or Metway branches, now have access to an expanded range of retail banking, insurance and investment services. Suncorp-Metway has

introduced new banking products for the farm sector and has been able to provide an expanded range of business and retail banking services to rural and regional Queensland. That stands in contrast to the major banks, which have been closing branches and reducing services in many smaller communities in regional Queensland. Even more galling is the hypocrisy of Mr Beattie.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will refer to Mr Beattie as "the honourable member".

Mrs SHELDON: Comparing his actions when in Government to his statements now, it is plain to see that he is nothing other than a political opportunist and that his attitude is entirely disingenuous. I wish to refer honourable members to the Suncorp annual report for 1995. In that annual report, the then Suncorp chairman made the following statement in relation to the significant increase in the use of ATMs and EFTPOS—

"This has placed a huge strain on our capacity to continue a no-fees policy in the Building Society when it is considered that each EFTPOS transaction costs Suncorp approximately 30 cents. Likewise for the use of non-Suncorp ATMs the cost to us was \$1.15 per transaction."

At the time, the Goss Labor Government adopted the position that Suncorp was a commercial entity and operated under a strict commercial charter. It regarded decisions in relation to fees and charges and the closure of Suncorp agencies and branches—22 agencies and five branches were closed during 1995-96—as commercial decisions for the board and management of Suncorp. Although Suncorp was wholly owned by Government at that time, the Goss Government insisted that Suncorp and QIDC operate at arm's length from Government. The QIDC was wholly Government owned, but Labor wanted it to act commercially. Suncorp was wholly Government owned, but Labor wanted it to act commercially. The Government is now a major shareholder of Suncorp-Metway, but Mr Beattie does not want it to act commercially even though it is a publicly listed company. It was under the previous Labor Government that Suncorp moved to introduce account keeping fees. The honourable member was a Minister in that Government, and it is hypocritical of him to turn around now and criticise Suncorp-Metway for taking commercial decisions similar to those undertaken by Suncorp in the past.

In summary, the Leader of the Opposition has deliberately misled the people of Queensland. He has deliberately attempted to undermine the major Queensland enterprise of Suncorp-Metway. He has shown a preparedness to sacrifice hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money so that he can try to score a few cheap political points. It is disgraceful that a Leader of the Opposition would not only make reckless statements but also do it so deliberately. This is the most cynically expedient political exercise yet by this master of the backflip, and it is important that the people of Queensland realise the facts.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Numbers

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Racing) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: Last year, I promised the House and the State of Queensland that the coalition Government would provide an extra 139 police by 30 June this year. It is with great pleasure that I announce today that we not only achieved that target but also exceeded all expectations and provided an additional 21 officers to the 139 officers promised. As at 30 June, Queensland had 6,566 sworn members of the Queensland Police Service. For the benefit of members opposite, I point out that that is 160 more officers than there were 12 months ago. That is the proud record of achievement of this coalition Government, and it is only the start.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr COOPER: Do the honourable members for Hervey Bay and Maryborough want to give away their officers? They have had so many more it is not funny. Heckle and Jeckle cannot get enough of them. Poor coots!

This year, we will recruit and train another 252 extra police and 200 civilians as the acceleration of the civilianisation program gets into full swing. Our performance on police numbers is in stark contrast to the final years of the Goss administration, which let police numbers slip away right across the State between 1993 and 1995 as populations boomed and crime was a major concern. Police numbers across the State fell by 79 officers during that period and rose by only 29 officers, while members opposite spent \$1.5 billion in the three years leading up to their political demise. Labor's final budget provided for an increase of only 60 positions in 1995-96 and recruitment was cut back from about 140 per combined intake—normal recruits and retreads—to well below 100. Shortly after the change of Government, in March 1996 there were only 115 recruits at the academy, with the January intake of 52 being the smallest for many years.

This Government doubled the number of new police promised by Labor over a 10-year period. The additional 2,780 positions will lift the sworn strength of the service to 9,100 by the year 2005—an increase of over 40% in the authorised police strength over the remainder of the decade. In 1997-98, up to 300 recruits will be in training at any one time at the Oxley academy or the Townsville campus—the campus which Labor did not want and which it will close if it ever gets back into power.

This Government cares about police. We will provide the tools for them to do the job and we will continue to put police on the streets, where the people want to see them. Only last week, I released for public comment a discussion paper on police powers. We want people to tell us what powers they think the police need to protect them and to fight an increasingly sophisticated criminal enemy. Almost every police district across the State has benefited in terms of police numbers since the coalition came to Government in February last year. Those which have not yet benefited soon will, as scores more

police are trained at the Queensland Police Service Academy at Oxley and the campus at Townsville.

During the 1996-97 financial year, 386 new police were trained and put on the beat. The far north region received 40 new police; northern, 41; central, 19; north coast, 40; southern, 18; metro north, 63; metro south, 57; and south eastern, a massive 100 officers. There are now 51 more police on duty on the Gold Coast than there were a year ago, and that is a great achievement. The Cairns district has 17 more police than it had a year ago, Mount Isa has 12 extra police, Gladstone has nine extra police, Longreach and Mackay have five extra police, Bundaberg is up by eight positions, the Sunshine Coast is up by 16 positions, Redcliffe is up by 15 positions, Toowoomba is up by nine, and south Brisbane has 24 more police. The list goes on and on.

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr COOPER: I do not wish to embarrass the member opposite any further. The numbers are going through the roof.

Only two weeks ago, I attended an induction of 38 rejoiners and will be on hand for the graduation of 119 constables next month. There will be further allocations of new officers in October and December from Oxley, and from Townsville in December. This performance must really get up the nose of the member for Waterford, who stood up in this House not too long ago and told everyone silly enough to listen to his ramblings that police were leaving the service in droves.

Mr Barton: They were.

Mr COOPER: There were not. The member said that there was no way that we could produce the extra police we promised. He said that that was impossible, because officers were leaving faster than we could train them and put them on the streets.

Mr Barton interjected.

Mr COOPER: I will come to that. It is outpourings such as that from the member for Waterford that have earned him the fitting tag of "Bungling Tom". He bungled it again. He constantly gets it wrong, but he will still not listen. His latest party trick is to go around the State criticising the State Government for poaching police from Victoria.

Mr Barton: You are.

Mr COOPER: Who started it? Members opposite!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate, it is a ministerial statement.

Mr COOPER: The honourable member was a Cabinet Minister in the Government that introduced the so-called poaching from Victoria.

During the 1996-97 financial year, a total of 128 former officers were recruited into the Queensland Police Service. Of this group, 30 were former members of the QPS, 91 were current or former members of interstate services and seven had previous service overseas. The average age of the officers was 34 years and they had an average of 10 years' previous service. The new QPS officers

include two former inspectors from Victoria, a significant number of senior sergeants and sergeants, as well as senior constables and constables. The recruitment program for experienced officers was introduced to assist in the overall recruitment program to dramatically increase the sworn strength of the QPS—a move made necessary by the neglect of the previous Government. With the large numbers of recruits being trained each year, experienced officers are being recruited and retrained to ensure that some 20% to 25% of new recruits have some experience behind them. A thorough vetting program is undertaken for each applicant to ensure that each officer joining the QPS has the high level of integrity necessary for appointment in this State.

The QPS is continuing to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from non-English-speaking backgrounds to reflect the composition of the multicultural community. It is also pleasing to see so many women joining the service. Only last week I was able to announce plans to recruit another eight police liaison officers, taking the number to 104. These officers help break down the barriers between police and ATSI and ethnic communities. I make no apology for making the QPS as efficient, well resourced, accountable and effective as is humanly possible, and the numbers will continue to rise.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BreastScreen Queensland Program

Hon. M. J. HORAN (Toowoomba South—Minister for Health) (9.53 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House that the implementation of the BreastScreen Queensland Program's infrastructure has been completed. We now have a Statewide network of 11 fixed breast screening and assessment services, four mobile screening services, two relocatable services and five satellite facilities. An additional relocatable service will be established in far-north Queensland later this year.

As part of its commitment to improving and maintaining the health and wellbeing of Queensland women, Queensland Health, with the Commonwealth, jointly funds the BreastScreen Queensland Program. This represents a \$14.3m commitment in this financial year to reducing the impact of breast cancer for the women of Queensland. BreastScreen Queensland is a Statewide program offering free breast cancer screening to women aged over 40. However, women aged over 50 are specifically encouraged to be screened as this is the age group where evidence of benefit is well demonstrated. Breast cancer affects about 1,000 Queensland women annually with over 300 women dying from the disease each year. Breast cancer is the major cause of cancer-related death among women. Regular screening mammography is the most effective method of detecting breast cancer in older women, and the chances of successful treatment are increased if the abnormality is discovered early. The unique challenges for Queensland Health in the implementation of the program have been in the main the vast geography of the State, the demographic distribution of the

population and the availability of the relevant clinical expertise throughout the State. However, these challenges and many others have been overcome so that today Queensland Health provides access to breast cancer screening for women throughout the State.

I wish to advise the House that the level of radiology support for screen reading and assessment has been increased, with over 40 private sector radiologists being contracted in the last nine months. This partnership with the private sector and use of relocatable services that make use of existing community health facilities ensures that eligible women have good access to screening services and maximises the use of existing health service facilities. This is a cost-efficient way of providing these services to women and working effectively with private and public sector services at the local level.

Over 271,589 women in Queensland have been screened to date, with approximately 107,000 of those screens occurring in the 1996-97 financial year. Our goal for the program is to increase this by 30% to 140,000 women in 1997-98. Access to mobile mammography services for women living in rural/remote areas has meant that 43% of the women screened are from rural/remote areas. This is consistent with their representation in the population.

In May 1997, Queensland Health, the Commonwealth and the Queensland Cancer Fund jointly funded the BreastScreen Queensland "You Must Remember This" media campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to promote the importance of breast cancer screening and raise awareness of the availability of BreastScreen Queensland services. We have been encouraged by the response of women to the "You Must Remember This" media campaign. The immediate impact of the campaign suggests that there has been on average a 25% to 30% increase in the number of bookings inquiries across the State.

The critical success factors for effective population screening for breast cancer are—

high levels of participation of eligible women (70% of the 50-69 age group);

consistent high-quality mammography;

high standards of film reading and multidisciplinary follow-up assessment; and

high standards of appropriate management and treatment of women with cancer detected.

All BreastScreen Queensland services are required to be accredited in accordance with the BreastScreen Australia national accreditation requirements and are continuously monitored to ensure that they meet international quality standards for breast cancer screening. BreastScreen Queensland services are achieving cancer detection rates equal to international standards. In 1996, 411 breast cancers were detected through BreastScreen services in Queensland, a rate of 4.4 per 1,000 women screened. This means that the high-quality services provided in Queensland are finding cancers that may not have been detected in otherwise well women because they are so small. Increasingly the size of the cancers detected through the

BreastScreen Queensland Program are as small as 10 millimetres. The outcome of treatment when cancers are detected at an early stage is very favourable.

With the infrastructure of services now complete and radiology support in place, the program is now poised to consolidate its performance and achieve effective and efficient provision of Statewide BreastScreen services. It is expected that over the next few years the earlier diagnosis of breast cancer and timely treatment should lead to a significant fall in the death rate of women from breast cancer. The Queensland Mammography Register is currently being developed. This will be a central register developed to efficiently and cost effectively maintain a complete screening history of women who participate in the program. It will allow for monitoring of all aspects of the screening program, including breast cancer size and type, treatment outcomes and trends over time, and provide a reminder service for clients to be screened every two years.

The establishment and maintenance of the BreastScreen Queensland Program is a key strategy of the coalition Government to improve the health status of Queensland women. I encourage all women over 50 to call 13 20 50 to make an appointment at a BreastScreen Queensland service for a free breast screen.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

South African Visit

Hon. B. W. DAVIDSON (Noosa—Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: I recently travelled to South Africa to meet with a number of business and Government representatives. The delegation comprised Mr George McFarland, a businessman who is one of the proponents of a rhino sanctuary in north Queensland, and Mr Tim Nevard of the Cooperative Research Centre for the Sustainable Development of Tropical Savannas. As you may be aware, Mr Speaker, the trip received much media attention, and I am today happy to advise the House and Queensland of the positive achievements during the visit.

After arriving in Johannesburg on Saturday, 21 June the delegation caught a connecting flight to Richards Bay, then drove to Matubatuba. At Matubatuba I attended the Kwazulu-Natal Game Auction. I was very fortunate to experience this event as this auction is held only once a year and it attracts the world leaders in wildlife conservation. The auction is one way in which the Natal Parks Board combines successful conservation and the sustainable use of wildlife. As well as providing the opportunity to observe the actual auction, I was also able to speak with a number of leading authorities in conservation and park management at this event.

That evening the delegation met with the entire Natal Parks Board. The board comprises 12 members with the chairman being Mr Pat Goss. The other members include conservationists, a traditional leader, political representatives, union representatives, a judge, academics and business

people. Both at the meeting that evening and in the extensive discussions the next day, the delegation and I were able to learn how this group has successfully combined tourism and conservation in the two wildlife parks, Umfolozi and Hluhluwe (Schushlui). Founded in 1947, the Natal Parks Board's charter is the conservation management of 76 formally protected areas ranging across the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Within its protected areas there are 24 camps, which provide 2,301 beds per night in a variety of accommodation units, and 36 camp grounds which can accommodate 9,591 people.

The board's staff of 3,150 includes, among others, general assistants, nature conservators, game guards, scientists, educationists, clerks, technicians, accountants, builders, road builders, mechanics, computer technologists and draughtsmen, as well as a communications wing. Thirteen employees have doctorates, 12 have masters degrees, 14 have honours degrees and 22 have bachelors degrees. Four staff members have higher national diplomas and 80 are national diploma graduates. Several members of the staff represent the board in their field of expertise on national and international conservation bodies, and a wide cross-section of staff members travel abroad to attend workshops, symposiums and seminars on the board's behalf.

Facing the challenges of political and social change, the board has for several years embraced a conservation model which promotes the conservation of biodiversity, practising conservation as a sustainable economic force. This extends from socioeconomic involvement with neighbours living adjacent to its protected areas to enhancing the province's tourism industry, both locally and internationally. The board's model benefits native South Africans, farmers and regional communities as it provides employment, training, environmental education and infrastructure development.

The Natal Parks Board is the world leader in the conservation of white and black rhinoceroses. It has been largely responsible for taking the white rhinoceros population from less than 100 at the turn of the century to now over 7,500. The delegation also talked with Dr George Hughes, the chief executive of the Natal Parks Board, regarding the proposed collocation of rhinoceroses to north Queensland. Dr Hughes was supportive of the project and offered to help in furthering the proposal. Australia, and in particular Queensland, has much to learn from the experiences of the Natal Parks Board, and I will be having further discussions with my Cabinet colleagues on this matter.

On Monday 23 June the delegation met with President Nelson Mandela's senior staff member, Mr Parkes Mankahlana, in Pretoria. Mr Mankahlana, who is also an executive member of the African National Congress, was aware of the north Queensland rhino project. He was not only very receptive to our suggestions but said he had also briefed President Mandela and other senior South African Ministers. As has been reported, Mr Mankahlana did raise concerns over why some sections of the media were

not supporting this project. Also as reported, I apologised to Mr Mankahlana for the Queensland Opposition's negativity over this project and explained that, as a Minister, I had received great support for the proposal from a large number of Queenslanders. We then spoke for over an hour, providing further details about the project which Mr Mankahlana said he would provide to the President. The meeting was very successful, and was the first step in further discussions that have since taken place and for others in the future.

The delegation then travelled to Mala Mala Game Reserve, where our host was Mr Michael Rattray. Until 1960 Mala Mala was a private shooting box, and in 1964 it was purchased by the Rattray family. Michael Rattray subsequently doubled the size of the Mala Mala Game Reserve, making it the largest block of privately owned big game land in South Africa. Mala Mala, which borders Kruger National Park, gained its world-wide renown due to its sound conservation management policies and its uncompromising high standard of service. While at Mala Mala, the delegation observed how the Rattray family managed the wildlife park, and it had discussions with Mr Rattray and his senior staff regarding the proposed north Queensland Sanctuary. Mr Rattray was also very supportive of the concept and provided key advice for furthering the project.

The next day, Wednesday 25 June, the delegation travelled back to Johannesburg where I met with Mr Gordon Griffiths, the President of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce. This chamber has over 4,000 members. Mr Griffiths and I discussed many business issues regarding Queensland and South Africa, including the current joint ventures taking place and future opportunities, particularly in technology transfer. I also took the opportunity to make Mr Griffiths aware of Queensland's 2002 World Expo bid.

That evening I met with Mr Vessey Westhuizen, the managing director of Reumech, and other representatives from this company. Also at this meeting was Mr Ian Potter, the Australian High Commissioner. Reumech has entered into a joint venture with the Queensland company Australian National Industries to form the Australian Specialised Vehicle System—ASVS—bid for a Department of Defence contract for wheeled armoured vehicles, named Project Bushranger. This project is worth a potential \$350m to Queensland. The next day I visited Reumech's plant. This provided me with the opportunity to see Reumech's operations at first hand, discuss the latest developments in its Queensland joint venture and discuss potential future business opportunities with Queensland.

Overall, the trip was a success in that it provided myself and the delegation with the contacts and information needed to further a number of projects between Queensland and South Africa. The project that received the most attention in the media was the north Queensland rhino project. This project was envisaged for north Queensland and north-western Queensland because of the marked similarities in topography, climate and vegetation

between the savannas of northern Australia and south-east and central Africa.

This is a positive proposal for all Queenslanders. It has the potential to provide economic empowerment, employment and global recognition through large site visitation, international media and political attention to Queensland in particular. Despite the negative attitudes displayed by some of the members opposite, I will continue to support and further develop this project. If I can help to create employment for Queenslanders, protect one of the world's endangered species and help set the Queensland model for partnership between tourism and the conservation of our native flora and fauna, I am happy to take any criticism the Opposition wishes to give me while achieving all of this. I now table my report on my ministerial visit to South Africa.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mining Industry

Hon. T. J. G. GILMORE (Tablelands—Minister for Mines and Energy) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: I wish to make a statement to the House this morning on an extremely important matter, a matter that is of gross misrepresentation and frustration for the mining industry and the Department of Mines and Energy. I refer to a series of articles appearing under the by-line of Wayne Sanderson in the pages of the *Courier-Mail*. In essence, Sanderson is making a number of outrageous allegations which are underpinned by the mischievous claims of those who have vested interests in damaging the mining industry.

The general tone of Sanderson's claims goes something like this: "The mining industry and the Department of Mines and Energy are in bed together. Therefore, the department goes easy on the miners when it comes to monitoring and regulating their activities." It is also alleged that a consequence of this is that we have not forced the miners to fulfil their rehabilitation and environmental responsibilities with the result that the people of Queensland are going to be stuck with a massive clean-up bill and, in matters where there are competing land management issues, miners are favoured at the expense of farmers in the Mining Wardens Court. By a grotesque distortion of the facts and by abandoning any yardstick of objectivity and fairness, Sanderson and others are mindlessly attacking an industry which arguably has done more than any other to underpin the economy of Queensland since Gympie gold saved the infant colony in 1867.

Mr Borbidge: I wonder if Mr McGrady agrees with Mr Welford's signing off of Mr Sanderson.

Mr GILMORE: It appears that Mr Welford, Mr McGrady and Mr Sanderson have all got their hand in the one pot with respect to this.

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. The member for Mount Isa has done more for the mining industry than the Minister will ever do.

Mr GILMORE: I will address that later in the day. They are, unknowingly and without regard to

current facts, hell-bent on discrediting the industry as well as the Department of Mines and Energy in its administration of that industry. They openly ignore rebuttals and corrections. They care little for the people affected, people who care deeply about their duty and who are unable to publicly defend themselves against vilification of this kind.

I want members of this House and the people of Queensland to know that the thrust of what Sanderson is saying is wrong. Yes, it is a fact that in some parts of Queensland we are still dealing with some difficult environmental legacies from mining which occurred according to the standards of the time up to more than a century ago. It is a fact that this Government and the previous Government have had to pick up the tab to rehabilitate the failed operations of some more recent mining projects. It is a fact that on occasions we have to deal with serious issues which are the result of a breach of mining conditions. But the important matter is that we do deal with them and that we do take corrective action. Under our present environmental management policy, the mining industry is meeting and will continue to meet its rehabilitation obligations.

There are those who allege a conspiracy between the Department of Mines and Energy and the mining industry. They are lying. There are those who allege that hundreds of farmers are at risk from longwall coal mining. They too are lying. When Wayne Sanderson peddles such preposterous nonsense, he is aiding and abetting those lies. In recent articles Sanderson has laboured the point that I have refused to respond to some of his allegations. That is true. I have not responded and for very good reason. Sanderson sees corruption everywhere, but the only real corruption is in that journalist's code of ethics.

At no time has he shown the slightest inclination in writing an objective article. His idea of balance is to write an article, phone at the end of the day seeking a comment and then to append a gratuitous quotation at the conclusion of the article. While employed by the ABC last year, he made numerous FOI applications or wrote directly to me. For the record, I replied in considerable detail to his letters, copies of which I would like to table along with copies of my responses.

Just one or two examples of the manner in which Wayne Sanderson goes about his work say much about his *modus operandi*. In July 1995, as part of the FOI mediation process, a meeting was arranged by the Information Commissioner between Sanderson and a senior manager from Mount Isa Mines. The manager duly flew from Mount Isa at company expense and arrived for the meeting, accompanied by a solicitor, retained also at MIM expense. Sanderson never fronted, never phoned and never apologised. On another occasion, boxes of documents were transported at taxpayers' expense from Rockhampton to Brisbane for Sanderson to examine under one of his FOI applications, but he never bothered to come and inspect them. Numerous phone messages and letters failed to elicit a response from him. Ultimately, the documents were returned to Rockhampton. Some

time later, however, Sanderson lodged the same application and the process started all over again.

It was recently estimated by my department that providing responses to requests by Sanderson for information has taken the equivalent of one officer working full time for more than three months. It has taken up much of our environmental officers' time in preparing material for him. If anyone wants to make their own judgment about his impartiality, I challenge them to examine his coverage in the Courier-Mail of the recent Supreme Court review of a decision by the mining warden in respect of an application by South Blackwater Coal Limited for a mining lease over a property at Comet which is owned by Mr Lloyd Wall.

The truth is that Wayne Sanderson is the spokesman for, and the public puppet of, those whose mission in life is to derail the current consultative process, which is well on the way to developing the most comprehensive environmental protection policy for the mining and petroleum industries in Australia.

Mr Welford: Mr McGrady started that.

Mr GILMORE: He did not. The member should not try to mislead the Parliament.

This is what this is all about—the derailing of the EPP process. But this is not going to happen, because this Government is going to ensure that Queensland has the best mining EPP in this nation. The Government is delighted that it started—this Government started—the EPP process. It is the first of its kind, incidentally, for any industry in Queensland. The draft EPP will be completed any day now, and when it is finally entrenched in law Queensland will have the fairest and most effective environmental management package for any industry in Australia.

Twenty-five public groups are represented on the EPP Stakeholders Consultative Committee. With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I am going to read out their names, because it does demonstrate that the EPP process is genuine and that, when these groups finally sign off on the EPP, it will be a document that every Queensland can have absolute confidence in. The groups are:

- the Department of Mines and Energy;
- the Department of Environment;
- the Department of the Premier and Cabinet;
- the Department of Local Government and Planning;
- the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care;
- the Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry;
- the Department of Natural Resources;
- the Local Government Association of Queensland;
- the Queensland Conservation Council;
- the Environmental Defenders Office;
- the Queensland Environmental Law Association;

- Landcare;
- the Cattlemen's Union;
- the Queensland Farmers Federation;
- the Queensland Graingrowers Association;
- the Queensland Federation of Land Councils Aboriginal Corporation;
- the Island Co-ordinating Council;
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission;
- the Australian Workers Union;
- the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union;
- the Queensland Mining Council;
- the North Queensland Independent Miners Association;
- the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association;
- the Queensland Chamber of Commerce; and
- the Metal Trades Industry Association.

I am sure that members would agree that that is a totally comprehensive group. I appreciate the time and effort that all of the representatives of these organisations are giving to the development of this most important document.

Finally, I would like to make a brief reference to the question of mine site monitoring and rehabilitation. I assure this House that mining operations in Queensland are being strictly monitored. If companies are guilty of any breaches, they will be dealt with. Last year, the show-cause notice issued to CRL with respect to a breach of its mining conditions on Stradbroke Island was well documented by the media. But there are a number of other instances where officers of my department, with my full backing, have applied appropriate sanctions when the terms of their mining agreement have been broken.

With respect to rehabilitation of land disturbed by mining, I want to say this: I absolutely debunk the notion suggested by Sanderson that Queensland taxpayers face a potentially huge bill at some time in the future. Regardless of the total rehabilitation cost—and I believe that my department and not Wayne Sanderson—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will wind up his statement. There is other business to do.

Mr GILMORE: There is only a little left.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will complete it.

Mr GILMORE: I am very confident that the measures we have in place—including our policy of holding substantial security deposits—will ensure the industry, not the taxpayer, pays for rehabilitation work. If every mining company in Queensland were to go belly up tomorrow, without having done any rehabilitation work, we would have a problem. But what is the likelihood of that happening? This proposition is analogous to suggesting that if every man, woman and child in Australia rushes off to their bank tomorrow seeking their funds, the banking system will collapse and they will not get their

money. That is theoretically possible but exceedingly unlikely, because risk management arrangements quite properly exist for the plausible scenarios. It is similar with the mining industry.

Rehabilitation is a complex and technical business. Rehabilitation methods and costs vary from mine to mine and within a single mine site itself. Underground rehabilitation is different from open cut, and metalliferous is different from coal. The Wayne Sanderson method of calculation is lower primary school stuff, which should be treated by Queenslanders with the contempt it deserves. And so should everything else that he has been saying about mining.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Reports

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (10.15 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest No. 7 of 1997 and commend this report to the House.

I also lay upon the table of the House a report of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee on the Government Owned Corporations (QCGC1-3 and AEC) Regulation 1997. A private member's disallowance motion with respect to this regulation is anticipated to be brought on for debate today. The committee distances itself from that motion. The committee is, however, compelled to report because the motion is to disallow the entire regulation, and if the committee does not report today it forfeits the opportunity to do so later.

I commend this report also to Parliament and move that both reports be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Reports

Mr WOOLMER (Springwood) (10.16 a.m.): I table reports Nos 1 and 2 of Estimates Committee A relating to Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill and the Appropriation Bill together with additional information provided to that committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Report

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (10.16 a.m.): I table report No. 1 of Estimates Committee B relating to the Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill together with the additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C

Report

Mr J. N. GOSS (Aspley) (10.16 a.m.): I table report No. 1 of Estimates Committee C relating to Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill together with additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Report

Ms WARWICK (Barron River) (10.16 a.m.): I table report No. 1 of Estimates Committee D relating to Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill together with additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Report

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (10.17 a.m.): I table report No. 1 of Estimates Committee E relating to Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill together with additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

Report

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel) (10.17 a.m.): I table report No. 1 of Estimates Committee F relating to the Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill together with additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G

Report

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh) (10.17 a.m.): I table report No. 1 of Estimates Committee G relating to Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill together with additional information provided to the committee.

OVERSEAS VISIT

Report

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (10.18 a.m.): In accordance with section 2 (1) (B) of the Members' Salaries, Allowances and Services Handbook, I lay upon the table a report on a study tour to Germany undertaken by myself and Lawrence Springborg.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Election of Mrs L. Lavarch

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth) (10.18 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this House note the election of Linda Lavarch as the Member for Kurwongbah."

Censure of Premier and Treasurer

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (10.19 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this Parliament—

- (a) censures the Premier and the Treasurer for deliberately misleading the Members of this House and the people of Queensland over the impact of the Government's decision to sponsor the Metway/Suncorp

merger in regard to branch closures, the loss of a significant number of Queensland jobs and increases in bank fees and charges; and

- (b) further censures the Premier and the Treasurer for their deliberate misrepresentation of the implications of the sale of Suncorp and the QIDC in their negotiations with the Member for Gladstone whose support for the merger was essential for the Government's objectives to be realised."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Suncorp-Metway Ltd

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (10.21 a.m.): I think that it is about time in this House that we had some truth and honesty in the debate about Suncorp-Metway and its fee increases. What we heard from the Treasurer this morning in a ministerial statement about the megabank was indeed a mega con trick. That is what we have had right from the beginning in relation to this so-called super bank. I table for the information of the House the full internal Suncorp-Metway document setting out the fee increases, titled Transaction Fee Restructuring Project. Let the Treasurer and Suncorp-Metway dispute what is in its own internal document. That document clearly shows the fees to be increased, which savagely attack pensioners and low income earners with less than \$500 in their accounts.

Mr FITZGERALD: I rise to a point of order. The member is speaking to the matter that he raised as the notice of motion for debate this evening.

Mr BEATTIE: This is different from the notice of motion. Indeed, the Standing Orders do not prevent my speaking to it anyway.

The important thing is this: a 150% increase in those fees has occurred. It affects the battlers and the pensioners. What did we hear from the Treasurer? She said that share price was more important than pensioners and battlers. The editorial in this morning's Gladstone Observer states—

"Liz Cunningham's admission of regret that her support of the Suncorp/Metway merger last year has not resulted in the promised benefits ..."

It is little wonder that that editorial concludes—

"There would no doubt be many Queensland electors who now would like to explore their options on the future of State Parliament."

Well may that view be expressed widely, because they have been betrayed by this Premier. They have been betrayed by this Treasurer. However, we will not be intimidated. We will fight for the battlers and we will fight for the pensioners of this State. We will make certain that they are looked after and that we do not go down the road that the Treasurer has taken.

Time expired.

Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Trust

Mr CARROLL (Mansfield) (10.23 a.m.): Today's allegations in the Courier-Mail are a scurrilous Labor smear job, partly based on documents improperly taken. The first paragraph of that article is totally incorrect. Informant and failed Labor candidate, Phil Reeve, is a member of the Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Trust who is upset with progressive works being continued by the present trust. He is one of seven trust members who approved each and every payment made by the trust, with full knowledge. He has methodically twisted numerous details for today's article, trying to get square with some current trustees and to disrupt the trust's work.

I received no favours from the trust. All employees or contractors of the trust received only fair pay for hard work performed in a public place upon production of detailed invoices. The trust managed its affairs well at all times. Under my chairmanship, it raised funds sufficient to finance substantial capital improvements costing \$600,000 over six years, which make the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds a real asset to the Mansfield electorate and surrounding districts. Misleading allegations made today about the caretaker relate to a period after my election to this place, when I was no longer a member of that trust. Friends and family of me and show society president Bob Goss in particular were so encouraged by our examples in enthusiasm for and commitment to the showgrounds that they put in thousands of hours of voluntary work that has never been acknowledged by people such as today's correspondent.

At the annual Mount Gravatt Show between 25 and 27 July 1997, our community has a chance to benefit from all that work. As I said last year, that annual show provides great family entertainment. I commend the valuable work of the show society in holding that annual event. Finally, I thank all those who have done enormous voluntary and community work at the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds for the trust, especially my family members.

Department of Tourism, Small Business and Industry

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.25 a.m.): The Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry, the "Minister for Good Times"—honourable members know him: "Thanks, mate! Bewdy! Ta"—is now out of Africa. He is the Minister who, in his own words, has no responsibility for the day-to-day running of his department. He has had two reviews of that department. The latest described it as "moribund". It is a department that is hamstrung in achieving either effective or efficient delivery of services and is lacking in direction. The Minister blames everyone else, but that department shows a lack of leadership. Thanks, mate! Bewdy! Ta!

The manufacturing industry is in real crisis. Manufacturing exports are down 12% on last year. Employment is down 6.4%, almost 12,000 people, on last year. Cuts in industry programs of some \$17m

have occurred. The latest Yellow Pages Index shows that 9 out of every 10 Queensland small businesses believe that the economy is stagnant; it is going backwards. That demonstrates a lack of leadership. Thanks, mate! Bewdy! Ta!

The Minister forgot to include the Information Industries Board in the restructuring of his department. It was brought to his attention only when the shadow Minister raised it. The IIB was important in underpinning growth in the IT&T industry in this State—one of the growth industries—yet he forgot about it. At the end of the day, we see a lack of leadership. Thanks, mate! Bewdy! Ta!

The Minister should be concentrating all of his efforts on restoring business confidence in this State, providing support for businesses and providing support to create real jobs in Queensland. He should not be the great white hunter strolling around Africa. He is now out of Africa and around the Horn. He has given the horn to all Queenslanders and he has given the horn to a range of members opposite in terms of their opportunities. He should be providing job opportunities for Queenslanders, providing real opportunities for business and creating jobs—

Time expired.

Queensland Economy

Mr TANTI (Mundingburra) (10.27 a.m.): I will tell the House of the latest positives that are happening in this State in relation to this forward-thinking, achieving coalition Government. The Opposition Leader, Mr Beattie, has been absent for two weeks—so the Sunday Mail states. I state that he has been absent for 17 months. Apparently he has been putting the finishing touches to the policies that Labor will take to the next poll. I understand that that document contains a lot of blank spaces.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I draw the attention of the House to the state of undress of the honourable member who has popped on a frock.

Mr TANTI: The positives are as follows. Beattie trails Borbidge by five points in the better Premier stakes. Singleton parted company with the Queensland ALP. Regional unemployment fell to an 18-month low. Unemployment in the region taking in Townsville fell a massive 3.5% according to data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. As to job creation—I point out to the member for Capalaba that the unemployment rate in the north-north west statistical region now stands at 6.3%. That is the lowest rate of regional unemployment in 18 months and the lowest result since May 1990. Last month the Townsville Labor president criticised the Government because unemployment in the region was running at 9.8%. The unemployment rate has now fallen a further 3.5 points to 6.3% and is now 5.6% lower than when we took over Government. The number of people claiming unemployment benefits locally had fallen by 878 by February 1997. The current downward trend is very positive.

I hope that with the work under way on Woolcock Street and with construction work due to start shortly on the Sun Metal zinc refinery the level of regional unemployment will continue to fall over the coming months. The Sun Metal \$15m-plus earthworks contract, the first of the—

Time expired.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Report

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (10.29 a.m.): I refer to the Public Works Committee Report No. 38, the provision of infrastructure in Cape York, tabled out of session on 27 June 1997. I commend the committee report to the House. I give notice that on Thursday next I will move that the House take note of the committee's report.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Bank Charges

Mr BEATTIE (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Treasurer to claims by the member for Gladstone that the information she received from the Government on the super bank was inaccurate, and I ask: given that there are massive job losses and exorbitant increases in bank charges, what other inaccurate information has the Treasurer given to the people of Queensland? Why did the Treasurer and the Premier mislead Mrs Cunningham, the member for Gladstone, and the people of Queensland?

Mrs SHELDON: I thank the honourable member for his question. Mrs Cunningham, the member for Gladstone, was not misled in any way.

South Pacific Cruise Lines

Mr BEATTIE: I refer the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry to comments by the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations in relation to a \$2m training program offered to South Pacific Cruise Lines to encourage them to establish their operations in Brisbane. Minister Santoro said that his department was in no way involved with this training program. I ask: why was Queensland TAFE snubbed by the giving of this contract to a private Victorian firm, William Angliss 2000 Pty Ltd, at a time when Queensland TAFE colleges have had their core funding slashed and now rely on being able to tender for training programs such as this?

Mr DAVIDSON: As the member would be well aware, I had no involvement in who was awarded the training contract. As I understand it, William Angliss is the private training provider that is contracted to the Victorian State Government. They had their negotiations and discussions with South Pacific Cruise Lines.

The honourable member should note—and I think that some of his colleagues have noted this—that Sarina Russo, who is a well regarded training provider in Queensland, has been appointed as the training provider for the 340 people who have been employed by South Pacific Cruise Lines. The

honourable member should note also that I had no involvement in the letting of the contract; it was an issue for the proponents. A Queensland training provider has been awarded the contract to train the 340 unemployed people who were identified through the CES—

Mr Purcell: Everyone is trying to get business for Queensland and you're giving it to Victoria.

Mr DAVIDSON: I thought that the Opposition would be supporting this project. I thought it was all about employment. I thought that the Leader of the Opposition was the bloke who was out there saying, "We are going to put up a \$200m training package." Where was the 200 million bucks coming from? He never said from where the \$200m was coming. He said, "We are going to put up a \$200m training package and we are going to train people." The only thing that the Leader of the Opposition did not say—

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. We have established very clearly where the money is coming from. However, we would prefer a Queensland company to get the job.

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

Mr DAVIDSON: The only thing that the Leader of the Opposition did not say, and which he should be challenged on, is where the jobs are coming from. It is all right to spend the \$200m on training the people, but where are the jobs going to come from?

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The jobs will come to those people—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Minister to continue his reply, that is the last frivolous point of order that I will take this morning. We have just had a constant series of them. It seems to be endemic in this House at the moment. I ask members not to take frivolous points of order. A point of order should relate to some comment or statement that a member finds offensive. I think that it has gone too far. I call the Minister.

Mr DAVIDSON: Mr Speaker, I agree with you totally. As I said, the Leader of the Opposition and his mate, little Jimmy Elder—

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

Mr DAVIDSON: The little member for Capalaba. The other day, someone asked me how tall the member is because that person thought that on TV he looked pretty small. The Opposition has been running around announcing this great training package of \$200m. It gave no clue as to where the money was coming from; it was just going to put up the \$200m to train people for jobs. No statement was made about where the jobs were going to come from.

Mr Beattie: Why are you exporting jobs to Victoria?

Mr DAVIDSON: The Opposition should take responsibility for the economic fiasco in this State. After six years of a Labor Government with Wayne

Goss and Peter Beattie—the honourable member for Logan and the honourable member for Brisbane Central—and all of their cronies, the economy went backwards. When the coalition took over Government, business confidence was at its lowest level of all time. A whole lot of work had to be done.

A little while ago, little Jimmy Elder, the honourable member for Capalaba, stood up in this House and attacked me for the state of TSBI—not over tourism, small business and industry but the old DBIRD section of TSBI. Who was the Minister for DBIRD for three years? Little Jimmy Elder, the honourable member for Capalaba! For the three years that he was the Minister, he sat on his hands and did nothing. He allowed the department to become moribund. He is the man who was responsible for that. I was the Minister for one year and in that time the frustration of dealing with the bureaucracy that the member for Capalaba established led me to employ KPMG.

I assure the honourable member for Capalaba, Mr Elder, that in the next two or three months he is going to see some major changes within TSBI and he is going to see enormous support from the private sector for those changes. So the member should be very careful about the politics that he tries to play throughout this process. This Government will get it right. After six years of a Labor Government, and particularly three years of the member's administration, the department was moribund.

Queensland's Low-tax Advantages

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Premier to the recent criticism from Victoria, New South Wales and now the ACT over the State Government's plan to advertise Queensland's low-tax advantages to lure business to the State, and I ask: what is the true position in respect of the southern claims?

Mr BORBIDGE: In reply to the honourable member, I welcome the criticism from yesterday's heroes down south in regard to the advertising campaign that Queensland has embarked upon to make sure that people, business and investors in New South Wales and, indeed, in Victoria know the benefits of doing business in this State.

It was very interesting to hear some ill-informed comments from Premier Kennett, among others, that part of the reason why State Government taxes in Queensland are some 42% lower than those in Victoria was the favourable treatment that Queensland had received from the Grants Commission. The fact is that this year, following the Grants Commission determinations, the State of Queensland actually received less, not more, than our per capita entitlement. So the comparative tax advantage that we enjoy at the present time is despite an adverse finding, not a favourable finding, from the Grants Commission. I also make the point that historically Queensland has enjoyed enormous advantages. Over a political generation, we have run a balanced Budget.

Mrs Edmond: Not any more.

Mr BORBIDGE: We have public sector superannuation schemes that are in the black, we

have a compulsory third-party scheme that is in the black and, despite the efforts of the honourable member who interjects who sought to bankrupt it, this Government is now slowly bringing the workers' compensation scheme back into the black.

I advise the House that, as of 30 June 1995, the estimated net worth of the Queensland State public sector was \$51 billion, or \$13,700 per head in real terms compared with the New South Wales State public sector's net worth as at that date of \$70 billion, or \$10,324 per head in real terms. In terms of net debt, using the adjusted method, which includes superannuation liabilities, as at 30 June 1997 Queensland's real per capita net debt is estimated to be \$1,553, whereas net debt in New South Wales is over three times that level at \$5,078. Queensland's lower level of net debt and superior balance sheet are reflected in significantly lower net interest costs.

Although New South Wales residents paid an estimated net \$278 each in real terms on interest costs in 1996-97, Queenslanders earned \$97 per head. That means that Queenslanders have an additional \$375 each with which to either lower taxation levels or increase expenditure on vital social infrastructure and services such as schools, roads and hospitals compared with the capacity of our counterparts south of the border.

In terms of economic growth, about which today the Deputy Leader of the Opposition again tried to talk Queensland down, the latest March quarter annual growth figures confirm Queensland as the leading State. In seasonally adjusted terms, Queensland posted annual growth of 3% compared with 2.6% for New South Wales and 2.1% for Victoria.

Further evidence of Queensland's superior position compared with the southern States appeared yesterday in newspapers when it was reported that Brisbane companies are the most optimistic in Australia about prospects for the next six months. In comparison, Melbourne had the lowest level of optimism.

In the office support sector, the level of optimism in Brisbane was even higher, as 79% of companies surveyed anticipated improved business conditions. In addition, the State has captured every major economic development project announced for Australia in the past eight months. Honourable members would also be aware of last week's Access Economics survey which pointed out that 30% of construction projects under way in the country were under way in Queensland.

The differences speak for themselves. The simple fact is that, in regard to land tax, in this year's Budget concessions are equivalent to \$37m, yet New South Wales is raising it and in certain cases is imposing land tax on the family home. Compared to New South Wales, we now enjoy a 57% advantage in State Government taxes and charges; compared to Victoria, the figure is 42%. However, this strange notion comes from Mr Egan and Premier Kennett that somehow Queensland is being subsidised by their States. I make the observation that, next time they raise this issue, they need to be reminded that for a long time Queenslanders have been subsidising jobs

in the southern States. Indeed, in regard to the recent decision by the Federal Government on car tariffs, it is estimated that the cost of the subsidy by the people of Queensland to New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia will amount to \$3.4 billion by the year 2010. If Premier Kennett, Premier Carr, Mr Egan and others want a debate on who is subsidising whom and if they want to raise issues in respect to the Premiers Conference or anything else, we are prepared to take them on.

I take this opportunity to respond briefly to the continuous carping of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Again, I confirm that Queensland is leading Australia. According to the latest statistics, in terms of economic growth Queensland is leaving States like Victoria behind by a country mile. Queensland leads the nation in the value of projects in the committed category and is second only to Western Australia in the total value of projects.

According to the ABS, Queensland remains the fastest growing State. Queensland leads all other States in the development of retail buildings, residential estates, and health and community facilities. Price Waterhouse's June 1997 survey of private investment in infrastructure in the Asia/Pacific region found that Queensland is rapidly becoming the focus of infrastructure development. The ABS survey shows that in the March quarter Queensland businesses led the nation in private investment, which was up by 4.8% compared with the national fall of 0.2%. According to Treasury, business investment in Queensland is running at its highest level since the start of the coalmining boom in the late 1970s which saw billions of dollars come into the State.

The Queensland State accounts show that the Queensland economy is growing at double the rate of the rest of Australia. A 14 April report showed that Queensland surpassed New South Wales as the nation's best economic performer. A survey by the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce of 14 economic and financial indicators and the industry's fifth annual report states that this is so. Queensland receives special mention for reducing reliance on taxes, fees and fines. The Access Economics report for June forecast that Queensland will have the highest jobs growth of all States in 1997-98, predicting a 3.1% growth in average employment. This would mean 60,000 jobs over the year. The ANZ employment advertisement survey shows that Queensland is leading the nation in job creation. According to the Midwood Queensland development report, Queensland is attracting overseas visitors at a faster rate than Victoria and New South Wales.

Who is right and who is wrong? Is the ABS right or wrong? Is the Midwood report right or wrong? Is Access Economics right or wrong? Is the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce right or wrong? Are the official statistics right or wrong? If one believed the carping critics opposite, all the independent evidence that is mounting up day by day is wrong. The news for the Opposition is that that evidence is dead right. Queensland has recaptured the title of Australia's growth State. If

Jeffrey Kennett, Bob Carr, Mr Egan and others such as Kate Carnell do not like it, that is their problem! The Queensland Government is getting on with the job.

South Pacific Cruise Lines

Mr GIBBS: I refer the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry to a \$24,000 feasibility study awarded to a Sydney-based company, Taylor Made Marketing, undertaken to look at the use of the old sugar wharves on the Brisbane River as a base for South Pacific Cruise Lines, and I ask: is it true that the owner of Taylor Made Marketing, Peter Taylor, has legal links to the Chancellor group, which the Minister stated was a financial backer of South Pacific Cruise Lines but which has publicly denied any involvement in the project and which has distanced itself from South Pacific Cruise Lines?

Mr DAVIDSON: I am not aware of the claims that the member makes. As I have stated before, the \$30,000 feasibility study was advanced by an officer in my department to South Pacific Cruise Lines. It was not approved by my office. As I understand it, documentation is on its way to me now which will give an accounted statement of the way in which those funds were spent. Taylor Made Marketing is the appointed consultant, as I understand it. I do not know whether it has had an association with the Chancellor group. I do not know who it has had associations with, to be honest. Taylor Made Marketing was appointed by South Pacific Cruise Lines, not by the Government and not by myself or my department. It has undertaken a feasibility study on upgrading the sugar wharves for the accommodation of the cruise ship industry.

Following question time, I will make some calls and I will be happy to discuss this issue with the member. Tomorrow, I will inform the House of the exact position of the consultants and the expenditure of the funding. As I understand it—and I have not seen it—there is correspondence from South Pacific Cruise Lines to myself to the extent that it has outlined the total expenditure—

Mr GIBBS: I rise to a point of order. Is it correct that the Minister just said that there was correspondence between himself and the company, but that he has not seen it?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will have to check Hansard.

Mr DAVIDSON: We have written to the people at SPCL and they have written back to us. As I said, as yet I have not sighted their correspondence. When I do sight their correspondence after question time, I will be happy to inform the honourable member, and the House tomorrow, of the extent of the correspondence from South Pacific Cruise Lines to my office.

I am pleased to see that the member has an ongoing interest in this issue. We are hopeful that at some time today an announcement will be made about a cruise ship that will operate out of Brisbane. I look forward to that announcement being made.

Leader of Opposition, Rail Journey

Mr CARROLL: I refer the Premier to the recent attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to re-engage himself with the people of Queensland by hiring a Queensland Rail carriage and heading north, and I ask: could the Premier inform the House of the long-term impacts of the Leader of the Opposition's train ride?

Mr Beattie: Is this the best you can do?

Mr BORBIDGE: The member will enjoy this answer. This is good natured.

I am delighted to inform the House that the final impact of the Leader of the Opposition's train ride has finally made its way across my desk. Honourable members will remember that the Leader of the Opposition and his loyal deputy stepped aboard what was known as the "New Directions Train" and headed north. The Leader of the Opposition and in particular the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who is a former Transport Minister, should be indebted for the change of Government; if they had their way, most of the train lines would not be there.

They headed north on this voyage of discovery and, along the way, they managed to disown, overturn, abolish or in any other way that they could invent or substantially amend just about every policy that they had put in place over their six years in Government. Enterprise bargaining was out. The Office of the Cabinet was gone forever. The PSMC was laid to rest. Of course economic rationalism had to go. They even buried poor old Fred Hilmer, despite the fact that they were the Government that committed the State of Queensland to the Hilmer reforms to find out, allegedly, how we could become more competitive. According to the Leader of the Opposition, that message would go down well as they alighted the platforms in Gympie, Maryborough and Gladstone—all areas which are still trying to recover from the last time that the Labor Party was in office.

However, it was the following comment about the trip that I found to be the most interesting. The Courier-Mail stated that "this \$15,000 journey, paid for by the State ALP, was arranged as more than just a vehicle to deliver policy directions". It most certainly delivered more than policy directions; I have just been given the bill for the food and the booze. It appears that, in delivering their policy, a total of \$2,775 worth of food and booze was served up to the hungry and thirsty souls over their four days of confinement. But who is going to be the mug who picks up the tab for that food and booze? Not the Labor Party; it sent the bill up the road to me for approval!

Mr Speaker, can you imagine the scenario on this great voyage of discovery—with the battlers waving goodbye at the station, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition travelling ministerial class and settling back with a nice bottle of chardonnay, champagne or perhaps a cocktail as they made their way to the next centre to face up to the poor souls waiting for them. This was not the campaign train, it was the gravy train.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. The Premier is misleading the House. I seek the withdrawal of those dishonest comments. This bill was paid for by the Labor Party. As I am informed, we negotiated with QR a price which included meals. The Premier should withdraw. If QR enters into a commercial contract with a client, that is between QR and the client. That was paid for by the Labor Party, and I seek a withdrawal.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition has asked for a withdrawal.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, before I table certain documents to prove that I am right, I withdraw what I said. I now table direct Queensland Rail invoice voucher vendor No. 3440 for entertainment expenses totalling \$2,775. I also table documents from Queensland Rail to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition invoicing a debit for the charter of a special train to depart Roma Street on Sunday, 20 April, to Townsville for the Leader of the Opposition and party.

Mr Beattie: What does that prove?

Mr BORBIDGE: Why did the member debit my department for alcohol and soft drinks, at a cost of \$425, and for food supplied by QFCL at a cost of \$2,350? This is the bill from Queensland Rail and this is the invoice voucher sent to the Department of the Premier, Economic Development and Trade. It is good to see the Leader of the Opposition travelling first class!

Member for Mansfield

Mr ELDER: I direct a question to the Minister for Emergency Services, Sport and Recreation. I refer to today's media reports that show that the member for Mansfield breached a section of the Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Act 1988, and I ask: in view of the report's adverse naming of the Government Deputy Whip for awarding contracts to his family whilst a trust member, what action is the Minister taking to have this matter investigated, and will he be referring it to the Criminal Justice Commission?

Mr VEIVERS: I first became aware of the issue raised by the honourable member when I noticed the article in the Courier-Mail this morning. I assure the House that I will be discussing the contents of that article with my director-general and my department. Consequently, I believe it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further on the issue at this time until I find out more about it.

Overseas Travel by Public Servants

Mr GRICE: Can the Premier outline to the House any plans by the former Government to provide some senior public servants with special overseas travel?

Mr BORBIDGE: Over recent weeks, we have heard the negative bleating from the Leader of the Opposition about the Government's plan to allow some public servants to learn from overseas administrations. It is illuminating for honourable members to be made aware of the plans put in place in the dying days of the former Goss Government, of

which honourable members will recall that the now Leader of the Opposition was a Minister. In those dying days, the former Government devised a cunning plan. Deep in the trenches of Government, were they worried about Mundingburra? The answer is: no. At the heart of the plan was a new form of allowance to be curiously titled "special conference leave" to be available only to directors-general and a handful of other senior officers.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I think the House is entitled to know how the former Government was going to look after its mates.

In reality, that plan would have meant a financial windfall for the State's senior public servants of up to \$25,000, which could be utilised each year for 10 days' accompanied travel anywhere in the world. It was an allowance all right—it was a junket allowance. It is clear that the proposal had the endorsement of Cabinet and, therefore, the support of the now Leader of the Opposition, because a special Executive Council minute was prepared. The only thing that got in the way of that special Executive Council minute was the fact that, soon after it was prepared, the Government was tossed from office. I will table the explanatory memorandum and the variation of contract agreement which accompanied the Executive Council minute. They show quite clearly that the former Premier approved this benefit in principle at a chief executive officer forum on 14 December 1995. That ECM sets out the background to the proposal, in that it will—

"Enable officers to keep abreast of contemporary management practices and departmental specific situations in both the public sector and private industry within and external to Australia."

Sir Humphrey would have been proud!

What was the junket allowance embraced by the party that is now so eager to criticise public servants in this State? Included in Labor's junket allowance was up to \$12,000 for business class travel to London for director-general and spouse, \$2,400 for accommodation, \$2,400 for meals, plus an additional \$230 per day for newspapers, for magazines, for snacks and for personal items. On top of that, there was a \$200 equipment allowance and \$1,000 thrown in for conference registration. With fringe benefits tax thrown in, there was a total benefit of \$27,200 per director-general per year. Of course, the 10 days' leave was not to be charged to any leave account. Again the Labor Party and the members opposite have been caught out for the hypocrites that they are. While they continually criticise this Government and public servants in this State, they had a deal going, ready for Executive Council, with a special \$25,000 per year junket allowance for the select handful of Labor mates who graced the senior levels of the bureaucracy under the previous Government.

But there is a bit more. When the Leader of the Opposition continued to whinge and to complain about public servants travelling, I asked my department to dig out the figures. I was naive

enough to think that the Labor Party must have had a simple philosophical objection to public servants travelling, so I asked the department to compare the dollar value in 1992 against the dollar value in 1996—the year that Labor lost power. The results are interesting. In 1992-93, under Labor overseas travel for public servants cost \$1,091,539.70. In 1996, after three more years of Labor, it totalled \$3,587,359.40—an increase of over 300% in three years. This is the party that criticises public servants. This is the party that criticises travel entitlements. This is the party that was going to give its mates a \$25,000 a year junket allowance—a secret deal that it never got around to implementing, but all the evidence in the documentation that I will now table shows that the deal was done.

Mr Beattie: Not one cent spent.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Leader of the Opposition said that not one cent of it was spent. That is because the Government changed and we would not have a bar of Labor's junket allowance of \$25,000 a year for each director-general.

I will now table certain documents for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition. The first is the explanatory memorandum in respect of the Executive Council minute. The Premier approved this benefit in principle at a chief executive officer forum on 14 December 1995. Labor's Premier might have; this Premier did not. I table the variation of contract of employment signed by the then Premier and to be signed by the other recipients. I table a notation to the then Premier from the Public Sector Management Commission's Mr Brian Head. I table for the benefit of honourable members Attachment 2, Costings. The bottom line grand total—it was a grand total, too—was \$27,200. I also table Attachment 3, "Special conference leave for directors-general". The Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party now stand condemned for massive political hypocrisy.

Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Trust

Ms SPENCE: I refer the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care to media reports that the Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Trust can no longer find \$14,000 to pay for a youth development worker to help young unemployed in my electorate. I ask: what money will the Minister approve for a Mount Gravatt youth worker seeing that the member for Mansfield has found jobs worth over \$110,000 for members of his immediate family who were paid out of trust funds?

Mr LINGARD: The leading questions asked in relation to my portfolio always amaze me. Recently, the shadow Minister asked a similar sort of leading question which was completely and utterly dishonest. Let me quote one of the similar examples which was used during the Estimates hearings. The member tried to accuse my department of approving grants when applications had not been received. The Opposition spokesman asked for a copy of a letter. A copy of a letter was presented to the member on 18 November through a particular computer, which she said came in after the grants were approved. But in fact the original letter came in on 4 October—well

before the approvals. This question is yet another example of that type of approach. I urge the Opposition to be honest in the leading questions that it asks. I am not aware of all of the details the member is seeking in terms of the Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Trust.

Quoting of Treasurer by Electricity Week

Ms WARWICK: I refer the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts to an article in a publication called Electricity Week in which she has been directly quoted as saying—

"The reason the Government has split up the industry is to make a convenient sale. The industry is worth about \$13 billion, and we believe if it is split up into three it is a lot easier to sell in parcels of \$3 billion or \$4 billion each."

I ask the Deputy Premier: did she make such a statement, and could she please explain to the House the circumstances of this publication?

Mrs SHELTON: I am delighted with my elevation to the honourable title of "senator" in the article, but I must set the record straight. The comments attributed to me are not mine; they are the comments of the Opposition Mines and Energy spokesman, the former honourable Tony McGrady, the member for Mount Isa. They were taken from a feature story in the Australian Financial Review on 26 June quoting the Opposition spokesperson, Tony McGrady. He said—

"The reason the Government has split up the industry is to make a convenient sale. The industry is worth about \$13 billion, and we believe if it is split up into three it is a lot easier to sell in parcels of \$3 billion or \$4 billion."

That is right: it was the honourable member who said—

"... we believe if it is split up into three it is a lot easier to sell ..."

Mr T. B. Sullivan: That's your plan, isn't it?

Mrs SHELTON: I will table a copy of the Australian Financial Review article. It gets better. Further, it has now been established that Electricity Week attributed those pro-privatisation quotes, which were made by the Opposition spokesman, to me through a process the publication calls "news abstracting". I have here a letter which I received yesterday from the editor of the publication, which I will also table, which explains how the mistake occurred. I shall read from the faxed letter. It states in part—

"In a very poorly subbed edition of Electricity Week ... we have taken a quote from the Queensland State Opposition spokesman for Mines and Energy, Tony O'Grady"—

they did not get the member's name right—

"and attributed it to the Treasurer, Mrs Sheldon."

The letter goes on to state—

"We apologise for the confusion this has caused. We now understand that it was Tony

O'Grady who wants to sell, not the Treasurer. We'll put a correction in today's edition."

I look forward to the correction as, I am sure, will the Labor Opposition. I table a copy of the letter. As for the position of this State Government, I must reiterate that the Mines and Energy Minister, Mr Gilmore, and myself are as one on this issue—privatisation is not on the agenda.

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. Also I bring the Treasurer's attention to the telephone number. It is a Sydney number, 01; normally it is 02.

Mrs SHELDON: The only thing they got right was the quote from Tony O'Grady.

Funding Cuts to Women's Rape and Sexual Assault Clinics

Mrs EDMOND: I refer the Treasurer and Minister for women's affairs to her belated interest in the savage funding cuts to women's rape and sexual assault clinics across Queensland. I ask: what consultation did Queensland Health have with her Office of Women's Affairs prior to these cuts being made, or is this yet another example of the Minister for Health blindly pursuing his own agenda at the expense of Queensland women?

Mrs SHELDON: I am a little amazed that the Opposition spokesperson on the Office of Women's Affairs did not ask that question. What is the matter with Judy? Is she being overshadowed by the Opposition spokesperson on Health?

Mrs Edmond: Is the Treasurer saying she is no longer the Minister representing Women's Affairs?

Mrs SHELDON: I was just drawing to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition the fact that obviously the Opposition spokesperson on women's affairs has been sidelined by the Opposition spokesperson on Health and, may I add—

An Opposition member interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Then she should have kept her question for her own portfolio, should she not, as the member well knows. May I say that indeed it is necessary for the Opposition spokesperson on women's affairs to ask questions and to speak on the radio, because the shadow Minister for Health does not know even the name of the Office of Women's Affairs. If I can just bring to her attention the fact that the Office of the Status of Women is a Federal institution, not a State institution, so I suggest that she start getting her facts right from square one.

The fact of the matter is that the review of the funding of rape crisis centres was put in place by the former Labor Government because it considered that the money that had been spread around in these various organisations had not been factually based. So the result of this review, as indeed the Minister for Health would answer the shadow Minister if she bothered to ask him, was indeed put in place by the Labor Party and the answers of that review were the answers put in place by the people opposite when they were in Government—not that I would expect them to understand that situation.

Naturally, as the Minister for the Office of Women's Affairs, I am very concerned about any cut to funding affecting women's health or crisis care. Certainly sexual abuse in our community is a crime. It is something for which women, who are unfortunately subjected to it in our community, must receive adequate counselling and help. I have spoken to the Health Minister on this issue and he is reviewing that to make sure that none of these services is cut and that women are not affected as a result. So, in future, could I have two things, please? It would be nice if the person who is actually in charge of the portfolio asked the question. I assume she has a bit more knowledge than the shadow Minister for Health. In fact, if the shadow Minister for Health really wants information, she should ask the Minister responsible for funding that program.

Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody

Mr HEGARTY: I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: could he inform the House of the Queensland Corrective Service Commission's response to the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody?

Mr COOPER: I thank the honourable member for the question because as recently as last week three Ministers from this Government were in Canberra at the Aboriginal deaths in custody conference which looked at overrepresentation in Corrective Services institutions of the ATSI people. It is my belief that that was a successful conference, but of course it remains to be seen from the outcomes as to just how successful it was. It is true and it has been true for quite some time, especially in the last three years, that the numbers of indigenous people in secure custody in particular have been increasing. In fact, they have doubled in the last three years. Up to 1 June, we had about 890 of these people in secure custody. Again, that represents about 23% of people in secure custody, but also about 60% are in juvenile detention centres. That is a figure that is far too high. It was generally recognised all around the conference and all around the State that there is an overrepresentation of these people in secure custody.

The key of course is what is being done about it. The Corrective Services Commission has quite a number of strategies in place and these have been working well. Naturally there is still a lot to be done, but one thing that is insisted upon is that Corrective Services Commission staff as well as the Queensland Police Service are required to do a course in cross-cultural training and educational programs.

Mr Hamill: Where are the four from Undarra?

Mr COOPER: Honourable members opposite should not make light of it. This is far too serious an issue which the members opposite did not do very much about and which we are doing a lot about. Some of the strategies are in place. As I said, we are putting on another eight ATSI PLOs—police liaison officers—this year. That is up to 104. They have proven to be an enormous success around the State. That will be continued because anyone and

everyone who has come into contact with them knows that the work that they do is essential, that it is absolutely vital. So we are continuing that program of increasing staff as far as the QPS and the Corrective Services Commission are concerned.

Other strategies put in place include diverting from secure custody ATSI offenders who have committed minor offences. We also are extending the program of diversion from secure facilities. We are involving the ATSI community-based organisations in the management of juvenile offenders. They are responding extremely well. It is going to be successful only if these people are involved. If they want to be involved, as far as we are concerned they will be. We are extending the family support program for ATSI offenders. We are introducing a pilot cell visitors program and we are encouraging elders' visits, particularly from Cairns out to Lotus Glen.

We are developing a family violence intervention program at all State correctional centres. We are emphasising the suicide prevention training for all QCSC staff. We are establishing firm links with the Indigenous Advisory Council; we are establishing specific Murri meeting places in correctional centres; and we are setting up video conferencing between Lotus Glen and Townsville centres to enable inmates to have face-to-face contact with relatives. The QCSC is also funding community justice panels in several Aboriginal communities of north Queensland. These have proven to be an enormous success. Quite often the non-indigenous justice system does not work in those circumstances and the indigenous people are far better at enforcing their own laws in their own communities. They do it extremely well, and that is to be encouraged.

Mr Foley: Hear, hear!

Mr COOPER: Well done, someone over there has got some sense. The Queensland Police Service is also working closely with the Corrective Services Commission. They are supporting diversionary centres for intoxicated people. The member opposite might like to support a few of these things too, because he has got a bit more sense than his mate. They are supporting rehabilitation centres for referral and treatment; safe houses staffed by suitable indigenous youth and adults; community education programs including traditional culture, life skills, importance of women and elders in traditional culture, health, domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse. How are we going? Is the member opposite still supportive? He did not hear it? He did not even listen.

Mr Foley: You were on strong ground at the start.

Mr COOPER: His mate here would not listen because he did nothing for four years——

Mr Foley: If you could match the words with deeds.

Mr COOPER:—but at least the member opposite has more of an understanding of what we have to do, which is—and I am sure he will agree with this—to address the underlying causes of deaths in custody and the overrepresentation in

correctional facilities. The member would support that—addressing the underlying causes. Does he know what they are? He knows what life is on the ATSI communities when there is an overindulgence in alcohol, drugs, petrol sniffing, domestic violence and those sorts of things.

I was up in the Lockhart River area just recently. Of course, there are very few people who are really interested in it, but when one sees members of a community who have been indulging in petrol sniffing and the effect on them and the accommodation when they wreck it, and the effect on their brains and their lives when they have indulged in this for 9 or 10 months, one can see that it is absolutely drastic and is absolutely abhorrent.

We need the absolute support of the ATSI people in making sure that they too take control of their own destiny and their own young people. It is affecting not only pregnant women but also children who are 8, 9 and 10 years of age. That is something that should affect and should get hold of everyone in this community, not only white people but also the indigenous people. It is causing irreparable damage to them all because of this lack of supervision and control coming from their own people. They need to be able to take control of their destiny. We are as one with them in our support for trying to make sure that they do get on top of this latest problem, which is a massive problem that I want to bring to the attention of this House. It could well get worse if we as a community—black and white—do not get together to make sure that we nip this one in the bud very early in the piece because of the damage that it is doing. We are more than just aware of the problem; we are putting into place the strategies to take care of it. We would like the support of members opposite. They might be able to take an interest in this problem which is going to affect us all.

Connolly/Ryan Inquiry

Mr FOLEY: I ask the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice: will he inform the House of the costs to Queensland taxpayers of the Connolly commission review of the Heiner documents matter following the Director of Public Prosecutions' review of two barristers' review which itself followed the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee's review of the Criminal Justice Commission's review of this matter?

Mr BEANLAND: Of course, if the Labor Party were to allow scrutiny of the relevant Cabinet documents, the smile on the face of the Leader of the Opposition might be vastly different, as he well knows. One could ask: what does Labor have to hide? Why will it not release those documents? That is the \$64 question. The member for Yeronga is obviously also a party to this little exercise. For example, if the Premier was not allowing access to certain Cabinet documents relating to a similar matter, of course the Labor Opposition would be crying foul all around the State and demanding that those documents be made public. The issue is: why will Labor not allow these documents to be made public? The simple reason is that it has something to hide.

Rhinoceros Project

Mr TANTI: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry: can he advise the House of any correspondence received or statements made supporting the north and north-western Queensland rhino project?

Mr DAVIDSON: I thank the member for Mundingburra for the question. I know that he has a real interest in this project. I am delighted to inform the House that, as a result of my commitment to this project over the past seven or eight months, I have received many letters which I would like to table for the information of the House. One letter from the Richmond Shire Council states—

"Congratulations on your trip to South Africa, the idea of a Rhinoceros Park for Queensland is absolutely fantastic."

A letter from GLADA, the Gulf Local Authorities Development Association, totally supports the rhinoceros project. A letter from the Council of the Shire of Burke states—

"Discussions at Gulflink (Burke Shire/Doomadgee Aboriginal Community Council) Association welcome the opportunity to participate with the project."

Discussions with Ian Williams of Century Zinc Mine indicate that the world's largest zinc mine may be prepared to investigate ways in which that company could be of assistance."

A letter from the Mayor of the Longreach Shire Council, Joan Moloney, totally supports the project. A letter from the Mayor of the Mareeba Shire Council, Chris Lewis, totally supporting the project states—

"I am writing to offer my support for the Rhino Conservation and breeding project."

Is the Mayor of the Herberton Shire Council a Labor mayor? A letter from the Herberton Shire Council states—

"I wish to encourage your financial support for the proposed pre-feasibility study for Rhinoceros Conservation Programme."

I have also received a letter from Warren Entsch, the Federal member for Leichhardt. A letter from AQIS states—

"AQIS is unlikely to object to the importation of black rhinoceros ..."

AQIS is the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service. DPI states—

"DPI does not have any difficulties with this proposal and would be prepared to consider support services ..."

Amazingly, a statement in the Bowen Independent by my good colleague and friend the member for Whitsunday, Lorraine Bird, totally supported the rhino project. Good luck to her. She had the foresight to go out there and fight for her electorate and the rhinos. Well done! Good luck to her. That is excellent.

I am limited by time, and I have so much to do. Let me read to honourable members a press release

of 25 November 1994 from Mr Elder, the then Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development, which stated—

"Africa represented a new market which Queensland companies should investigate, the Minister for Business, Industry and Regional Development, Jim Elder, said today."

Speaking at a lunch of the recently launched Africa-Australia Business Organisation, Mr Elder said there was increasing interest in the African continent, due largely to the recent changes in the Republic of South Africa and the lifting of trade restrictions with that country."

I will table all these documents.

In the last few days, I have received correspondence from Dr Ian Player totally supporting the project. If members want to challenge Ian Player, they should be very careful. Today I received a letter from Michael Rattray from Mala Mala game reserve totally supporting the project. I also have a letter from George Hughes from the Natal Parks Board totally supporting the project.

Last week, the Opposition criticised my trip to South Africa. This proposal was put together over six or eight months. It was not dreamed up—like many of the Opposition's proposals—over a week, two weeks or three weeks. It was not a fly-by-night proposal. All the appropriate people were involved. Opposition members attacked Tim Nevard, from the James Cook University, and George McFarland. We are going to get square with them. So little Jim Elder, the member for Capalaba, can just sit there and wait for his time to come, because when it comes he will be hit hard. He will not be given the opportunity to forget his disgraceful and disgusting behaviour over my trip to South Africa. When I table letters in this House over the next few weeks and months, he will end up with egg all over his face. He has no interest in jobs, no interest in economic development in this State, and no interest in the Longreach and Burketown areas of this State. He is interested only in playing politics to score cheap political points for himself.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Maryborough Base Hospital

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (11.30 a.m.): I rise today to address a matter of tremendous importance to the citizens of my electorate of Maryborough. There is great apprehension in the community as to whether Maryborough's Base Hospital is to be maintained with the full complement of services and staff who are presently employed. There are fears that our maternity services could be downgraded dramatically, that our operating theatres could be closed and that we could lose intensive care and emergency services facilities. In plain English, we could see our 150-year history of being the region's base hospital ended.

This treachery became evident only in the Health Minister's speech when opening the new Hervey Bay Hospital and in his subsequent media statements. A headline in the Fraser Coast Chronicle states "Bay hospital likely chief hospital—Maryborough change tipped". The article states—

"The new Hervey Bay Hospital is almost certain to be the region's major hospital by the end of this year. The hospital's renal unit opens next week and day surgery in September. From October, it will boast high risk birthing plus paediatrics, coronary care, intensive care, a special care nursery, high risk operating theatre and 24 hour specialist staff.

The \$15m redevelopment of the Maryborough Base Hospital will still go ahead but Health Minister Mike Horan yesterday admitted future services for the Maryborough Hospital would have to be assessed.

The Maryborough hospital will retain intensive care plus new mental health and palliative care services. High risk birthing seemed set to be lost to the Heritage City but services will instead be taken over by St Stephens private hospital.

Maryborough will lose some staff to the Bay as Bay Hospital staff levels rise from 128 full-time equivalents now to 300 by Christmas."

That is 174 who will be transferred out of Maryborough. The article continues—

" 'I can't say how many Maryborough staff will move at this stage,' Mr Horan said.

But Maryborough's patient volumes will be changing—it will have far less patients than now so it won't need the staff."

The Hervey Bay Independent reported from the same interview in an article titled "Health Care Pendulum Swings to Bay". It stated—

"Maryborough will lose its high risk birthing unit when it is moved to Hervey Bay's new hospital in October. From then, Maryborough's high risk maternity patients will have to travel to Hervey Bay.

"When (Hervey Bay) becomes the high risk birthing unit any high risk births will have to come here because this is where we have the obstetricians.' "

They are going from Maryborough to Hervey Bay. The article continues—

"While conceding that Hervey Bay would be the region's major hospital, he had been 'very careful' to ensure Maryborough did not lose out 'simply because a large part of the patient volume has suddenly left. It makes it very difficult then to provide some services where you need a specialist and that specialist needs a certain number of patients in order to operate.'

Maryborough hospital would still provide cardiac care and intensive care units even though it had been a 'major organisational task

to provide both those services in two hospitals that are 25 minutes apart.' "

That is if you are driving over the speed limit. It goes on—

"Mr Horan conceded that at some stage he would have to assess the future of some of the functions of the Maryborough Hospital.

'Yes, we will be discussing with the staff all of the services that will be provided.

The final decisions have to be made on the \$15m redevelopment and the actual finalisation of plans.' "

To say that those statements by the Minister for Health shocked and angered the citizens of all political persuasions of Maryborough, Tiara and Woocoo Shire would be a major understatement; in fact, they were furious. That is no wonder, following guarantee after guarantee from the Minister that there would be no downgrading of the Maryborough Hospital. Even the health council had not been consulted or advised of that complete reversal of plans. The uproar was such that the Minister hastened to Maryborough, convened a meeting firstly with the health council and later with the chairman of the health council, Dr Cotton, presidents of the Hervey Bay and Maryborough Chambers of Commerce, three local mayors, senior Maryborough medical staff and me. At the meeting, Minister Horan promised that all existing services and staff would be maintained at the Maryborough Base Hospital and that the bed numbers of 120 and the existing staff would stay in place for at least two years. The only exception was that nurses who were commuting from Hervey Bay could apply for a position there.

The Minister reiterated that staff numbers would be maintained at Maryborough. The Minister addressed some 150 protesters, many from Hervey Bay, who want to see services at Maryborough Hospital stay in place, and repeated the guarantee. The next morning on ABC radio in Bundaberg, he started to back away from his promise that no staff would be transferred to Hervey Bay Hospital. The people of Maryborough are now asking whether they can believe anything that the Minister has to say. The community has shown its great concern about this matter with overwhelming support for a petition asking this House to support the current level of staffing and full services at the Maryborough Base Hospital. In two weeks a small-business man, Mr Alex Romanov, has gathered more than 7,500 signatures of support. That translates into more than 33% of the voting public in the Maryborough electorate.

I ask the Minister to note that the management and staff at the hospital are getting mixed and confused messages. It would appear that, in spite of the Minister's promises to the contrary, the staff are being persuaded to transfer to Hervey Bay. At the request of the community, a watchdog committee has been set up. That committee includes Fraser Coast community leaders, including Mayor Alan Brown; Hervey Bay Mayor, Bill Brennan; Woocoo Shire Mayor, Kev Mahoney; presidents of the Maryborough and Hervey Bay Chambers of Commerce, Syd Collins and Andrew McNamara; the

member for Hervey Bay, Bill Nunn; and me. That illustrates that 70,000 citizens of Maryborough and Hervey Bay do not trust the Minister. I ask: who would blame them? The Minister has been running around the State claiming that the Opposition has been scaremongering. It is not the Opposition that has been scaring the people; it was a statement made by the Minister at the opening of the Hervey Bay Hospital and his subsequent media statements that scared the people. Believe me, Mr Speaker, we are all still very scared. On behalf of the staff of the Maryborough Hospital and the local community, I ask the Minister to keep his word.

The Minister is attempting to con people by telling them that a start will be made on the upgrading of theatres and accident and emergency facilities at the Maryborough Hospital. However, only \$3.5m has been provided in this year's budget, so that cannot start until July 1998. There will be another election between now and then. That will provide another opportunity for policies to change. The \$15m promise is just another snow job by this Minister to have Maryborough citizens lower their guard while he strips the Maryborough Hospital of equipment and staff and downgrades it to a second-class medical service until he gets past the next election. The Minister has done his dash in Maryborough. Even members of the National Party no longer trust him. I do not blame them.

If that action was intended to drive a wedge between Maryborough and Hervey Bay, it is not working. The people of Hervey Bay are as disgusted as the people of Maryborough with that action in Maryborough. The Minister made promises that he knew he had no hope of keeping. He has no money to finance the Hervey Bay Hospital, so he has set out to rob the Maryborough Hospital, downgrade it and tear it to pieces. It is a damned disgrace!

Mr Horan: They got an increase in their budget.

Mr DOLLIN: We got \$3.5m in the budget. Does the Minister call that an increase? He has had \$9m of ours since May 1995. What has he done with it? Did he spend it at Robina?

Mr Horan: More money in the budget for Maryborough. More in the budget for Hervey Bay.

Mr DOLLIN: The Minister is not being believed. Last time he was in that district he faced 150 protesters. Next time the whole of Maryborough will be out. The National Party will be carrying the flag. The Minister has done his dash in Maryborough and so has this Government. The Minister is not living up to his word. Information has been pouring in to me. He has not frightened those people. All of his head butting has not put the wind up them. They are sliding that information under my door and they are ringing up. I have in my possession instructions that have come from the Minister to say that those theatres will be close for two years while he humbugs around and buggers Maryborough up.

Mr Woolmer: Table it.

Mr Tanti interjected.

Mr DOLLIN: I will be tabling it later. The member for Mundingburra should go back to his votes.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr DOLLIN: The Minister has a forked tongue.

Mr Horan: You just want to see it go down. That's all.

Mr DOLLIN: I do not want to see it go down. If the Minister puts it down, I will have his guts for garters, and so will Maryborough. They will have him. Next time the Minister visits Maryborough, he had better bring a couple of bodyguards. What the Minister is trying to do is a ruddy disgrace. He is deceiving the people. He has deceived his own party. They have all had enough of him. The Minister should line up and do as he promised; if he does not, I can promise him the roughest 12 months he has ever had.

Mr Horan: You don't want to see it succeed.

Mr DOLLIN: It will succeed all right. The Minister has ruined Wahroonga. He has thrown our people back into the caravan parks and everywhere else. Now he is trying to stuff the hospital up. That is what he is trying to do.

SuperQRIS Incentive Scheme

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North) (11.40 a.m.): It gives me great pleasure to make some comments on the recent review of the Queensland Racing Incentive Scheme, which was conducted by Mr Jim Kennedy. The key word in the revamped Queensland Racing Incentive Scheme designed by Mr Kennedy is, in fact, "incentive." Mr Kennedy has redesigned and refocused the new SuperQRIS scheme to make it attractive and desirable for owners to go out and buy the home-grown, Queensland-bred product. It also offers breeders direct reward or incentive for producing a better quality of racehorse.

Mr Palaszczuk: How is your racehorse?

Mr HEALY: It is very good, actually.

By tackling these two issues with the right catalyst, we aim to achieve a greater demand for Queensland-bred horses and stallions and ultimately achieve higher prices for yearlings. The "incentive" will be put back into the incentive scheme through a range of measures. Firstly, the coalition Government has committed an additional \$500,000 towards an unplaced starters scheme, upping the ante for QRIS registered horses. This initiative, which was announced last week by the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Racing, has been welcomed by the racing industry. Last weekend in Mackay, I had the pleasure of representing the Minister at the Mackay Cup. In Mackay, I spoke to quite a few people in the racing industry—owners, trainers and breeders. They were all ecstatic about some of the initiatives that have been announced by the Minister.

Importantly, this initiative will also reduce the cost of racing for owners of QRIS thoroughbreds in line with the Government's policy of wherever possible making racing cheaper for participants. That

will take the Government's total commitment to the new SuperQRIS scheme to a record \$3.5m. That demonstrates once and for all this Government's clear determination to support the racing industry with positive, well-targeted initiatives. Furthermore, the State Government will consider Mr Kennedy's recommendation to increase QRIS funds by an additional \$1m in the context of available funds and the future of the Queensland TAB. Before the Treasurer leaves the Chamber, I again thank her for her contribution of that \$1m which will come from bookmakers' turnover tax.

Mrs Sheldon: \$2m.

Mr HEALY: Sorry, the \$2m that will come from bookmakers' turnover tax that will go directly into the racing industry in the form of track maintenance. That will give genuine confidence to race clubs throughout Queensland.

The State Government's \$3m annual contribution to underwrite added stakes prize money for QRIS registered horses remains a key component in the SuperQRIS package. The aim is to distribute QRIS prize money as evenly as possible between metropolitan races, which showcase our top-class product on the national and international stage, and provincial and country racing, which provides strong competition for QRIS added stakes. The \$3m allocation for added stakes is also to be split equally between two-year-old and three-year-old horses to broaden the depth of quality thoroughbreds on the Queensland racing circuit. That allows for more balance and emphasis to be placed on the longer-term development of quality racing stock and removes some of the pressures on owners to race the more immature two-year-olds by providing a larger selection of three-year-old races with SuperQRIS added stakes. Again, for the regional areas of Queensland that is most important. A lot of trainers in those areas do not place a lot of emphasis on their two-year-olds because, being in regional or rural areas, they have to take their horses a long way to race. They prefer and have preferred—and they have indicated this to the Minister—more money to be added to racing for three-year-olds. Of course, through the incentives that were outlined by Mr Kennedy in his review, that will happen. That prize money will be split equally between two-year-old and three-year-old horses.

Similarly, the recommendation to program more QRIS fillies races should encourage the development of stronger brood mare blood lines to enhance our breeding stock. As with any Government initiative, in terms of meeting the goals and objectives of the scheme the Government seeks a partnership with the racing industry. To that end, the new scheme will include a \$300 nominator's bonus scheme and a special group winner's bonus to be funded from QRIS registration funds. That part of the scheme will reward breeders, offering them a direct financial incentive to produce Queensland-bred winners. The nominator's bonus will be paid direct to the nominator of all QRIS eligible winners of two-year-old and three-year-old QRIS added stakes races run in metropolitan and strategic provincial

QRIS added stakes races during 1997-98. The nominators will gain \$3,000 per metropolitan QRIS race meeting win while \$1,500 will apply to provincial QRIS race wins.

The special group winner's bonus will apply solely to breeders. This is an initiative that I know the breeding industry will certainly welcome. It offers a \$10,000 bonus to the breeder of any QRIS registered two-year-old or three-year-old horse that wins a group race anywhere in Australia during 1997-98. That is a great bonus for breeders. Up until now there has not been a lot of incentive for breeders. In many cases, much of the major prize money that has been injected into the industry from QRIS has gone to the owners, who are quite happy about that. Certainly, a lot of the owners who buy horses at the QRIS sales expect a return on their money, if not better. However, for some years the breeding industry has believed that, right from the very start when the QRIS scheme was introduced, it certainly was not gaining the initiatives that needed to be introduced. I think that this \$10,000 bonus is a marvellous initiative. It provides an added incentive to produce horses that are competitive on the national stage and, of course, that may be increased through sponsorship arrangements to be sought by the new Queensland Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association.

Mr Kennedy's report also addressed the breedback issue. That is a very contentious issue that has been the subject of much debate and polarity of opinion in the industry. However, it defers consideration of breed back as a component of the overhauled QRIS scheme until the effect that the privatisation of the New South Wales TAB and the proposal to privatise the Queensland TAB has on the Queensland racing and breeding industries becomes clear. Of course, we will not know that until New South Wales decides to go ahead with its privatisation and the investigations that Queensland is undertaking to find out the effect that privatisation would have on the industry in Queensland become known. That will allow the industry to get a clear picture of the lie of the land in relation to breed back in what may be a substantially altered environment.

Naturally, the recommendations in the report address the historical shortcomings in the advertising and promotion of the QRIS scheme which have been the source of much dissent and discontent in the industry. That component of the QRIS budget will fall under the new joint owners and breeders association and it is to be limited to 10% of the overall registration budget. Similarly, there is a requirement for annual statistical reporting and analysis for the benefit of scheme participants as well as financial oversight by the Queensland Principal Club in line with the policy of openness and accountability for the scheme. It is no good continuing blindly with this scheme or with any other scheme without constantly looking and checking to see whether the scheme is achieving what it set out to do. We have to take the pulse of the scheme regularly and to let the industry know of the health of the scheme. As Mr Kennedy outlined in his review, there is quite a bit of discontent in the industry.

When QRIS was set up, there was a suggestion that there might have been some funny goings-on in relation to some finances. That concern arose only because QRIS was a very difficult scheme to understand. Through the openness and accountability of the scheme as recommended by Mr Kennedy, the racing industry and the participants in the industry will certainly be able to understand it. To that end, each year there will be a published assessment of the scheme for everybody to see. That report will include such things as the average sale price for QRIS yearlings with a comparison over the previous three years both in Queensland and interstate. Similarly, the number of QRIS registrations with comparisons to the three preceding seasons will also be published. Key breeding information such as the level of service fees to the leading 25 stallions, the number of services each performed and comparisons over three years will give an indication of the increased demand for Queensland stallions. The annual report will also include the number of stakes-winning mares served by Queensland stallions along with an overall assessment of the scheme, including trend analysis and commentary, which will present a clear picture of its performance and whether it is achieving its objectives.

From here, it is full steam ahead for the new SuperQRIS. Work is already under way to implement the key recommendations of this report. The creation of the new combined owners and breeders organisation, the Queensland Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association, is already in train under the guidance of an industry steering committee which is being chaired by Mr Brian Allom. The Minister has established an implementation group as per Mr Kennedy's recommendation to oversee the implementation of new administrative arrangements outlined in the QRIS review. That committee is chaired by Dr Bob Mason and comprises Mr Brian Allom, Mr Kevin Hasemann, Mr Bruce Schafer and Mrs Helen Coughlan, who also acted as secretary to the review.

I congratulate Mr Kennedy on the considerable time and effort he put into the review and also the many industry participants who contributed. Yesterday, I had a chance to have a short conversation with Mr Kennedy. I congratulated him on the review. He is certainly a man who understands the industry, which is extremely important. In that regard, he is very well respected. I urge those members who are interested in the racing industry to look at that particular review.

I am sure that members will agree that the SuperQRIS blueprint will lift Queensland horse breeding to new heights in quality and professionalism. I also note the Opposition Racing spokesman's support for the new scheme. Obviously, he knows a good thing when he sees it. I know that in my own electorate and the surrounding Darling Downs area where there is a high concentration of horse breeding activity, a lot of interest has been generated in the new incentive scheme. We all look forward to a brighter future for Queensland horse breeding and the return of genuine incentive to this flagship industry scheme, the super Queensland Racing Incentive Scheme, SuperQRIS.

Coal Mining Safety

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy) (11.50 a.m.): It is my belief that, regardless of its political make-up, the State Government of the day has a clear obligation to all employees of the coal industry to ensure that the highest standards of workplace health and safety are maintained in what is the most hazardous industry in the world. From the Minister to the director-general to the chief inspector of mines, it should be clear that budget considerations and personal agendas should not be an impediment to the effectiveness of mining industry safety.

In Queensland, under the Coal Mining Act and the Mines Regulation Act there is a requirement that investigations into certain accidents—depending on the type of accident, the environment and the severity of injuries—be carried out by an inspector of mines. From my experience, those accidents were usually investigated by the inspector in an effort to determine the cause of the accident and what could be done to ensure that a similar accident did not occur again. Where there has been a fatal accident, the mining warden and a panel of reviewers inquire into the accident and make recommendations that it is hoped would prevent similar fatalities in the future.

In recent times, reviewers and the mining warden have, in their findings and recommendations, been critical of the Government of the day, through the Department of Mines and Energy, and of the mining companies themselves. Given the close relationship between the current Government, certain people within the department and the mining companies, one can understand why there is a move by the coal producers and the Minister to disband the Mining Wardens Court in its current form. Mining companies do not like the truth about why accidents occur and the department does not want honesty in reporting. Mining Warden Frank Windridge has had the courage to report accurately and honestly not only in the interests of providing the facts relevant to fatal incidents but also of ensuring that everything possible is done to prevent similar accidents from occurring. There is nothing more embarrassing for a mining company than to be found wanting in safety procedures and the Department of Mines and Energy certainly does not want the mining warden reporting unfavourably about its failure to uphold the standards of safety in the coalmining industry. The most recent example of that was the Moura No. 2 inquiry report and the coroner's report released in January 1996, in which the shortcomings of the department were highlighted.

I stand for honesty in the reporting of fatalities within the mining industry. Under the current structure of the Mining Wardens Court we have independence, but some people fear that independence. In particular, the mining companies are paranoid about the warden and they will do anything to have the Mining Wardens Court stripped of its independence. One way of achieving that is to place it under the control of the Attorney-General so that there will be some control over who will head inquiries into mining fatalities and, to some extent, determine the outcomes of those inquiries.

The Minister for Mines and Energy has shown his true colours in this matter. He is no different from any other Minister in this "back to the bad old days" Government. If Government members do not like the way a job is being done, especially if it is critical of the Government, they close the operation down or restructure it so that the Government has greater control and can pull the strings.

The report of the Mining Warden and Coroner, Frank Windridge, on the Moura No. 2 disaster was highly critical of the BHP mining company and of the Government. Mr Windridge used these words to express his dissatisfaction with the procedures in place at the mine—

"It is the opinion of the Inquiry that events at Moura surrounding assumptions as to the state of knowledge of the night shift on August 7 and the safety of those at the mine represent a passage of neglect and non-decision which must never be repeated in the coalmining industry."

Of the State Government and, more specifically, the Department of Mines and Energy which has responsibility for the Mines Inspectorate, Mr Windridge stated—

"It is a matter of regret that the one per cent per annum (Mines Department) dividend payback to Treasury was applied to field staff with health and safety responsibilities. This infers that the Department was prepared to accept a level of death and injury in the industry so long as budget targets were met."

I accept that we were in Government at the time and there is no way in the world that I intend to walk away from that. However, as I told the media after the reports were handed down, Ministers are only as good as the bureaucrats who advise them. The Minister would do well to take on board what I have said today because nothing has changed.

Mr Windridge has used words of dissatisfaction when commenting on the way that mine management and mining companies commit themselves to safe practices. Criticism of the companies and of the State Government has upset those who should be accepting what has been said instead of banding together to shoot the messenger. I have made similar comments to Mr Windridge, who said in his report on the Moura tragedy—

"Governments have no moral right to walk away when a disaster happens and decline to accept any responsibility. They are by association and legislation clearly involved."

In attempting to take away the opportunity for independent, open and accountable inquiries into mining fatalities in this State, the Minister is walking away from the moral obligation of which Mr Windridge wrote. I remember Minister Gilmore calling for Mr McGrady, the Minister for Mines at the time of the Moura No. 2 disaster, to resign. I remember the hypocrisy of the then Opposition which, when in Government previously, had failed to act on the recommendations of past inquiries into industry fatalities. As the Minister, Mr Gilmore is now leading the push to close down the mining warden's office.

He wants to shut the mining warden up. He is not interested in the men and women who work in a high-risk industry. He is not interested in their families and the impacts that that would have on the communities in which they live. I wonder what the attitude of the Minister and his bureaucrats would be if they faced the same risks as mine workers do on a daily basis. Bureaucrats do everything to protect their pay packets, but there is little commitment to preventing accidents, saving lives and saving mines. The Minister should be reminded that the current Coal Mining Act has been written with the blood of mine workers. People like Frank Windridge who are independent and are not controlled by Government or the will of the mining companies must be allowed to carry on with their jobs without fear of retribution or threat of being silenced. The Minister will have blood on his hands if he shuts down the mining warden's ability to undertake independent investigations into industry fatalities.

I take this opportunity to highlight some of the findings of the mining warden and other reviewers into a number of recent fatalities within the mining industry to make it clear to everyone who knows and understands mining why the independence of the mining warden must be maintained. On 14 March 1995, an inquiry found that Mount Isa Mines Limited inadequately trained its workers, had poorly defined supervision and relied on on-the-job training. The report states—

"We find the instruction and training given in relation to this particular phase of their work, namely shunting operations, was inadequate and not conducive to the maintenance or provision of a safe work place and scheme of work."

We saw no evidence to support a belief that the senior members of this crew received any formal training in shunting operations. Management relied on on-the-job training whereby experienced persons passed on both good and bad habits with no follow up by supervisors, management or the safety department."

On 4 June 1996 at Mount Isa Mines, a fatal accident occurred when an unsecured grating on a walkway gave way. The review panel was unable to determine when a stairway was removed and covered by mesh grating. It was thought that it could have been as far back as 1988. Whenever the work was undertaken, the grates were not securely fixed to the supporting beams. The panel stated—

"It would appear that there were no safe work procedures in place to perform this task or to monitor the satisfactory completion of that work."

In addition to this, workplace inspections and safety audits conducted on an 'ad hoc' basis failed to detect this potential hazard."

This case revealed the company's lack of real commitment to workers' safety because it had failed to respond when the poor condition of the entire floor where the accident had occurred was raised at a meeting in April 1996.

In another fatal accident at Mount Isa, the review panel identified as a contributing factor the failure of the company to deploy a competent person to assist the deceased or to set up equipment as required by standard work procedures or the provisions of the Metalliferous Mining Regulations 1985. In 1996, the mining warden recommended that communications between employees must be improved to ensure that the commitment to and understanding of safe operations is mutual and recommended that a working group be established to identify barriers to effective communications and to determine the means of removing those barriers.

These types of recommendations raise serious concerns. What has management been doing? Why have these communication barriers existed? What commitment does management have to workplace safety if it allows standard work practices and mining regulations to be ignored to such an extent that it costs a life? Why is it that a life must be lost before action is taken to reduce those risks?

Last year, a miner lost his life at the Oakey Creek mine due to the substandard condition of the workplace. The subsequent report stated—

"The existing rill (furrow) adjacent to the edge of the excavation at the site of the accident was of insufficient height to prevent a multi-purpose vehicle from being driven or proceeding over the edge of an excavation."

There was insufficient lighting to provide clear identification of the edge of the excavation.

Time expired.

Abuse of Older People

Mrs WILSON (Mulgrave) (12 p.m.): The 1996-97 State Budget allocated \$0.6m over three years to operate a Statewide service to respond to the abuse of older people. This initiative is a clear indication of the commitment of this Government, through the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, to respond to the needs of seniors who have or may be abused. Over the past decade, the abuse of older people has been the subject of growing public concern. It is an issue which is attracting the increasing attention of researchers, Governments and the community in Australia.

International studies indicate that between 3% and 5% of people over the age of 65 living in the community are abused. Two Australian studies have been conducted, both by Dr Susan Kurrle and Associates. The first study found that, over a one-year period, 4.6% of older clients of a geriatric rehabilitation service had experienced abuse. The recent study involved clients of a number of aged care assessment teams, including one in Brisbane. The study found that 1.2% of clients had been abused. This rate was lower than that reported in the earlier study and by older people themselves in the overseas studies and may reflect that abuse is often hidden and seldom revealed to others.

The abuse of older people is defined as any behaviour or patterns of behaviour by a person or persons with whom an older person has a

relationship implying trust which results in harm to an older person. Seniors who are abused may suffer from one or more of the following types of abuse: psychological, physical and financial abuse and, of course, neglect. Studies show that more older women than older men are abused and that it occurs in family relationships, spousal relationships and friendships. Both men and women have been identified as abusers and the majority of abusers are relatives of the victim.

The current Queensland developments for responding to the abuse of seniors have put this State in a very strong position to address the needs of this very vulnerable group. These developments are based on the findings of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care's report Abuse of Older People in Queensland. The report notes that the availability and suitability of services to respond to situations of abuse varied in different areas of the State and for different communities.

Many services have a role in responding to situations of abuse of older people, including aged care assessment teams, community health services, Home and Community Care Program services, the Queensland Police Service, Legal Friend, the Public Trustee, legal services and domestic violence services. The project found that few of those services had developed a body of expertise or knowledge on all types of abuse and that no one service type was positioned to respond to the needs of all older people who have or may be abused. The report concluded that, due to the complexity of the issue, the need for a variety of responses and the lack of services with expertise in the area, some older Queenslanders have had difficulty in identifying and accessing appropriate assistance.

The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care has been expanding responses to older people in situations of abuse through the development and promotion of publications on this topic, through the funding of a new Statewide service, and a project on the abuse of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander people. The Community Health Association of Queensland has been funded to operate this new Statewide service. It aims to enhance the safety and quality of life of seniors by ensuring that older people who are abused have access to the assistance that they need.

The service will be available to assist all older Queenslanders who have been or may be abused by a person with whom they have a personal relationship. The service will work within a framework which recognises the autonomy of older people and their right to make choices and decisions regarding their own lives. The central office, located in Brisbane, will develop training and education materials, maintain data collection systems, collate research, identify models of best practice and oversee service development and planning.

The service will employ community workers in south-east, north and central Queensland and will develop strategies to ensure access for older people in rural and remote areas. The community workers will provide specialist information and education for

existing services, older people and their families. They will respond to inquiries by providing information and referring older people to or linking them with existing services. When requested, they will support existing services working with older people who have been or may be abused.

As abuse covers a very broad range of situations and relationships, the service will develop strategies for assisting older people in all abusive situations, from physical abuse to financial abuse and neglect. It will also assist older people living in a range of situations, including those living independently, with their family or in other types of accommodation. The service will establish an advisory committee to provide advice on service planning and development. That committee will include experienced workers from existing services, representatives of older people and other people with specific expertise in the field. Regional community workers will hold regular meetings with older people's representatives, key services and departments in their local area.

The Office of Ageing within the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care will provide advice and support to this organisation to ensure the development of a high-quality service which responds to the needs of older people who have been abused. The Office of Ageing will also work with this service to ensure that a data collection system is established which will provide a greater understanding of the issues for older people who have been abused.

Although this Statewide service will be available to work with the older people in Queensland who may be abused by someone with whom they have a personal relationship, it will have only a limited capacity to explore the issues of abuse of older Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander people. The specific needs of older indigenous people were noted in consultations with older people during the Project on Abuse of Older People conducted in 1994. The need for greater consultation and development of models to respond to abuse was also identified.

The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care has responded to this need by providing a non-recurrent grant of \$40,000 to the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council in Rockhampton to conduct a project to identify abuse issues for older Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander people and develop strategies to respond to them. The project will be conducted in central Queensland and will consider appropriate responses for all indigenous communities. The findings of this project will be used to inform the development of responses in other communities across Queensland. This will be the first time in Australia that the specific needs of older Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander people who have been abused will be addressed.

The department has also taken a leading role in the production and distribution of a range of publications aimed at informing older people and the services working with them about the abuse of older people. The Office of Ageing produced a kit to

assist services to develop agency guidelines to respond to abuse. The kit has been circulated to approximately 650 services across Queensland, including hospitals, community health centres, Home and Community Care services, domestic violence services and other community-based services.

In a follow-up to the kit, presentations on abuse and the use of the kit have been given to community groups and service providers in different locations in Queensland, including Cairns, Townsville, the Gold Coast and Brisbane. Those presentations aim to encourage services to develop agency protocols and to establish links between agencies. In the coming months, it is expected that the kit will be evaluated and the information gained will provide the direction for future promotional activities within the services.

The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is also preparing a Guide to Legal Issues for Responding to Abuse of Older People. This is an additional resource which brings together for the first time in Queensland the range of legal information relevant to the situations of abuse of older people. This guide will provide the service providers and older people with information on the range of legal options currently available. The document will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that the information remains current.

In addition to information and support, the need for additional protection for people who are unable to make decisions for themselves and for easily accessible protection orders for situations of non-spousal abuse has been raised extensively during consultation with older people and people working with them. The department has been conducting a comprehensive review of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 to consider the options and implications for extending the Act to cover older people affected by violence within domestic relationships.

In June of 1997, the Department of Justice released for comment the Powers of Attorney Bill 1997. The Bill follows closely the recommendations of the Queensland Law Reform Commission in its report on Assisted and Substituted Decision Making so far as they relate to enduring powers of attorney, health directives and statutory health attorneys. The proposed legislation will allow people to better plan for the future management of their affairs if they should lose the mental capacity to make their own decisions. The new legislation extends the range of decisions which can be made under an enduring power of attorney and underlies the clear principle with which attorneys must comply when making decisions.

Responses to abuse of older people cannot occur in isolation. They need to form part of broader strategies that address the needs of senior people and vulnerable people in our community. The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care will continue to monitor the ongoing needs of older people and to explore policy and program developments that will respond to the needs of the growing, ageing population. The issue of abuse of older people will continue to remain a high priority for this Government.

Family Support Workers

Ms BLIGH (South Brisbane) (12.09 p.m.): Many members in this Chamber have heard the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and his director-general, Allan Male, trumpeting the virtues of their family support worker funding program. Members will be aware no doubt that they call the program the curtain of care which they claim—is this microphone not on?

Mr Springborg: That looks like a curtain of care to me.

Ms BLIGH: The member for Warwick should be very interested in what I have to say, because some of his constituents have missed out very poorly. They call the program the curtain of care which they claim will come down all over Queensland to provide protection and services to Queensland families. I tell honourable members that nothing could be further from the truth. When challenged about clear funding rorts in this program, the Minister claims that he has had to act to personally intervene to ensure that his so-called curtain was complete—he has had to intervene to fill voids in this curtain. I thought it would be instructive therefore to have a look at some details of the curtain and how it actually looks when we look at it across the State.

It is important to understand the background to this program. First of all, in July last year the Minister announced that funding would be available for 22 family support workers across the State. I will refer to this part of the program as funding round 1. Locations for services were targeted on the basis of need. They were assessed on objective criteria, including comparative rates of child protection notifications and numbers of children under 17 in each region and area. On that basis, funding guidelines were prepared and an information paper and information sessions were provided to community groups across the State spelling out eligibility criteria and where services would be located. On that basis, services then decided whether or not to apply.

I would like to go into some detail about how this operated in the Brisbane North region. In the Brisbane North region it was identified that four positions would be necessary. The areas targeted for those positions would be Redcliffe, the inner city, Caboolture and Maroochydore. After an exhaustive assessment process, the department recommended that the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre, Lifeline on the Sunshine Coast, the Caboolture Community Care Centre and the Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre should receive funding. In the end, those organisations that were funded were the Brisbane City Mission, the Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre, the Burpengary Baptist Church and Lifeline Sunshine Coast. It was only a 50% strike rate on the recommendations of the department, but I have to say it is a huge improvement on what happened in other areas. But we should ask ourselves: why the turnaround? Why did the Minister decide to fund organisations that were not recommended by the department? Was it because he was searching for excellence? The sad answer to that is: no.

In the case of the Burpengary Baptist Church, the departmental rating on objective criteria for this organisation was a very low 11 out of 27 possible points. This compares with an average score of 24 and 25 for organisations that were overlooked for funding in this round. This then was the first round of funding, in which there was at least some rudimentary attempt to adhere to a recognisable and accountable process, some passing pretence at a public and transparent funding round. However, this ultimately collapsed when it got to the office of the director-general and the Minister. But it is in the second and subsequent so-called rounds of funding that we see the real problem with this funding program.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: Just a rort.

Ms BLIGH: "Round" is in fact an exaggeration for what happened in the subsequent months because, as the honourable member here has suggested, it is nothing more than a rort; it has been nothing more than a slush fund from which the Minister has disbursed funds on an ad hoc basis outside of any guidelines, in some cases outside the law, outside all eligibility criteria and with no public advertisement of any further funds being available. What that means is that every organisation in every electorate across this State was never notified that there would be extra funding available and they were given no opportunity to apply for that funding.

There are at least 11 new services which have been funded in Queensland since the first round. The funding of these 11 and the total pattern which has resulted shows the lie behind the so-called curtain of care. In the Brisbane South region there are five family support workers. In Central Queensland there are seven. In North Queensland there are five. In the South West region there are five. But in Brisbane North there are 11 family support workers. Seven of the new 11 have gone to the Brisbane North area. The Brisbane North region now has 11 of 33 family support workers. Thirty three per cent of the funding of this program has gone to one region. We should ask ourselves then: what is different about the Brisbane North region? Is the population growth much larger here than for, say, Brisbane South, where there is nothing south of Helensvale—nothing between Helensvale and the border? No, there is nothing different here about the population growth to justify this kind of increase. Was there a relatively lower number of family support services in this region? No. Why, then, is the curtain of care falling so heavily across this part of the State?

Of the 11 services funded, eight were not initially recommended by the department for specific reasons or because the department held serious concerns about their capacity to administer the funds. In some cases there does not appear to be any opportunity for departmental comment. Only two of the 11 services funded in this region were ever recommended as high priority for funding in the first place. Five of the 11 new funded services never submitted applications for that funding. Ten of the 11 have had personal contact, however, with the Minister or his director-general. The Minister came

into this House this morning and made what has to be one of the most pathetic attempts to justify this rort. He tried to say that a letter from one of these organisations—a personal letter to him—was somehow dated earlier than I originally thought. Even if that is the case, I say to the Minister that a personal letter to him does not constitute an application. Every organisation in every electorate in this State that had to apply in the first round had to go through a rigorous application process and fill out an application form. But in this case the Minister made an exception.

Let us look a little closer at the actual location of these services in Brisbane North. What do we find? We find that 10 of the 11 services funded in this region are all within a 30-kilometre radius of the director-general's home in Burpengary. In other parts of Queensland you can travel a long way before you come to a family support service, but it now appears that proximity to Allan Male's place of residence has become a new funding criteria in this department. My advice to Queenslanders—and I would advise honourable members to provide this advice to the community services in their electorate—is that, if they are seeking the protection of the so-called curtain of care, they should head on out to Burpengary, because out on the northern outskirts of Brisbane the Minister and his director-general are not content with a curtain; they are abusing public funds to construct an entire manchester department. They have drapes and blinds; they have the velvet and silk models for the director-general and the groups with which he has a personal relationship while other organisations in this State have to be satisfied with bare windows and tattered flimsy cotton curtains.

There is no doubt that many of the groups that have been funded are worthy organisations, but this is no way to run a program or a department. It is a bit like the weather, really: it is pouring in Burpengary but it is just scattered showers in the rest of the State. The question for the Minister is: how can he explain why he has approved 30% of this funding in the Brisbane North area? In Queensland it appears now that Santa Claus is ringing his bells as he careers around the State urging on his reindeer. One can literally track the travels of the Minister and the director-general because where they go the funds will follow. It is as though the curtain of care is actually attached to the back of their sleigh. But when they are not travelling around dispensing largess, the sleigh is parked outside Allan Male's house, where he is busily draping himself in the curtain.

Last week the Minister approved—again outside of any scrutiny where he refused to discuss this at the Estimates committee hearing—a \$300,000 funding grant to the Shaftesbury Centre. The community sector will no doubt be very interested in that. But the Minister and his director-general go flying off into the sunset singing, "Who cares? We don't!" Who cares about budget allocations? Who cares about proper processes of decision making? Who cares about accountability? The Santa from Beaudesert knows who is good and who is bad. If you want a present you had better be sitting on the Minister's knee. Tell him how good you have been

and make a special wish, and if he thinks you have been good you might end up with a bigger present than even you asked for. But if he does not get to visit you then he will never know that your application was excellent or that your capacity was independently rated and assessed as being outstanding or that your community has the greatest unmet need in the State. You need to queue for Santa. All honourable members should tell their own community organisations not to bother putting in an application but just to have a little chat to "Santa Kev".

The curtain of care is now flapping wildly in the breeze as the Minister drops goodies on the favoured few. But the final curtain is looming on this one-act play. Queenslanders have rejected rorting and corruption of this proportion in the past, and they will do so again as soon as they get the chance.

Land Transactions by Member for Chatsworth

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (12.19 p.m.): I rise to inform the House of most serious allegations involving the member for Chatsworth. I have been provided with undeniable evidence which confirms that Labor's former Housing Minister entered into a deceitful land sales agreement for personal gain which suggests a gross conflict of interest and smacks of misuse and abuse of public office. The evidence clearly shows that the former Minister purchased land at 19 Florence Street, Carina—at the rear of his own house. He obviously had little guilt in ripping off one of his own constituents, an 84-year-old grandmother who was tricked out of more than \$30,000 in the deal. So desperate was he to get her—

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue. The property that I purchased at 19 Florence Street was at market value, as evidenced by documents that I have from the Valuer-General's department. It is untrue and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr CONNOR: Whatever the member finds offensive, I withdraw. However, I will be supporting this with documents later on.

So desperate was he to get her signature on the contract that the member for Chatsworth's department provided a Housing Commission home for the vendor's grand daughter under the most suspicious of circumstances. He was so keen to get his—

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr CONNOR: I will be tabling the document later on, but if he finds it offensive I will withdraw. He was so keen to get his grubby little hands on this prized real estate that the tenant, the vendor's grand daughter, living in this house at 19 Florence Street was provided with a near new, three-bedroom house only days before settlement. Well might the member for Chatsworth hang his head in shame. When he was Minister, 28,000 families were desperately in need of a Housing Commission home. Most were forced to wait months and even years before they were able to obtain one. This person got one the

same day she applied. I repeat: she got one the same day she applied. Most are forced to wait months. That was unless——

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. I think the member should point out that the area was an area which had no waiting lists.

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

Mr CONNOR: Most were forced to wait months—unless they were willing to do business with the Labor Minister. For the member for Chatsworth to sell out one of his own constituents to increase his land wealth is beyond contempt and exposes this disgraceful person for what he is.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. I take objection to that. It is untrue and I ask it to be withdrawn.

Mr CONNOR: Whatever he finds offensive I will withdraw.

Mr MACKENROTH: Everything that he said is offensive and untrue. I ask him to withdraw what he just said there. It is untrue.

Mr CONNOR: I have already withdrawn.

I wonder what his union mates would think of him. I wonder what his neighbours think of him—let alone his constituents. What occurred at worst was corrupt; at best it was grossly improper.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn. It is untrue.

Mr CONNOR: I withdraw anything that he finds offensive. I am sure that his constituents will be sickened to learn of how he ran his office while he was Housing Minister. The next time you venture out of your palatial home at 218 Stanley Road, Carina——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will refer to other members by their electorates.

Mr CONNOR: When the member for Chatsworth ventures out of his palatial home at 218 Stanley Road, Carina, he should spare a thought for the needy souls who have been waiting years to obtain a Housing Commission home. The Leader of the Opposition has no alternative now but to sack the member for Chatsworth. He is a disgrace to his own party. The member for Chatsworth is a disgrace to this House and what it stands for. He is a disgrace to his own constituents.

The member for Chatsworth has a remarkable history of achievements since his entering the House. The most remarkable thing about his curriculum vitae is the fact that somehow he has managed to remain a member. The member for Chatsworth seems to place greater store in the amount of public notoriety he can generate than he does in the serious business of this Parliament. Almost everyone remembers what he did to gain his reputation, but I take this opportunity to summarise just a few of his achievements. What about the travel rorts? He thought it was legitimate to spend taxpayers' money on travel for himself and his wife to Sydney to watch a netball team that he coached play

a game. He began that fateful journey on 1 April 1988. When his sin was uncovered he repaid the money. Then, obviously under great pressure from the Premier, he resigned as Police Minister on 10 December 1991.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue. I ask for it to be withdrawn. I was under no pressure from anybody.

Mr CONNOR: Whatever he finds offensive I will withdraw. What about the four-wheel drive hire? The same year, there was a CJC investigation into the member for Chatsworth spending \$5,622 of taxpayers' dollars without proper authority.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. That is just totally untrue. That is untrue and I ask him to withdraw that. That is untrue.

Mr CONNOR: I withdraw anything that he finds offensive.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has withdrawn.

Mr CONNOR: What about the Joh jet flight? He raised the ante in the notoriety stakes yet again when he used the Joh jet to fly to Port Macquarie to counsel a run-away MP, Phil Heath. What about Coco's \$5,000?

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. I draw the member's attention to the lists that were released yesterday which show that Coco made a \$4,400 donation to the National Party.

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

Mr CONNOR: Accepting \$5,000 from Santo Coco was hardly a smart move, especially when Coco ended up in gaol following a conviction for attempting to bribe two Commonwealth officials. It was equally stupid that Coco's conversation with the member for Chatsworth arranging the money drop was caught on tape via a Federal Police bug planted in Coco's office in the course of an official investigation. The notoriety factor climbed to a higher plateau when, after the \$5,000 cash drop conversation, the bug caught Coco explaining to a third party that the former Minister thought Coco was trying to buy him. He thought he was trying to buy him, but he still took the money!

What about the HOME and RPP failures? That was a beauty. With stewardship over the discredited home loan scheme, the former Minister must wear the blame for not acting sooner to limit the damage to the State and the participants. He threw good money after bad in a failed attempt to stave off the collapse of the scheme. When I took office, I inherited from the former Minister the diabolical rental purchase plan scheme which I had to terminate to prevent more people from falling into the same poverty trap it created. It is likely that these schemes will cost taxpayers \$60m before the pain ends, while 1,000 families have watched their housing dreams go up in smoke because the two schemes failed them. Many just handed in the keys and walked away, losing their deposits, their homes and their contributions. I am certain that these embittered home owners will be

pleased to learn of today's fresh allegations surrounding the former Minister who made sure that he personally did very well in the property stakes.

I will now table the contract for the block of land in question at 19 Florence Street that details the transaction. The contract shows the purchase of a block of land for \$30,000. I might say that a block of land in Carina for \$30,000 is a real steal.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. I would point out that that block of land had no access to anything.

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

Mr CONNOR: It is a very cheap block of land indeed. It is 1,100 square metres; in fact, it is a very big block of land, too—for \$30,000! I also table a photo of Mr Mackenroth's house. That is quite a mansion. I also would like to table an application form that the grand daughter and her spouse put in only four days prior to settlement and, surprise, surprise, she got the house the same day that she applied for it. I repeat: she got it the same day. What a coincidence! I table that application form as well. But surprise, surprise, she was entitled only to a two-bedroom house because she lived with her spouse and her brother, but she got an almost new, three-bedroom brick and tile house on the same day that she applied. Isn't that amazing?

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I rise to a point of order. In the suburb of Leichhardt where I live people going into Housing Commission houses regularly get three-bedroom houses because they are empty.

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

Mr CONNOR: If the member for Chatsworth has any integrity or decency at all he will do the right thing and resign from the House.

Time expired.

GOVERNMENT OWNED CORPORATIONS (QGC1-3 and AEC) REGULATION 1997

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa) (12.30 p.m.) I move—

"That the Government Owned Corporations (QGC1-3 and AEC) Regulation 1997, No. 67, Gazetted on 27 March 1997 and tabled in the Parliament on 29 April 1997, be disallowed."

The Opposition moves this motion at a time when the Queensland electricity industry is going through a very traumatic time. Workers in the industry do not know from day to day what their future will be. They do not know from day to day whether they will have a job in the weeks ahead. This industry, as I have said before, has been restructured and restructured time and time again. The Opposition seeks to disallow this regulation because it constitutes economic vandalism on the electricity generation industry in the State of Queensland.

This regulation puts into effect the division of AUSTA Electric into three generation corporations and one engineering consultancy corporation as from 1 July this year. It has already happened, but it has still not received the final sanction of this Queensland Parliament. This is an opportunity today for the member for Gladstone to practise her new-found scepticism about the assurances of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government. The member for Gladstone has been willing to support legislation on this issue despite concerns about tariff equalisation, privatisation and, indeed, job security. I ask the member for Gladstone: in light of her experience with Suncorp/Metway, can she still be confident that the assurances she has received about electricity will be delivered?

This regulation seeks to destroy an efficient generation company in the form of AUSTA Electric by rubbing out its economies of scale. The Minister for Mines and Energy keeps saying that Queensland is falling behind the pack, but his own task force report made the following comment on page 34—

"Queensland has generally experienced the highest technical efficiency in Australia."

That conclusion was made without the additional efficiency benefits of the brand-new Stanwell facility being included. The Minister makes his claims about falling behind the pack, but he has never, ever substantiated any of those claims with facts. The task force report also clearly acknowledged that splitting up AUSTA would reduce economies of scale and, therefore, reduce efficiencies by the order of 5%. We think that they are very conservative estimates about the cost to efficiency. That means that 80% of the State's electricity capacity will become less efficient under this Minister's policy. This policy simply make no sense whatsoever unless the Government has a final objective of privatisation. The claim that making three generators out of one creates competition is a mindless truism. What it really does is hamper the ability of the State's existing generation capacity to compete with new entrants in the market.

The Minister has stars in his eyes when he looks interstate and sees drops in electricity prices to industry—just industry, mind you; the domestic customer has not done very well to date. The Minister thinks that we can simply replicate those price drops in Queensland. But that plan has a few hitches. Firstly, our prices to industry are already very low. Much of the price drop in other States is just catching up with the price discount that Queensland has traditionally offered. Secondly, lower prices in Victoria and New South Wales are directly related to oversupply of power generating capacity in those States. But Queensland does not have an oversupply; we are just keeping pace with demand after allowing for appropriate reserves. So unless we build unnecessary power stations, Queensland will never achieve the low prices that are currently being offered in other States.

Some industry figures have supported electricity reform on the basis that it would create oversupply and, therefore, prices would drop. Those people have a poor recollection of Australia's

economic history. It was, after all, only 17 years ago—around the beginning of the 1980s—when we saw a spate of electricity station construction. It added billions of dollars to our foreign debt, and the interest costs pushed up electricity prices by enormous amounts. In any event, oversupply is unsustainable, and it will gradually diminish, with prices returning to more sustainable levels—probably not far away from what Queensland is charging today. It comes back to the fundamental point: yes, competition is desirable in this industry, but not at any cost—not at the cost of higher prices for domestic consumers and small commercial users, and not at the cost of 2,000 jobs from the Queensland electricity industry. Two thousand of our fellow Queenslanders could lose their jobs.

The member for Gladstone, in considering what this Government is really doing to this industry, should pay heed to what the Minister for Mines and Energy said on ABC radio just the other day. He referred to the industry as one which "we have just taken apart, pulled the guts out, turned it over, and we are putting it all together." Then he seemed to catch himself and decided to switch to another point. I wonder if he was going to say, "We are putting it all up for sale."

The member for Gladstone, in considering this Government's commitment to electricity workers in this State, should be aware that the Minister does not care how many workers will be affected because, as he says, "They will pick up jobs elsewhere". I ask members to listen to what he said on ABC radio. He said—

"There is going to be downsizing in this industry, I am sure, but I don't know whether it's one person or whether it's 5,000. It's pick a number time."

We talk about the restructuring of AUSTA and what has happened there. Whereas we had one corporation and one board running that organisation, we now have four boards running that particular organisation, and each one of them has to be serviced—four boards, four chief executive officers, four lots of board members, four groups of people, servicing each one of these organisations. As I have said time and time again, the Opposition in this Parliament believes that the purpose of splitting up AUSTA was simply to package it into small, neat groups ready to be sold off. The Minister keeps denying that, but the Treasurer made a comment which I think was very relevant. She said, "We will see how the restructuring goes and then we will look at it with a view to privatisation." Having said that, in the recent Budget she then ripped \$850m from this particular industry. \$850m has been ripped out of this industry. If one goes by the Victorian experience, the industry will be flogged off to the highest bidder.

Let us have a look at some of the people who bought into the Victorian industry. In Victoria, the workers in part of the industry have been on strike for six weeks. They have been on strike because one of the new purchasers came in and introduced industrial relations practices which belonged to 100 years ago. The maintenance staff have been reduced by two-thirds since privatisation. Those people were

stood down by senior American management eight weeks ago during the enterprise agreement negotiations. The ETU in that State has negotiated successful enterprise agreements with other distributors in that State, but for some reason they simply cannot get through to Citipower, the company which, at its annual general meeting, made its ideas perfectly clear when it spoke about Australia. It said—

"Entergy"—

which is one of the companies—

"is focusing on building a major long-range position in Australia. Our 1996 acquisition of Citipower, a major distribution company in Melbourne, Victoria, was the initial step. We hope to expand to other States such as Queensland and New South Wales."

I have news for them. If they think that they are coming into Queensland to practise the industrial relations policies that they are practising in Victoria and obviously practising overseas, they will receive no assistance from the Opposition when we are in Government. We want to send the message out today loud and clear that privatisation of the Queensland electricity industry is not on our agenda today, next month, next year or in 10 years. There is no place in the Australian Labor Party's platform for privatisation. The shadow Cabinet has made that decision. A couple of weeks ago the party conference made the same decision. Let those people who think that they are coming into Queensland to buy our industry have second thoughts.

I turn to what has happened with the task force. The Minister did not know. I knew, but the Minister did not have a clue. In the last financial year, this Government paid the chairman of that task force \$225,000. The Minister did not know that; I knew it. This current financial year, \$425,000 is being paid to one person, namely, Professor Anderson. Again, the Minister did not have a clue what he was being paid. The fat cats are running all the way to the bank. The ordinary workers, the blue collar people in that industry, do not know from day to day whether or not they have a job.

Recently we have seen new boards appointed around the State. I have no problems with the appointments to those boards; that is at the Minister's discretion. That is fine. However, the Minister did not even have the decency to write to the previous board members to tell them that their services were no longer required. He did not have the decency to write to them and thank them.

Mr Gilmore: Let it be on the record that I signed letters to every one of them.

Mr McGRADY: That was well and truly after it appeared in the Courier-Mail. That just shows the contempt with which this Minister regarded those people who, in the main, had served the industry and the people of Queensland well.

I do not have a lot of time, but I will touch briefly on the \$850m that the Minister sat back and allowed the Treasurer to rip out of the electricity industry. What happens next year? What do we do

when we find that there is no further \$850m in that industry? The Treasurer says, "We will see how the restructure takes place. If we are not happy, maybe we will privatise it." She has tied the hands of the industry behind its back. She has ripped \$850m out of the electricity industry.

I have a concern about those 2,000 of our fellow Queenslanders who could face retrenchments from the industry. During the Estimates committee hearing, the Minister had the opportunity to say to me, "You have been scaremongering; that is not true." The Minister sacked Bill Blair, the former Chairman of the Queensland Transmission and Supply Corporation. He was sacked because he had the guts to say that 1,500 jobs would be lost under the Minister's policy. The Minister had the opportunity; he failed.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee) (12.45 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Mount Isa. One of the key differences between the Labor Party and the coalition is that we believe that the electricity industry can be run efficiently under public ownership. Nothing demonstrates that fact more ably than the experience of the management of the industry over the last decade. The public record clearly outlines the leading-edge performance of this industry. I will take time to outline some of those performances.

The generation sector is recognised worldwide as setting benchmark standards in areas such as availability, pricing and engineering generally. AUSTA's 1995-96 annual report reveals that the average availability at Stanwell, Callide and Tarong was consistently at levels of 94.5% despite major overhauls during the year. Data from North America published in 1995 showed the availability of similar sized power stations to be about 80%. With respect to pricing, it is interesting to quote Allan Gillespie, the chief executive officer of AUSTA, who states in the annual report—

"The portfolio of power stations allows AUSTA Electric to take advantage of economy of scale. Therefore, operating costs per unit of electricity produced can be reduced to a significantly greater extent than for single station operation. Our current five year plan allows for a decrease in total operating costs (excluding depreciation) of 39% in real terms."

In a recent article in the Australian Stock Exchange's Perspective, the industry's performance was highlighted as follows—

"Australia constructed more coal fired power stations during the 1980's than any other industrialised country, developing not only high levels of technical efficiency but also the world class skills that now underpin the industry's move into export markets. Overall the outcome in the two decades to the late 1980's was a productivity growth rate nearly five times that of the major OECD countries. This relatively strong productivity performance is evidenced by Australia's real electricity prices which fell by an average of 2 percent annually during the

period 1960 to 1995, in contrast to a 0.4% decline in the United States. Electricity prices in Australia are among the lowest in the world with the hydro schemes of Canada, New Zealand and Norway the leading competitors."

Even the infamous Commission of Audit recognises the international standards of performance of the Queensland electricity industry. So why would the present Government want to sell off the industry, to privatise it? Why would it want to off-load it to the private sector? The reason is that this Government has no commitment to public ownership. It is driven by an ideological economic rationalist agenda which says that only the private sector can deliver the efficiencies needed in this industry. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the Government continues down the path towards privatisation of the industry. Treasurer Joan Sheldon and Premier Borbidge have let the cat out of the bag. They intend to privatise the industry to demonstrate their conservative credentials to the private sector.

The Premier was recently quoted as saying that "there are no plans to privatise the electricity industry at this time." This morning the Treasurer made a feeble attempt to distance herself from her own and her departments' desire to privatise the industry. Everyone knows that the Government will privatise the industry if it is elected at the next election. Why else would the Government destroy what is now a viable and efficient industry by breaking it up into small saleable pieces? Business Queensland states—

"Mines and Industry Minister Tom Gilmore is adamant privatisation is not on the agenda."

It goes on to say—

"However industry observers believe that privatisation is inevitable."

On the one hand, Labor has indicated through the shadow Minister, the member for Mount Isa, and the Leader of the Opposition that the next Labor Government is committed to public ownership of that industry. We have also given the undertaking that, when in Government after the next election, we will place an immediate moratorium on retrenchments in the industry. On the other hand, the Government will not rule out the possibility of up to 2,000 workers losing their jobs as a result of the current restructuring. The Treasurer's and this Government's campaign to destroy the gains made in this industry has been outlined by the shadow Minister on a number of occasions. One of the greatest problems was the black hole that the Treasurer created by the \$850m raid on funds in this industry in the recent Budget. That \$850m black hole will hang as a millstone around the neck of the people of this State for many years to come. That black hole creates a debt that all Queenslanders will have to pay. Whether it be through higher electricity prices, which are inevitable, as overseas experience shows—I have taken that point up with the Minister in a previous debate—or through reduced services, one way or another the people of Queensland will pay for the \$850m raid on the industry. The Treasurer has consigned to the people of Queensland a black hole that will place enormous budgetary constraints on future Governments—all for the political gain of

having a treasure chest to take the Government into the next election.

I want to make a few comments about some industrial relations issues in the electricity industry. The member for Mount Isa touched on a dispute which is currently taking place in Victoria and which I believe gives an insight into what may be in store for Queenslanders under a privatised industry. Currently, an American-owned company, Citipower, is endeavouring to impose American-style contract labour within the electricity industry or, more specifically, the distribution industry in Victoria. Reports indicate that this company has reduced its maintenance work force by two-thirds and is seeking to impose unreasonable conditions of employment on its remaining employees. For example, those conditions include workers being required to be on call from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. on any day of the week. Citipower has been engaged in a nine-week dispute with unions and workers over a new enterprise agreement.

That is the type of dispute we do not want to have in Queensland. In this country, we do not want US-style industrial relations where workers' rights and conditions are reduced to the lowest common denominator. The Louisiana-based company that owns Citipower, Entergy, has indicated its desire to expand into the Queensland electricity market. Evidence made available to me suggests that this company has an international track record of anti-union, anti-worker industrial relations practices. We do not want companies that adopt renegade industrial relations policies operating in the electricity industry in Queensland. The people of Queensland have had enough of confrontationist industrial relations practices in this industry. During the mid-1980s under the Bjelke-Petersen regime, we saw plenty of that. The Minister should be sending a strong message to companies such as Entergy that if they adopt such practices as part of their *modus operandi* in this industry, they are not welcome in Queensland. I am pleased to say that the shadow Minister has indicated already his disdain of that company's industrial relations practices.

I refer to a discussion paper which, as I understand it, was prepared for the new generation company CS Energy, which covers the Callide and Swanbank Power Stations. That internal discussion paper was prepared on 8 May. It states that, in establishing the new gencos, no industrial relations strategy can be pursued which puts at risk either politically or industrially the achievement of competitiveness or productivity given the short time frame available. There is a hint in that proposal that something is to come. The proposal states further that any industrial relations strategy or people transition processes which apply to the transitional period must be geared to maximise the possibility that the work force views the reforms positively and to minimise the possibility that the reforms will result in negative impacts on commitment.

The document I have just read outlines an internal management discussion paper which basically says that the company is going to con workers into believing that this is all going to be a

nice, safe and secure transition but that, come judgment day, in terms of industrial relations, there will be problems. I want to outline a couple of the proposals in this discussion paper about which workers need to be asking their local management some serious questions. One of the proposals is that each genco examine other options such as Queensland workplace agreements as legislation and opportunity allows. We know that, at this stage, Queensland workplace agreements are not available to the electricity industry. However, there is a clear intent and a desire of management within the industry to move to individual workplace contracts. I think that workers in all power stations that are involved in this current disaggregation should be asking clear questions of their management about their positions or future intentions with respect to individual contracts.

Time expired.

Mr HARPER (Mount Ommaney) (12.55 p.m.): In rising to speak to this disallowance motion, I want to talk firstly about some specific matters and then generally about the industry. I never cease to be amazed by the former Minister, the member for Mount Isa, and his reactions to some of the progressive changes brought in by this Government and this Minister. The member takes those changes as a personal affront. In doing that, at times he seems to suffer from lapses of memory. He talks about downsizing in staff, yet he seems to forget about the massive downsizing in staff that went on under Labor and under him as Minister. There are plenty of people in the industry and former members of the industry who have not forgotten that, yet Labor and the shadow Minister seem to forget that.

In regard to the electricity industry, the Labor Party and the member for Mount Isa never seem to stop talking about privatisation. It is Labor and the member for Mount Isa who are out there talking about it, not this Government. Yet the member for Mount Isa will not comment on the stated moves of the Labor Government in New South Wales. Today, when I tried to interject on the member, he did not seem to want to take the bait. He did not want to comment on what the Labor Government in New South Wales is proposing to do. It is the Labor Party that is talking about privatisation, not the coalition.

Of course, in relation to that matter, we should remember that it is the gentleman sitting opposite, the member for Mount Isa, who sold off the Gladstone Power Station. If that is not privatisation, what are we talking about? The Labor Party is a little bit confused about that whole issue. However, that is quite understandable. The member for Nudgee led with the chin and talked about the \$850m that this Government is going to use progressively for the betterment of Queensland. Once again, he seems to have caught the lapses of memory of his shadow Minister, because it was under the Labor Government and the former Minister that \$1.3m did not go to Queensland; it went to Canberra to help their mate Keating get out of trouble. They seem to have forgotten about that.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr HARPER: By his interjections even the shadow Treasurer seems to have forgotten those heady days when the Labor Government's friend in Canberra needed propping up. Some of Queensland's property was sold off to help its Federal friends.

In relation to the concerns of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, I say that the provisions of the GOC Act were specifically included in full knowledge of the Legislative Standards Act. In fact, the GOC Act postdates that Act. The Labor Government introduced the legislation and it was fully aware and cognisant of the effects of section 57B of the GOC Act, yet to hear the members opposite speak, one would not think that was the case.

The Queensland Government's electricity strategy is aimed at delivering lower electricity prices to Queensland businesses and stimulating further economic growth and development in this State. That is what it is about. The timely and efficient introduction of the strategy is an important element of the Government's overall economic framework for attracting new businesses and investment projects to Queensland. The electricity industry is one of the State's most important industries as it provides intermediate factors and inputs to both small and large businesses. With electricity accounting for up to 30% of the cost of some enterprises, reliable, low-cost electricity is fundamental to existing businesses in this State and attracting new projects to Queensland.

Reliable, low-cost electricity is also very important to domestic consumers—every single one of us—who rely on its availability for their everyday activities in their homes. Our friends opposite seem to keep forgetting that. Because of that, it is imperative that Queensland has the most efficient electricity industry possible. That is what we are aiming to do. That is the sole purpose of our reforms. Under Labor, in relation to electricity, Queensland lost ground relative to other States. That is clearly documented. The member for Mount Isa as Minister presided over the loss of competitiveness of the Queensland industry. This Government has taken positive action to restore the position that Queensland held through its electricity strategy. The member for Mount Isa wants to maintain the status quo with regard to AUSTA. The status quo is simply not sustainable in the changing market and the changing organisation of electricity today.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr HARPER: The regulation being debated is a central element of the Government's electricity strategy because, among other things, it disaggregates the State-owned generator, AUSTA Electric, which provides 80% of Queensland's power needs. In formulating its electricity strategy late last year, the Government carefully considered the report of the Queensland Electricity Industry Structure Task Force, which recommended that the efficiency of electricity generation in Queensland and lower prices to Queensland consumers required, among other things, effective competition. The task force report and the ensuing debate unequivocally

demonstrated that effective competition depended on separating AUSTA Electric into at least three generators. It is important to note that there has been considerable debate on this issue in the House, yet the shadow Minister still moves this motion. As the new industry arrangements involve a wholesale pool, it is imperative that a competitive structure be created to facilitate its effective operation.

When the member for Mount Isa was the Minister, he strongly supported Queensland entering the national electricity market. Let us well remember that point. He was so keen to do this that he personally presided over plans to construct a major interconnect with New South Wales via a route which was, as we all know, totally unacceptable to the majority of Queenslanders and which was clearly suboptimal in delivering the benefits of interconnection to this State. Central to the national electricity market is a requirement for all generators with over 30 megawatt capacity to sell their electricity into a pool. It is a mockery for the member for Mount Isa to suggest that an effective pool can be established in Queensland with one generator having an 80% market share and, basically, the remaining 20% share lying with the generation unit that the Labor Government sold off. In opposing this regulation, the member opposite is supporting the establishment of a generation pool in Queensland with the State-owned generator, AUSTA Electric, having an 80% market share and the ability to manipulate the pool.

As a corporatised entity, AUSTA would have the incentive to maximise its commercial position by using its market power to gain the pool. This would be to AUSTA's gain and the people of Queensland's loss. It would render Queensland's entry into the national market totally counter productive. The unequivocal expert view—the view of the ACCC, the view of the expert electricity industry task force and the view of the Government—is that AUSTA must be disaggregated if we are to have lower electricity prices in this State. This regulation is not about privatisation—I repeat, it is not about privatisation—it is about lower electricity prices for Queenslanders and it is about the jobs that will result from that. This is what the Government is on about.

It is a fact that the Government disaggregated AUSTA on 1 July 1997. There are now three new generation companies in the State, all Government owned, and they are competing with each other. As I said earlier, when he was the Minister, the shadow Minister supported that. By opposing the regulation, the Opposition is seeking for these new corporations to be dismantled and for AUSTA to be put back together again. Quite apart from the cost involved, the loss of jobs and the higher electricity prices that would result, Queensland would look stupid on the national and international stage. Importantly, such a move would act as a disincentive to companies wishing to expand or establish new businesses in Queensland. As such, it would have particular implications for large scale, energy intensive projects which use electricity as a key factor input.

Therefore, without the separation of AUSTA Electric provided for by the regulation, Queensland

cannot hope to establish a highly efficient and competitive electricity industry in this State. I urge the Opposition to think very carefully about the implications of this motion on the future economic development of Queensland. The responsibility for such a suggestion would be on its head.

A decision not to disaggregate AUSTA Electric would send a negative message to national and international proponents considering investment in Queensland. The Government and the Queensland Electricity Reform Unit have received representations from a vast array of parties looking at investing in this State. These parties will go elsewhere if Queensland maintains the status quo in its electricity sector, as the member opposite has suggested.

This subject goes to the heart of the Government's role in relation to State-owned assets which I believe is not to prop up large Government-owned corporations; it is to ensure that the State's assets are managed in a way which delivers efficient outcomes, for example, lower electricity prices and the maintenance of high quality services. The Government is positioning the State's electric industry so that it can participate in the national electricity market which Queensland plans to join at the time of interconnection with the New South Wales grid in late 2001. It is essential that industry participation gain as much experience as possible in the interim market before joining that market. Victoria and New South Wales are daily gaining invaluable experience in the integrated market which has been established as a precursor to the full national electricity market.

To suggest that AUSTA Electric should not be broken up but rather reaggregated would not only disadvantage Queensland on a long-term basis through higher electricity prices but would also act as another distraction in denying those very capable people in the industry——

Time expired.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate) (2.36 p.m.): In relation to the deregulation of the electricity industry, I will address the issue of Queensland's seven distribution boards. I was a union organiser before I was elected to Parliament and I had the distinct pleasure of working with people from many of the electricity boards and most of the power stations in Queensland. Therefore, I have some knowledge of the industry.

I am concerned that, whilst we have been given a commitment that the boards will stay, we have been given no firm commitment on how long they will stay for and the role that they will play as the Queensland electricity industry continues to be deregulated. It also concerns me that we keep hearing that in Victoria there was a 15% to 20% wholesale price reduction in electricity prices following deregulation, but no-one mentions the fact that Victoria was a long way behind Queensland in the first place. Queensland always had the highest technical efficiency in generation of any State in Australia. Therefore, one cannot simply say that what was good for Victoria will be good for Queensland.

Queensland is the most decentralised State in the nation. It is the only State where more people live outside the capital city than within it. What will happen to those people? We have been given a commitment that there will be price capping to the year 2001, but what happens after the year 2001? Where will the protection for the consumers in regional Queensland be? We have always had tariff equalisation so that, no matter where one lives in this great State, one will not pay more for electricity. The Government has given a commitment that tariff equalisation will remain in part but, again I emphasise, after the year 2001 what happens to the people in regional Queensland?

What happens to the seven distribution boards? As I said, I have had the pleasure of working with people from many of the distribution boards. When one visits the small depots in towns throughout the State, one realises the important role that they play within their communities. We have always viewed small regional towns as very important. If we go down the path of deregulation, what will happen to those small depots and the people who work at them? What of their future and that of their kids and towns?

One of the greatest problems in our economy is that in general people feel that they do not have much job security. Deregulating the electricity industry will in no way improve the job security of employees in that industry. With the continuing deregulation of the industry, how can we tell employees that their jobs are secure? The latest electricity industry publication, which came out in July, contains the new industry structure. It shows the continuing changes in the electricity industry. There are now some nine new independent power producers in Queensland. The citizens of this State know very little about those new independent power producers and about the role that they will play in job creation and electricity supply in Queensland.

It was not all that long ago that the National Party reigned during one of the greatest industrial disputes that this State has ever seen. That dispute was in the electricity industry. The National Party has reigned during times of enormous difficulty in the electricity industry. Its track record has always been to rule with the club and to belt the employees in the industry into submission. As we head into the next century, the National Party cannot persist with that sort of philosophy.

In deregulating the industry, it is important that the employees be retained. I have always been of the view that we should not fix something that is not broken. A lot of these changes seem to be change for the sake of change. I accept the fact that we are linking with the national grid and that we are now playing in the big ballpark; that we should not just put on our blinkers and think only about Queensland. That is to be expected. However, as I said, the reality is that, as the largest decentralised State, I do not believe we have sufficient safety nets for Queensland consumers, both at industry and household levels. However, my greatest concern is about the employees.

The bottom line for any private player in the electricity industry will be profit. That profit will come at any expense. It is not right to bring in independent power producers, let them take the cream and expect the Government to look after the rest. I believe that the citizens of any State have an obligation to ensure that utilities such as power, water and telecommunications are not deregulated fully. It is important that the State continue to have the majority control of utilities that benefits its citizens.

As the largest decentralised State, we should not allow private independent power producers carte blanche in Queensland. We should not allow them to do what they want to do, to produce where they want to produce and to sell where they want to sell. I do not believe—and this is yet to be shown—that there is a sufficient safety net. In reality, there has never been a push by the household sector for great changes in the electricity industry. That push has always come from large industry.

It is true to say that to attract large industry to this State it is important to have lower electricity industry prices so that we can be competitive. However, when we were in Government we were able to do that without discriminating against household consumers. After the year 2001 and the end of price capping, there will be no protection whatsoever for household consumers. To keep industries in this State, we will have to continue to ensure that we supply them with lower cost electricity. One has to question whether the household consumer will be the one paying for that. I will be interested to hear what the Minister has to say about that issue in his speech in this debate today.

As we continue down the path of deregulation, we need to ask: how far should we go? Will we go all the way, totally deregulate and privatise the industry? If so, we have to address the questions that I have raised about the electricity boards, their role in regional Queensland and the future job security of employees in the electricity industry. What will happen to those people? Where will the future lie for regional Queensland? Where will the future lie for the consumers in regional Queensland? Those are questions that have not been answered in this debate and which have not been answered as the industry has been deregulated. Those are the questions that now need to be answered.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay) (2.47 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the disallowance motion moved by the shadow Minister for Mines and Energy and member for Mount Isa. On 27 March 1997, the coalition Government gazetted changes to the regulations which govern the operation of the Queensland Generation Corporation. The regulation was tabled in Parliament on 29 April 1997 and came into effect on 1 July 1997.

The effect of this regulation is to disaggregate the Queensland Generation Corporation, trading as AUSTA Electric, into four Government owned corporations. The four corporations are: Stanwell Corporation, comprising the Stanwell Power Station, the Barron River Hydro Power Station, the Kareeya Hydro Power Station, the Mackay gas turbine, and

the Rockhampton gas turbine; Tarong Energy, comprising the Wivenhoe Hydro Power Station and the Tarong Power Station; CS Energy, comprising the Callide A and B Power Stations, the Swanbank Power Station and the Middle Ridge gas turbine; the AUSTA Energy Corporation, comprising Generations Projects, Technology and Business Development units.

Why would the Government want to disaggregate AUSTA Electric into three independent competing generators and a business unit? The answer is as plain as the nose on one's face. The Government wants to privatise the industry along the lines of the Victorian model. AUSTA is a very profitable organisation. Its earnings in the 1995-96 financial year were in the vicinity of \$1.247 billion and its net profit after tax was \$229.9m, which gave a return in dividends to shareholding Ministers of \$172.4m and an overall return on assets of 10.1%.

The Minister and the Treasurer might say that they have given a commitment that they will not privatise. In fact, the Minister indicated during the debate on the Electricity Amendment Bill that privatisation is not on in the current term of this Government, but he could not give a commitment beyond that. However, what will the members opposite do if they win the next election? I believe that they will privatise it. As we can see, AUSTA is such a profitable organisation that its disaggregation into four corporations would give the Government a bigger return when privatised.

This Government cannot continually deny that privatisation is not on its agenda. A report prepared by its own Queensland Commission of Audit has placed privatisation firmly on the agenda. The report states in Volume II at page 211 under Recommendation 12.1 that—

"A detailed electricity industry reform strategy should be developed consistent with the national electricity market agreements. In particular, that strategy should give effect to the need for:

the industry to be restructured to allow the maximum possible degree of competition; and

selling generation, transmission and distribution assets to the private sector."

Recommendation 12.2 states that—

"The Government should establish a special purpose taskforce to implement the above recommendations and in particular:

manage the preparation of the industry for sale;

establish the framework to renegotiate long-term contracts which limit the effective operation of the market;

establish interconnections with the national grid; and

review the means of achieving other economic and social objectives, including the establishment of transparent community service obligations."

As can be seen, the Government has endorsed the findings of the Commission of Audit. It has set up the task force, which recommended the changes in the structure and will no doubt deliver on the commission's recommendation to privatise. The Government has said that this will deliver positive outcomes for consumers with lower electricity prices. This appears to be a contradiction. Already the coalition Government has saddled the industry with an \$850m debt to pay for its unfunded election promises. In a competitive market this debt will only lead to higher prices and massive job losses. Prior to the Government's decision to saddle the industry with this debt, the Queensland industry had the lowest debt to equity ratio of any power industry in Australia. In the Electricity News issue No. 5 of June 1997, Professor Anderson states that—

"Generation retail corporations will face considerable competition from third party players, which will reinforce the need for them to have robust strategies for dealing with the market, efficient cost structures and carefully articulated risk positions."

Professor Anderson, in his report to Government titled "Reform of the Queensland Electricity Supply Industry", states that disaggregation will lead to higher electricity costs. On page 105 under section 6.4, a graph titled "Generation Utility Average Costs Curve", the report shows that the current average cost per dollar kilowatt hour for AUSTA is 0.034 against outputs of 23,000 gigawatt hours. By breaking AUSTA up into three competing generators with about 8,000 gigawatt hours, the cost curve shows that the cost per dollar kilowatt hour is about 0.037. On the report's own reckoning, the cost will increase by 5%, but I believe it could be as high as 10% because of the inefficiencies brought on by the creation of four new corporations in the generation area with their own CEOs, boards, etc. Professor Anderson appears to contradict himself. This is further backed up by the chief executive officer of AUSTA Electric, who said in the 1995-96 annual report that AUSTA had embraced the principles of total quality throughout the organisation and would analyse each part of its business to find better ways of working and to create a better work environment. He stated—

"I believe that the introduction of total quality was the most effective way to yield improvements of up to 35% through process improvement methodology."

Mr Lucas: AUSTA opposed disaggregation.

Mr MULHERIN: The member for Lytton is right: AUSTA was opposed to disaggregation. The CEO continued—

"The end result will be tighter cost control and better overall business performance. The portfolio of power stations allow AUSTA Electric to take advantage of economy of scale, therefore operating costs per unit of our electricity produced can be reduced to a significantly greater extent than for a single station operation. AUSTA's then current five-year plan allowed for a decrease in the total operating cost of 39% in real terms."

In other words, the CEO is saying that having a single generation corporation will deliver economies of scale, thus reducing the operating cost over smaller corporations. Comments by Professor Anderson and the chief executive officer of AUSTA indicate that disaggregation will not deliver cheaper electricity prices to the consumer and put to rest the argument that disaggregation will lead to lower electricity prices. In fact in Electricity Week, the architect of the Victorian industry, the Victorian Treasurer, the Honourable Alan Stockdale, told the Association of Power Exchanges that the advantages of disaggregating were consistently overestimated by reformers.

As I mentioned earlier, if the coalition Government is elected at the next State election, it will proceed down the privatisation track. Who will be the likely buyers? If the Victorian experience is any real indication, it will be the large American energy companies that will dominate the global electricity industry. Eventually we will see the vertical integration of the Australian industry owned by foreign corporations which will no doubt be the major players in a horizontally integrated global electricity industry. Already AUSTA Electric and the new corporations are preparing the way in the industrial relations arena, which would make the industry a more attractive proposition to American power corporations and their anti-worker philosophies.

In previous reorganisations of the electricity industry, the unions and industry have applied to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission for a seamless transition of the award for the industry's workers. However, industrial relations representatives of AUSTA and industrial relations representatives of the new corporations—in fact, the representatives were the same people wearing different hats—opposed the application by the industry unions that the new corporations be covered by the electricity supply industry award. They argued that this would be a denial of procedural fairness and that the employees were in fact employees of the old AUSTA Corporation for a period of 12 months and were on secondment to the new corporation until the transition was completed in 12 months. The commission rejected these arguments by AUSTA and the new corporations and agreed with the application by industry unions for a seamless transition of the award. If they had been successful, no doubt they would have lobbied the Government to amend the legislation which currently prevents the introduction of Queensland workplace agreements, which would no doubt suit an American buyer.

The morale in the industry is zero minus. Workers fear massive job losses and uncertainty in their employment. They feel betrayed by this coalition Government, which promised job certainty and security in the lead-up to the last election. No doubt industry employees will punish the coalition Government at the next election. A newly elected Labor Government would not privatise the electricity industry but would reconstitute it and place a moratorium on redundancies.

Time expired.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton) (2.57 p.m.): I rise to support the disallowance motion moved by the member for Mount Isa, the shadow Minister, a motion that seeks to oppose the parliamentary approval of the butchering split-up of AUSTA into three generating units and the engineering corporation. The people of Queensland should remember that there is one reason and one reason only to disaggregate AUSTA and split it up into three units: privatisation. One only has to consider the facts and figures to draw that logical conclusion.

This is not the old National Party that used to defend Government involvement in industry and in business in the interests of its constituency. It should not be forgotten that this was the National Party that rolled over and allowed the Liberals to get their own way when they sold off Suncorp, and we have seen what has happened there. The National Party will once again roll over to the Liberals at the next State election because they will be the millstone around the neck of the National Party that will bring it down. That is because the National Party has bought the Liberal Party philosophy of privatisation at all costs. The coalition Government set up the FitzGerald Commission of Audit, and that let the cat out of the bag. What did the FitzGerald commission report say at page 18 of its summary document? It stated—

"Privatisation and structural reform of the industry will ensure competition, lock in anticipated benefits and provide substantial investment funds (about \$12.5 billion) for the State."

That is what the Government's Commission of Audit wanted to do. Then the Government set up its task force, which cost a fortune. The member for Mount Isa has spoken about that. It trotted out the recommendation to split AUSTA against AUSTA's recommendation. AUSTA did not want to be split up, but that did not matter; they wanted to do it anyway. And now the Minister denies that there is any privatisation agenda. Let us look at what happened elsewhere.

In New South Wales, unfortunately under a Labor Government, the relevant Minister denied that there was any privatisation on the agenda, and previous conservative Governments denied it also. Now we are faced with a situation in New South Wales in which the electricity industry is being privatised with the support of the coalition mates of this Government in that State. This Government should not attempt to claim that things are out of its control. It happened in New South Wales despite the denials. Let us look at what some of the urgers on the sidelines have said about the industry. I will read from an article in *Business Queensland* of 23 December 1996 by Messrs Fraser and MacDermott, which states—

"However, industry observers believe privatisation is inevitable.

They claim the government's reform programme has been dictated by the views of the independent Member for Gladstone, Liz Cunningham, who opposes privatisation.

She holds the balance of power in state parliament and, as a consequence, they say it would be futile to attempt to privatise the assets—at least during the current term of government."

It goes on to say—

"Clive Bubb, general manager of the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, also suspects the assets will eventually be sold to private interests."

I table that article. Another *Business Queensland* article on 3 March this year by Don Kirkwood states—

"The state government has stopped short of privatisation in the restructure, but Chris Nichols, director of Price Waterhouse Energy and Utility Services, believes such a step ultimately is inevitable."

So actions speak much louder than words. Let us have a look at efficiency. Is a split-up in the best interests of the industry? As I said before, AUSTA said: no, no, no. What about the task force? It said that the separation of AUSTA into three separate generating units would cause average costs to increase by 5%. We know that it is a very competitive industry, and a 5% increase in costs for those three generating units would be a substantial economic impost on them that would impair their ability to compete effectively as things currently stand. I table a diagram from the electricity task force's own report that clearly indicates that electricity cost curve and where AUSTA is on it—it is way down the curve at the moment. There is no doubting the figures. The crowd opposite, not us, drew that up to show what would happen if AUSTA was split up, that it would go back up that average cost curve to increase costs.

It is very funny that we see conservative Governments supporting the break-up of public electricity generating assets because it is fine, it seems, in this country if one has the conservative philosophy that one can deaggregate Government enterprises, but when it comes to private enterprises in fact what one wants to do is encourage them to amalgamate. We only have to look at what is happening with the Government's colleagues in Canberra who, with great glee, are falling over each other trying to amalgamate as many parts of our media industry as is possible. According to that thinking, if one is in the private media sector, we would like to have two operators and merge them all together, but in the electricity industry we want to go the other way. It is a great pity that in this country we do not have the sort of strong antitrust laws that exist in the United States to combat this ever-increasing centralisation in the private sector that is not always in the interests of competition.

The credo of this Government is: if it is Government owned, split it up; if it is private sector owned, let it be gobbled up. It is very interesting to analyse the task force's recommendations about deaggregating AUSTA. The current output of AUSTA is about 23,500 gigawatt hours; the United Kingdom has two privatised generating corporations,

National Power which generates at 123,800 gigawatt hours and PowerGen at 76,500 gigawatt hours. As the member for Mackay in his excellent contribution to the debate pointed out, we have AUSTA now deaggregated into three units at about 8,000 gigawatt hours each. How are they going to compete in a national market in any efficient sense?

I believe it is important to contrast what is happening to the real reforms that took place under Labor. I do not think that any fair-minded person could dispute that the former Minister for Minerals and Energy, the member for Mount Isa, was probably Queensland's greatest ever Minerals and Energy Minister. He was someone who took his portfolio seriously and realised the importance that it played in the economic development of this State. He realised that we can get a proper return on our assets. AUSTA Electric in its annual report last year notes the average availability of Stanwell, Callide and Tarong powerhouses at 94.5% compared with the US figure of 79.6%. Analysis for the QESI task force conducted by London Economics showed that in distribution the Queensland average for controllable efficiency is 95%, compared to an Australian average of 89%, a UK average of 88% and an overall sample average of 77%. So do not believe it; read it. We support competition, but we support competition that benefits the community.

What has the Government got now? It is well recognised that we have the most efficient electricity industry in Australia. Our prices are very reasonable and I table Figure 12.3 from the Fitzgerald commission of inquiry that supports the hypothesis that Queensland domestic and small users, such as small business—people whom generally I would hope that we here would represent—have close to the cheapest tariffs in Australia. It will not be long before the Government will be jettisoning its article of faith, electricity tariff equalisation. Again, what does its task force say? At page 39 it states—

"The Government's current uniform tariff policy institutionalises pricing inefficiency. The network costs and line losses associated with transporting electricity over large distances means that it is more expensive to supply a remote customer than a similar customer in Brisbane."

It goes on to suggest—

"... cost-reflective prices would require significant tariff increases for users in remote areas:

... domestic prices would have to increase by 134%;

commercial users in remote areas ... 80%;

light industrial tariffs in remote areas ... 122%."

What a great initiative that will be in the interests of decentralising Queensland's economic development! That will come; it will come under a privatised industry. What does the task force say? "We will fund it as a community service obligation." Instead of in the past where the electricity industry was paying economic rents to the State Government in terms of its ability to generate revenue, in a competitively

neutral market it will be a Budget drain of about \$27m for pensioner rebates and \$152m for cross-subsidies. That is what the Government is going to do to the electricity industry. It will not be able to continue to rip \$850m annually out of the industry any more because there is nothing that it can do about it.

Finally, I think it is very important to have a look at what an independent observer, Margaret Beardow, from the Australian Stock Exchange journal—and I table that article—has said about the electricity industry. She notes—

"Contrary to the view that the industry has a poor productivity performance and has been a drag on Australia's international competitiveness, productivity growth in the electricity industry exceeded that of the Australian economy for many years."

She goes on to say in relation to the electricity industry—

"Critics of the pace of development of the pool assume that the slow progress has delayed competitive reductions to prices and placed Australian business at an international cost disadvantage. Comparison of international prices, however, reveals that countries with competitive markets have seen prices rise, not fall, as cross-subsidies and other market imperfections are unwound."

In Victoria we have had a situation—

Time expired.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone) (3.07 p.m.): I rise in this disallowance debate because I understand that if the motion is successful it will block the electricity reforms as outlined in the Electricity Amendment Act that was passed during May. When that Bill was debated, I supported the restructuring not because I support the process but because of the implications to the industry in my electorate and therefore to employment and development generally. The concerns that were outlined at that time continue; they have not changed at all. They include issues such as the efficiency of creating 15 new entities from the current 10 and the fact that the national competition policy signed off by the previous Government, and particularly I guess by the current shadow Minister, required that transparent competition had to be included in the State's electricity industry. It is difficult to understand how the shadow Minister can now be criticising this situation when it was created primarily or in great part by that agreement. It appears precious to me to say that he would not support privatisation, yet in my own electorate the Labor Government sold the Gladstone Power Station to private enterprise.

Mr McGRADY: I rise to a point of order. The member for Gladstone knows as well as I do that the reason we sold off the Gladstone Power Station was to allow massive investment.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: I acknowledge that the result of the sale of the Gladstone Power House was industrial development, but I have always maintained that the development could go ahead without it. It is no use the shadow Minister saying, "I do not support

privatisation", when that was one of the issues that was addressed when he was the Minister.

A couple of the other issues that I raised at the time continue, and I know the member for Sandgate earlier raised such issues as tariff equalisation, the need to ensure that our country residents continue to receive fair and equitable pricing. One of the benefits of tariff equalisation was that it recognised the disability factors within our State, and distance and decentralisation are major factors. I understand that there is this commitment to 2001, but the concern is fairly expressed: what happens after 2001? Quite frankly, the Treasury agenda that is being pushed at the moment of dollar-driven reviews of services is not at all encouraging to either myself or to many people in the electorate.

Another issue that was raised was the stability of pricing. Again, during the debate in May, I raised my opposition to privatisation. I acknowledge that, in the debate on the Electricity Amendment Bill, the Minister said that privatisation was not an issue. This morning, the Treasurer said that privatisation is not an issue. I recognise that what happens in this term of Government will not bind following Governments; that irrespective of who gets in, they can flog off the electricity industry tomorrow, irrespective of promises given or not given.

Mr Palaszczuk: Some of us have got to be honest.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Too right—on both sides!

Business Queensland rightly said that I would not support privatisation of the fundamental infrastructure of this State. That is a given. This is not a debate on whether or not the industry is being privatised. It is a debate on whether or not the industry is going to be required to comply with the Hilmer requirements. The Minister has said that privatisation will not occur. As far as the report of the Commission of Audit is concerned, I do not think it is worth the paper it is written on.

It is important that the new structure, irrespective of what form it takes, continues to respond to community needs for affordable power. The new structure must not absolve the Minister of his or her responsibility on this or any other issue—whether it is pricing or anything else. One of the implications of corporatisation that has arisen on a number of occasions is that it gives the responsible Minister the opportunity to duck for cover so that, when a tricky issue comes up, the Minister can say, "This is a corporate structure. They are making commercial decisions, and I cannot interfere." In my contribution to the debate on the Electricity Amendment Bill, I made mention of the fact that it had occurred in the electricity industry whereby the current Minister had showed a willingness to intervene with the board when an action was being taken that was wrong. I am not sure about the legalities, but it was certainly morally wrong, and the Minister stepped in and intervened. I hope that that can continue with these corporate structures. However, it appears that corporatisation gives an opportunity to Ministers to absolve themselves of

the responsibilities of the portfolio when the going gets tough.

A shareholding Minister is involved when a public entity, be it a department or a GOC, makes a decision which disadvantages the fundamental shareholders, and those fundamental shareholders are the people of Queensland. So if the Treasury agenda is to form GOCs all over the place, and if we go ahead and do that, then it must be done on the basis that it does not absolve the relevant Ministers from the responsibility of that portfolio. If that is what occurs, then I hope that the electorate in this State gives whoever that Minister is a huge amount of stick, because he or she would deserve it. We, as elected representatives, are responsible to act for the benefit of our community. In this instance, the benefit in my electorate is that the large industries have said that electricity pricing is fundamental to their competitiveness. It is one of the primary inputs: electricity, gas, coal, water, transport and a few others. Industry in my electorate has been saying that unless these reforms go ahead, they will find it difficult to be competitive in the world market.

Mr Fouras: We already are.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: The industry in my electorate is saying that it is a continuing concern. As to the percentage of impact that would result if this restructuring did not go ahead—I have been unable to find statistics on this.

As I said at the beginning, I retain the concerns that I expressed when the Bill was debated. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee also raised issues about Henry VIII clauses. In discussion with the Parliamentary Secretary, he has said that positive action will be taken to address the concerns of the committee, with some advancement by Thursday. I look forward to that. However, I note that the Henry VIII clause to which the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has referred is a positive Henry VIII clause in that it proposed to modify a delegation in the Act to ensure that the delegation is to an appropriately qualified employee.

In the last couple of minutes available to me I want to reiterate that my concerns about this restructuring remain. It is being done to comply with Hilmer, to show transparent pricing; but whether it is this restructuring or whether it is another restructuring, we still have a fundamental responsibility to be answerable to the community. At the conclusion of my speech on the Bill in May, I said—

"... at the risk of being repetitious, the fundamental concern that I and many other people have is that the Government will become commercially focused and will look at the bottom line of the ledger rather than at its obligation to the community. People pay their taxes and they expect to get services, not because it is a good business decision to do so but because it is the role and responsibility of Government to provide those services."

I will not be supporting the disallowance motion, not because I think that the Minister has answered all the issues, and not because I think that this restructuring

is a great thing. I am doing it because of the implications to the community in my electorate and to the State generally. But people must be able to have confidence returned to them that the corporatisation of Government services is not an easy way out for Ministers to remove themselves from or absolve themselves of the responsibility for budget decisions. It is also not a vehicle—and should not be a vehicle—that the elected Government allows, which will let Treasury push a dollar-driven agenda which will work in the long term to the disadvantage of our residents. That is not what we are here for. People will accept that some services might cost extra dollars, but provided that they see a return to them in goods and services that are affordable, accessible and fair and reasonable, they will accept additional cost.

I believe that, in the long term, all this guff about Hilmer will prove to be just that—a theoretical exercise. It will take a Government with significant guts to turn around and stop the mountain that is rolling. The restructuring has started. The Minister knows of my concerns, and those concerns continue.

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumbidgee) (3.16 p.m.): The House ought to disallow this regulation. The shadow Minister has made the point that the dismemberment of this utility has the effect of reducing the economies of scale which are available to it, consequently rendering it more liable for privatisation. The disutility of a utility, or the economic inutility of a utility, once it is demonstrated, makes it vulnerable to claims by outside organisations that they could run it better than the Government and, therefore, it ought to be privatised. That in itself is quite sufficient to justify this House in disallowing this regulation. But I would like to concentrate on another point which has been touched on only slightly by other members, that is, that the regulation is in breach of the fundamental legislative principles.

It really is of importance not only what Governments do but how they do it. When Governments proceed to dismember a utility by the kind of instrument that we have before us, then it is time for those who believe in the sovereignty of Parliament to stop and insist that the process not go further. What we have here is a regulation which clearly, explicitly and on its face repeals a provision of a piece of legislation. What we have here is as clear an instance of Government by Executive decree as could ever be put before any free people.

Let me read to members the relevant section of the regulations. Clause 12 states—

"For its application to an associate, section 100 of the Act is changed to read as follows ..."

What could be clearer than that demonstration of the fact that what we have here is a regulation which is simply amending the substantive provision of an Act of this House? That regulation was put before a Cabinet meeting. It was sent down to Executive Council. It was rubber-stamped, and it came to this Parliament. At the end of that process, if this Parliament does not stand in its way and prevent it

from going through, we will have had a clear instance of Government by Executive decree.

There was correspondence between the Treasurer and the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I am not a member of that committee, but I am aware of the good work that it does, as is every member of this Parliament. In the course of that correspondence, the Treasurer wrote to the committee and made the following point. Before I explain the Treasurer's point, let me refer to the legal context in which the committee was talking to the Treasurer. The committee stated that this is a Henry VIII clause. A Henry VIII clause is a clause that purports to amend a piece of legislation by regulation or other Government Act. She wrote back saying that it is not a Henry VIII clause. She said that a regulation made pursuant to section 57B is not amending sections 98 to 100 of the GOC Act as they currently stand. Mr Deputy Speaker, is it not? Let us read what the section as it currently stands says. Section 100(1) states—

"The chief executive officer of a statutory GOC may delegate the chief executive officer's powers ... to an employee of the GOC."

That is clear enough. What will the section read when it is amended by this regulation? It will state—

"The chief executive officer of an associate may delegate the chief executive officer's powers ... to an appropriately qualified officer or employee whose services are made available to the associate under assistance given or an arrangement made under section 57C."

That is a lot more words and a lot of different words. One can see that the Treasurer's claim in writing to the committee that a regulation made pursuant to section 57 is not amending sections 98 to 100 of the GOC Act as they currently stand was an heroic claim, a claim that flies in the face of clear facts. The words that I just read to the Parliament were very different words from the words that were contained in the legislation. The words that I just read out to the Parliament are words that mean something quite different. They empower all sorts of different people.

It may have been convenient for the Government to do it like this. It may have been convenient for the Minister to do it like this. I have no problem with the convenience of the administration of the State being given due regard, but not on the basis of something like this, because this is the kind of provision that strikes at the very heart of parliamentary government. If one can simply change the words of a statute by a regulation such as this, by Executive decree, where will it stop? This is a machinery provision. Why would it stop at a machinery provision? If Cabinet can amend legislation, if Executive Council can change the words and the work of this Parliament in respect of a machinery piece of legislation, why can it not do it in respect of everything? If we can have a provision that states, "For its application to an associate, section 100 of the Act is changed to read as follows", why could we not have a provision in the Criminal Code that states, "For its application to a particular class of people, section whatever it might be will be

changed to read as follows"? If we could have it in the criminal law, we could have it in any statute. The practice of using Henry VIII clauses is a practice that is subversive of democratic government. It is subversive of parliamentary government.

Mr Fouras: You have convinced me, but you will never convince the people on the other side about Executive Government's powers. You never will.

Mr WELLS: I take the point of the honourable member for Ashgrove, but I believe that, even if one is speaking to deaf ears or stone walls, it is well to say these things, because history would like to know that those things were said.

The honourable member for Gladstone referred to the fact that it was a Henry VIII clause, but she said that it was a positive Henry VIII clause by virtue of the fact that it circumscribed the categories of people to whom a delegation could be made under this provision. That is perfectly true: it does circumscribe the categories of people to whom a delegation can be made. That does not make it a positive Henry VIII clause. That is like saying, if I may be so bold, that because some people who had conducted a bank robbery subsequently donated a small portion of the stolen money to charity, they were engaged in a positive bank robbery. This is not a positive Henry VIII clause. There is no such thing as a positive Henry VIII clause. Every Henry VIII clause is a clause that threatens, however it is constructed—

Mr Woolmer interjected.

Mr WELLS: I am sorry. I missed that pearl that fell from the lips of the honourable member.

Mr Woolmer: I thought that the scrutiny committee brought it up a few years ago when you were Attorney-General and involved a Henry VIII clause that you used in legislation.

Mr WELLS: The honourable member is correct. There was one such occasion. When I look back and examine it in the light of history, I think to myself, "The argument that I used at that stage was as powerful as any that could ever be used, but I was wrong." There is no such thing as a positive Henry VIII clause. There is no such thing as a Henry VIII clause that cannot be dealt with in a better way. The argument of convenience is a strong one. One does not want to inconvenience the administration of the State. A better way would be to have a series of Schedules to the Act of Parliament itself. Let these things come before the Parliament. Let all sorts of provisions be made that will enable us to get through the kinds of difficulties that are faced here, but let us not use a short cut that will undermine the foundations of legislative government or the foundations of parliamentary sovereignty.

Hon. T. J. G. GILMORE (Tablelands—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.27 p.m.), in reply: I believe that today the Opposition has been rather naughty. The previous Minister, the honourable member for Mount Isa, did not address the regulation in his 15-minute dissertation to the House. He spent his time stating and restating a nonsense. There was certain reiteration from members on the other side of

the House, in the manner that we would have expected from Goebbels during the war. He was the Minister for propaganda during the Third Reich. Henry, you would know all about Mr Goebbels. There is no doubt about that.

Mr Palaszczuk: Don't mention Goebbels to me.

Mr GILMORE: We will not mention the war, either. Goebbels had a view that if one states something often enough and long enough it becomes conventional wisdom. The business of the Opposition was not to debate this regulation but to state and to restate things that are patently absurd, things that are untrue but which shall become the conventional wisdom if members opposite have anything to do with it. Today they took an opportunity made available to them to state Opposition policy as they move towards the coming election in 12 months' time. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition recently managed to get an urgency motion through State conference that they will not have privatisation and that they will not do this and not do that. He reminded me of an ageing Don Quixote tilting at windmills and taking advice from a fat and ageing Sancho Panza as his faithful lieutenant. Unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition did not do his own homework. As a result, he has not only misled himself and probably this Parliament but certainly the ALP convention.

A number of matters have been raised and I would like to go through a couple of them. The member for Murrumbidgee raised the matter of the Henry VIII clause. I would have thought that he would have blanched as he did that. As I recall it, the honourable member for Murrumbidgee was the Attorney-General of this State when the Government owned corporations legislation went through the Parliament. For the benefit of the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, I point out that section 57B of that Act states that section 98 to 100 apply with all necessary changes and any changes prescribed by regulation as if it were a statutory GOC. He was the Attorney at the time. This is not a Henry VIII clause; it is prescribed in the legislation and the member opposite presided over it. Goodness gracious me, is the member blushing now!

Mr J. H. SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. There is no claim that section 12 of the regulation is a Henry VIII clause. Section 57B of the Act is the Henry VIII clause. Section 12 of the regulation is made pursuant to it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr J. N. Goss): There is no point of order.

Mr GILMORE: I make the point that the problem is with the Act, not with the regulation. From that point of view, suddenly this whole shabby exercise has been brought into focus.

Nonetheless, I will speak for a few minutes, because I think that I must, about some of the arguments that have been raised. Today, we have been told ad nauseam that the restructuring of the electricity industry is all about privatisation. I will state and restate that privatisation is not an issue.

Mr Fouras: So why are you doing it, then?

Mr GILMORE: Indeed, I am glad that the member asked. The members opposite have no concept whatsoever of efficiency, competition and of the benefits to this State from new industry and new jobs that can be created because of cheaper electricity prices. They have no concept whatsoever of those issues. They also have no concept whatsoever of good management, about which I am going to speak in a few moments' time.

Today, two points have been raised: firstly, that the honourable member for Mount Isa does not understand the issues in regard to the restructuring of the electricity industry; and, secondly, that the honourable member for Mount Isa could not be trusted again, as he could not be trusted the first time, with the management of this enormous electricity business. The electricity business is the biggest industry in this State. Quite clearly, some of the things that have been said today demonstrate——

Mr FOURAS: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the House. He stated that the reason for these regulations is for cheaper electricity. In fact, he should not have allowed \$850m to be taken out of the electricity industry——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr FOURAS: The Minister should never have allowed that. It is a disgrace!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I warn the member to sit down while I am on my feet.

Mr FOURAS: The Minister cannot argue about that at all. It is a disgrace!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Ashgrove should know better than to interrupt while I am on my feet.

Mr GILMORE: The member for Ashgrove has brought this place into disrepute. He reminds me of the \$850m. I promised the honourable member for Mount Isa and other members opposite who refused to take my interjections that I would raise that matter. However, I will raise it only in the context of the \$1.3 billion that on 1 January 1995 the Honourable the Treasurer at the time, Mr De Lacy, took from the electricity industry in exactly the same set of circumstances. At the time, the electricity industry was presided over by the honourable the member for Mount Isa, and there was not a word spoken.

Mr Lucas: Did you put the groceries on the bankcard with it?

Mr GILMORE: A \$1.3 billion bankcard? The member was not even a member at the time. He was only a lad. We were here and we remember what happened. The honourable member for Mount Isa would have us forget.

Nonetheless, I turn to the issue of competition. If we are going to speak about the restructure of the electricity industry, then let us speak about it. There is no question that competition brings benefits for all Queenslanders. We were sent down this track at the COAG conferences, over which the Labor Government presided. There is no question that we were put on the rails and driven down this track,

which I and this Government cannot get off, by the Goss Labor Government and by the Keating Government in Canberra. Now, members opposite wash their hands like Pontius Pilate and say, "It was not us. We could not have done such a dreadful thing as that. Therefore, whatever members on the Government side are doing must be wrong." Let me reassure members opposite that they began the process. However, it was probably one of the few things that the honourable member for Mount Isa did when he was in Government that was right. Now he disabuses himself of it. With great disingenuousness he says, "No, it was not me. I had nothing to do with it. If I get back into Government, I am going to rewind this thing. I want to put it all back together in the shoddy form in which it was when I left it. Not only that, we are going to have a moratorium on job losses in the industry." I will speak about that shortly.

Mr Veivers: It is very hard to rewind the spring, isn't it? It is very hard to rewind it back.

Mr GILMORE: Sadly, it is. Clearly, the honourable member for Mount Isa cannot get some issues through his head. He said that it is a dreadful thing if we construct too many power stations and invest too much money in power stations because it results in extra costs associated with power production. I have stated and restated—and I wish that the honourable member for Mount Isa would read the report—that the truth of the matter is that this Government will never build another power station. That is now the province of private industry. We are encouraging private industry to invest in new generation in this State. We are not about the business of the privatisation of existing infrastructure; we are talking about private investment in new infrastructure. I ask the member to please get it through his head. Private industry will choose to invest or will choose not to invest depending on the circumstances of the day and the investment climate that is available to them.

Again today, the issue of this dreadful interconnector has been raised. The benefits to the people of Queensland from the interconnector that we are apparently planning are far in advance of the Eastlink proposal of the previous Minister. In terms of the construction of new power stations in the Surat Basin, it places Queensland at a strategic advantage which it otherwise did not have. That is where private investment will make a big benefit to future generations in this State. The strategic placement of that interconnector will bring the big benefit to Queensland. That interconnector has also taken us down the path of the national market, wherein we were prescribed to go by the member when he was Minister. What are we getting out of this? New opportunities for investment in this State not only in the electricity industry but also clearly in the development of new industry and new industrial opportunities.

Another myth that the Opposition tries to protect and to have become conventional wisdom is that Queensland has the cheapest electricity prices in this country. That is clearly not so. A week would not go past when people from major industry would come to my office and plead for the Government to

bring forward these reforms to the electricity industry. Right now, they are making investment-dollar decisions. They are moving their investment dollars to New South Wales and Victoria simply because we are behind the game. This Government is moving this restructure ahead faster than any other State Government has managed to achieve and, may I say, any other jurisdiction in the world has managed to achieve. We are bringing this forward because of the benefits it brings to Queensland.

Today we have heard much about the consumers of this State. One member said that the consumers are not going to benefit. Might I remind honourable members opposite that the consumers of this State include industry. Industry is going to invest in this State as a result of this package and people will be employed in this State as a result of this package.

Mrs Bird: You're not only ignorant but you're misinformed. You're wrong.

Mr GILMORE: I am sure that the member has read the report from one end to the other. We are going to have an exam later, so the member better start reading now. It will be the first time the member has ever read anything.

Mrs Bird: How would you know what I read?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GILMORE: Mr Speaker, welcome back to the chair. If looks could kill, I would wither and die immediately.

Clearly, the Opposition cannot understand the marketplace. Today, the honourable member for Mount Isa indicated again that he does not understand the structure of the market, and neither does the honourable member for Sandgate, who spoke at some length all this boondoggle about how it is going to work and we are going to have people selling their power wherever they like. The members opposite have never read the document. They do not understand the pool structure, about the national electricity market, and the way in which the national code will work. Clearly, the document has evaded the consciousness of the members opposite. This Government is not setting up some kind of fiefdom in which people can plunder this State and sell electricity at some enormous cost. That is not so. A market will be set up according to national rules which are agreed by Governments across the country, whether they be Labor or conservative. Everybody has agreed to the rules, except for the Opposition which has never heard of them. There is no plunder. It is simply a process of putting in place a competent market whereby we are——

Mrs Bird: It is simply a matter of mathematics, my friend.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We will try my mathematics 123A in a minute.

Mr GILMORE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I must move on, because time is pressing.

A few moments ago, an ABC radio interview that I gave was widely misquoted and used out of context by the member for Mount Isa. At the

Estimates committee hearing, I refused to confirm or deny that 2,000 jobs would be lost in the electricity industry. It is like the old question: will you confirm or deny that you still beat your wife? The question is loaded and impossible to answer. I do not have a copy of the transcript of the ABC interview with me, but I said that it is most likely that there will be some downsizing in the electricity industry. Most of the downsizing that is happening today was prescribed by the member for Mount Isa when he was the Minister, in order to encourage efficiency gains which will be made by the cooperation of sectors throughout the electricity industry. That was another of the former Minister's decisions that was right, but from which he now distances himself. A most extraordinary thing happens to people in Opposition: they become coy about some of the things that they did when in Government.

The Opposition, through the member for Mount Isa, apparently believes that if large industry is Government owned, it can afford to be inherently inefficient. As I said during the radio interview, I would be perfectly happy to employ another 10,000 people in the electricity industry, starting tomorrow. However, they would have nothing to do. The outcome would be that we would have to increase the price of electricity by 100% or more. That is the principle that the honourable member for Mount Isa espouses. He says that we can afford to over employ in the electricity industry, because it is a Government-owned enterprise and can therefore be inefficient. Whether we are talking about 10,000 people or one, the principle is that if one over employs, one is inefficient. As part of the restructure of the electricity industry, I will ensure that every person in the industry is well looked after. If some people lose their jobs as a result of the restructure, they will lose them through early retirement or a package of some kind, but it will be voluntary. People will be looked after, because it is part of the award. That is what we intend to do in any case.

I have given an undertaking to the House that the industry will be turned around from being the fourth most efficient in the country. Members opposite cannot keep pretending that it is the most efficient industry in the country; it patently is not. I will turn it around from being the fourth most efficient to being the most efficient industry in the country. As a result of that, the State will receive benefits which it is currently denied because of the ineffectiveness of the former Mines Minister.

A question about distribution boards was raised. The honourable member for Sandgate asked how long the boards will stay in place. I took great pains to keep those boards in place. If any of the Opposition members had read it, they would know that the document indicated that there would be an amalgamation of the seven distribution boards into three. I recommended that Cabinet did not accept that proposal because we believe that the seven distribution boards provide a well-trusted and well-understood service to the State and we intend absolutely to keep them. In answer to the question, the boards are safe and functional, but they are no longer retailers; they are wire hire operators.

In terms of tariff equalisation, goodness gracious me, how many times do I have to speak about the Government's commitment to provide certainty to the people in remote Queensland, to those who are disadvantaged by distance and to those people whose electric energy costs a fortune to get to them? We are pleased to help them. Indeed, I am currently developing a policy for the electrification of the whole of Queensland, which the member opposite never achieved when he was the Minister. That policy will be aimed at ensuring that the people who live in remote areas of the State are looked after as though they lived in Brisbane.

Mr Fouras: What about the Daintree? You are going to destroy our heritage.

Mr GILMORE: That includes the people north of the Daintree River.

I cannot agree with the proposition that competition in the electricity industry can be achieved by regulation. That is simply an absurd proposition. We have chosen to go for the disaggregation of AUSTA into four parts, three generators and one engineering corporation, as stated by members of the Opposition. Clearly, if a town has a single store, one pays the price that the store keeper determines the market can afford to pay. That is true of monopolies around the world. It is true of monopolies at the corner-store level and it is true of monopolies at the electricity-generation level. There is no question about that. It is proven, because the market power of a monopolist simply says that that is so. Therefore, we have chosen to disaggregate AUSTA. Today, much has been said about the loss of economy of scale of 5%. The honourable member for Nudgee, in one of the more sensible contributions to this debate—indeed, he always—

Time expired.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 44—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, Lavarch, Lucas, McElligott, McGrady, Mackenroth, Milliner, Mulherin, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Welford, Wells. Tellers: Livingstone, Sullivan T. B.

NOES, 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

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Rail Journey by Leader of Opposition

Hon. R. E. BORBRIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (3.53 p.m.), by leave: This morning during

question time, the Leader of the Opposition accused me of misleading the House and making dishonest comments in respect of the payment, which he claimed was made by the Labor Party and not my department, for drinks and food in relation to his recent railway expedition. I table a photocopy of Department of the Premier and Cabinet expenditure account cheque No. 055242 for \$2,775 payable to Queensland Rail. It is the Leader of the Opposition who has misled the Parliament.

ABORIGINAL, TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES (JUSTICE INITIATIVES) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 4 June (see p. 2056).

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga) (3.54 p.m.): By this Bill the Government seeks to make a virtue out of necessity. This Bill is necessary because of recent Government amendments to the Criminal Code introduced into this Chamber and passed by the Parliament which prevent justices of the peace from carrying out functions performed previously by them in relation to the hearing and determining of indictable offences tried summarily.

As a result of the recent amendment to section 552(C) of the Criminal Code, the summary hearing in trying an indictable offence must be by a magistrate. That policy on the part of the Government was no doubt motivated in part by the fact that the maximum penalty that could be imposed is three years' imprisonment. Some might say that it was also motivated in part by a less than robust commitment on the part of the Government to the process of reform for justices of the peace initiated by the Labor Government and driven in particular by the former Attorney-General and member for Murrumbidgee, the Honourable Dean Wells. Be that as it may, it is necessary to put in place legislation to allow Aboriginal and Islander people to participate in the proper administration of justice in the way in which the Bill contemplates. For that reason, the Opposition will support the Bill, with certain reservations. In the course of the debate, I will seek certain clarifications and assurances from the Attorney-General.

It is axiomatic that Aboriginal and Islander people should have the right to participate in the administration of justice. One of the great injustices of modern times is the extent to which Aboriginal and Islander people are detained in our prisons and our juvenile detention centres, yet by contrast so few Aboriginal and Islander people have the opportunity to participate as officers of the court in the administration of justice.

In that respect, the Labor Government took earnest steps to encourage opportunities for Aboriginal and Islander people to become members of the Police Service and to participate in the administration of Corrective Services. In the case of the judicial office, the former Attorney-General, Dean Wells, in particular was extremely hardworking in advancing the cause of training for justices of the peace. In particular, a training effort was undertaken

so that Aboriginal and Islander people who were willing to serve as justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) might have the opportunity to do so. That is particularly important if we are to ensure that justice is done and is seen to be done.

However, I have to draw the attention of the House to a disturbing lack of commitment on the part of the Government to the training of Aboriginal and Islander justices of the peace. In particular, I draw the attention of the House to the stinging criticism of the Government made by the all-party parliamentary Estimates committee in the report tabled in the House earlier today. This is not merely a dissenting report on the part of the Opposition; this is a report of an all-party parliamentary committee which observed in the report of Estimates Committee B that the Ministerial Program Statements of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice show that the number of justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) trained in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is estimated to be 37 in 1996-97 and nil in 1997-98.

The committee went on to note that the provision for the training of Aboriginal and Islander justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) has declined from 159 in the 1995-96 Budget to 30 in the 1996-97 Budget and to nil in the 1997-98 Budget. The committee noted that "this is a concern when the need for greater participation in the administration of justice is acknowledged". The Government's explanation offered in response to that criticism is that it is offering refresher courses to Aboriginal and Islander persons and that, by undertaking a pilot project in Kowanyama and on Thursday Island, that amounts to an adequate response on the part of the Government.

I say to the Government that the sharp criticism on the part of the all-party committee of this Parliament should sting it into action. It should sting it into putting resources into this area. The Government has brought forward this legislation, which is rendered necessary because of the Government's own changes to the Criminal Code. The Opposition supports the principles behind this legislation and we encourage the Government in all efforts to increase Aboriginal and Islander participation in the administration of justice.

This is of great importance when one considers the injustice that can confront Aboriginal and Islander persons appearing before courts. There has been greater recognition in recent years that the language used by police and by courts is sometimes not properly understood by Aboriginal persons, and this can lead to confusion and injustice. This was discussed by Chief Justice Forster of the Northern Territory Supreme Court in a celebrated case of *R v. Anunga and Others* (1976) 11 ALR 412 when Chief Justice Forster said this—

"Police and legal English sometimes is not translatable into Aboriginal language at all and there are no separate Aboriginal words for some simple English words like 'in', 'at', 'on', 'by', 'with', or 'over', these being suffixes added to the word they qualify. Some words may translate literally into the Aboriginal language

and mean something different. 'Did you go into his house?' means to an English speaking person, 'Did you go into the building?' but to an Aboriginal it may also mean 'Did you go within the fence surrounding the house?'"

In that case, the court set out rules to govern the interviewing of Aboriginal suspects by police. I quote again from Chief Justice Forster in the *Anunga* case when he observed—

"Another matter which needs to be understood is that most Aboriginal people are basically courteous and polite and will answer questions by white people in the way in which they think the questioner wants. Even if they are not courteous and polite there is the same reaction when they are dealing with an authority figure such as a policeman. Indeed, their action is probably a combination of natural politeness and their attitude to someone in authority. Some Aboriginal people find the standard caution quite bewildering even if they understand that they do not have to answer questions because, if they do not have to answer questions, then why are the questions being asked?"

That case and many others in the criminal jurisdiction have helped to make courts more aware of the injustice that can be done when justice is administered by persons who lack the language and the culture of the defendants who appear before those courts. It is for that reason that in recent years we have seen the Supreme Courts throughout the country willing to engage in cultural awareness training courses. I commend the judiciary for their willingness to engage in such courses, for the development of greater cultural sensitivity on the part of judges is to be encouraged. However, how much better might it be if we had the opportunity for those who are sitting on the bench themselves to be Aboriginal and Islander people who are aware of these language issues, who are understanding of the culture of which the defendant is a part?

One of the impulses that speaks to humankind is the impulse to be judged by one's peers. It was thus in Runnymede in 1215 when the Magna Carta was signed, and it is thus here in Queensland today. It is important that we should do all in our power to see that those who administer justice through our courts include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I was pleased the other day to speak briefly with former senator Neville Bonner, who participated with Judge McGuire of the Childrens Court in a recent hearing at Cherbourg. I was very pleased to see the Childrens Court willing to avail itself of the knowledge, experience and wisdom of someone such as former senator Bonner. It is to be greatly hoped that we can engender in our jurisprudence a rapprochement between these two great legal and cultural traditions, namely, the tradition of Aboriginal and Islander Australia and the tradition of the British common law which we have inherited. For it is not simply through great High Court decisions and through great legislative reforms that justice is achieved. Justice is to be achieved by the hard work and application and understanding of ordinary

people in ordinary situations working to solve local problems in a way which is humane and just.

One of the great opportunities which I had when serving as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice in late 1995 was to visit the Torres Strait to be present when the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate swore in the new justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) who had trained through the initiative put in place by my predecessor, the honourable member for Murrumba, Dean Wells. I acknowledge the member for Cook, who accompanied me on that trip. What I saw there was a willingness of senior leaders in the Torres Strait Islander community to subject themselves to detailed training courses and examinations in order to acquire the knowledge and skills to achieve the status of justices of the peace (Magistrates Court).

I for one was quite impressed by their commitment to the cause of justice and I was quite impressed with the leadership shown by such leaders as Getano Lui and a range of leaders throughout the Torres Strait islands. These were people who put themselves through a training course so that they might have the legal knowledge and the relevant skills to contribute to the administration of justice. This is important not simply for the administration of the criminal law through the Criminal Code, but it is also important in terms of the community courts established under the Community Services (Aborigines) Act and the Community Services (Torres Strait) Act.

Those community courts have the opportunity of hearing breaches of by-laws passed by local Aboriginal or island councils. The provision of training and the relevant legislative apparatus should be encouraged so that the law can be administered locally, swiftly and fairly. It does nothing for the administration of justice if an incident occurs in a community and weeks or perhaps months have to pass before the matter can be heard by a magistrate. It is basic to our system of justice that justice delayed is justice denied. This initiative is all about ensuring that justice can be done swiftly and it can be done at the local level.

While the Opposition supports the legislation, there are a number of reservations which we will discuss in greater particularity in the debate on the clauses, but I draw the House's attention to the unusual provisions that appear in the Bill that a justice appointed under the Bill "must be a justice of the peace (magistrates court) who the Attorney-General is satisfied has appropriate qualifications." This begs two questions. Firstly, what are the appropriate qualifications that the Attorney-General has in mind? I would ask him to enlighten the House on that point. Secondly, what are the means whereby the Attorney-General is to satisfy himself?

I should say that normally one would be quite concerned about a regime whereby a member of the Executive, namely the Attorney-General, has such a direct role in determining the panel of persons who may constitute a court. There are issues to do with the separation of powers that can easily arise under such an arrangement. That having been said, the Opposition proceeds on the basis that the

Government approaches this task in goodwill, and we will support the Government on the assumption that goodwill is to be exercised.

However, this is an issue which I would respectfully suggest has to be revisited in due course. The current form of words confers a very broad discretion upon the Attorney-General, and the conferring of such a broad discretion in a matter touching upon the administration of justice is not as a matter of principle a good thing. I accept that the current Attorney-General will approach this task with goodwill, and the Opposition will be watching carefully to ensure that persons who are appointed as justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) by the Attorney-General are appointed in fair and appropriate ways. It is an unusual provision to have in court legislation and it may be that this should be amended by spelling out the relevant qualifications or indeed by putting in place a rule of law rather than the rule of the Attorney-General's discretion for appointment in this way.

In conclusion, let me say that it is my earnest hope and the earnest hope of the Opposition that this will contribute to a better administration of justice in this State. The opportunities are there to enable Aboriginal and Islander people to participate in the administration of justice. This Bill has been rendered necessary because of certain recent changes to the Criminal Code; but, that being said, the Bill can be a vehicle for enabling justices of the peace in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and remote communities to hear and determine certain indictable offences summarily. That can only make for speedy and more local determination of issues of justice and, accordingly, the Opposition will support it.

Mr BREDHAUER (Cook) (4.17 p.m.): I note the comments of the member for Yeronga and shadow Attorney. Likewise, I therefore note that the Opposition will be supporting the Bill. I want to make a couple of comments about the Bill in its present form as it specifically affects my electorate and any flow-on programs in other communities which would similarly affect significant parts of my electorate. This is an area in which I have taken a great deal of interest over recent years, particularly under the former Labor Government under the former Labor Attorneys—the member for Murrumba, Dean Wells, and the member for Yeronga, Matt Foley—who had not just a professional commitment through their role as Ministers but also had a very abiding personal commitment to the issues of the dispensing of justice for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, and I thank them for their commitment.

There are a couple of important points, most of which the shadow Attorney alluded to in his remarks, some of which I think are worthy of my going to those issues as well. One of them that concerns me particularly is the sense of alienation which Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders feel from the law enforcement, the legal and the justice systems. I have to say that there would be many of my constituents who feel unrepresented by or within all elements of the legal and justice systems be it through law enforcement, through the Queensland

Police Service and various other elements such as the police liaison officers. They would also feel unrepresented by the legal services, even those which are operated for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In very few cases they have, for example, legal professionals who are either Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders, although I note the good work of the field officers in many of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, many of whom are themselves Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders.

Even within the justice system itself, whether it be the people on the Bench or, as the member for Yeronga said, in jury trials, for example, it is not all that common for Aboriginal people who are on trial to have other Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders on their juries. Therefore, it is debatable in the minds of many people whether they are, in fact, juries of their peers. It is important that we recognise that, in a sense, this makes many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel that their stake in the legal and judicial systems is a lesser stake than that which we feel we have in the system ourselves, because they do not feel adequately represented. In fact, they would go so far as to say that there is a sense of isolation or even alienation from those systems. I believe that the intention of the Bill before the House today is, in part, to try to address that sense of isolation and that sense of alienation and to ensure that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders feel as if they have a greater stake and a greater ownership in the justice system. That can only be beneficial.

Many issues which affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities appear and, in many cases, do seem to have solutions imposed from outside those communities or outside the experiences of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people concerned. I believe that more and more members of Government, Government departments and various other agencies which deal with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders recognise that the most effective mechanisms to deal with issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are those which have their basis within the communities and which grow from the grassroots up, if one likes. Having Aboriginal people represented as justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) in these instances will add to that sense of ownership of the justice system.

There are other elements, of course, within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities which were initiatives of our Government. I refer particularly to the elders groups which have begun to operate in a number of communities. Those elders groups are an important tool in providing a link between the justice system and offenders or potential offenders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. More especially, they attempt to provide that link in a traditional role as elders to the younger people in those communities. I believe that the initiatives that were taken by us in Government and which—to give credit where it is due—have been followed up by a number of Ministers in the current Government are to be applauded. I have some reservations about the operations of the elders groups but, by and large, I

believe that they operate effectively in attempting to help members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to understand the laws which apply to them—as they apply to everyone else—and to understand the responsibility that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders have to live up to the expectations of those laws in their own communities as we are expected to live up to them in our own.

I have mentioned the relationship with peers. However, I believe that justice which is dispensed by one's peers is seen to be far more significant and far more personalised, I suppose, than that which is seen to be administered by some distant—in many cases—or even alien system which either visits the community or, in the case of more serious offences, where the person is actually removed from his or her community and taken somewhere else so that justice in those circumstances can be dispensed.

The member for Yeronga mentioned his experience with the justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) on Thursday Island. He said that he was impressed that a number of leaders in the Torres Strait Islander community had agreed to undertake those courses and had applied to become justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) and had been successful in achieving that position. The situation was likewise in Kowanyama. I knew each of the people who undertook those courses on Thursday Island and in Kowanyama. Indeed, they were often the leaders within their communities who were seeking to play a leadership role in helping their communities to understand their rights and responsibilities in the justice system. Therefore, it is important that we have a relationship between the local leadership in those communities and those people who are involved in the dispensing of justice.

Of course, dispensing justice in a more timely fashion also makes the issues more relevant to offenders. That is an important issue. Too often, if a person has to await the monthly visit of a magistrate, and quite a deal of time has elapsed since the alleged offence, that person can be punished for something which may seem irrelevant by the time he or she is presenting to the magistrate and being found guilty and punished or the issue is dismissed. So if justice can be dispensed in a more timely fashion, that will be another useful element.

It is also important to understand how difficult the situation of the monthly visit of the magistrate can be. I have had reported to me situations in which legal counsel who are due to represent offenders have actually flown into a community on the same plane as the magistrate. They go to whatever is being used as the court for the day and are then meant to brief their clients or receive a brief from their clients about the charges. They are then meant to represent them in the court and ensure that justice is effectively dispensed in each case. People who have operated as solicitors on behalf of their clients, people who are active members of their community, and even some of the clients themselves have told me from time to time that they do not believe that they can do the system justice under the circumstances. If you get 30 or 40 people who have to appear on a given day, the time constraints can be

great, the capacity for people to receive effective legal assistance prior to appearing for the hearing of their charges is diminished and, in my view, people are at risk of not receiving the due justice that they deserve.

It is also important to note the sense of understanding of cultural and social circumstances which justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) can bring in circumstances like this—not that this should necessarily affect the outcome or even go to the innocence or otherwise of the person who is appearing on a given charge. However, I believe it is important that there is a sense of understanding of the cultural and social circumstances. It is also important that the person who is appearing before the court knows that the people who are hearing the charges that have been laid against that person do have that sense of understanding of cultural and social circumstances that could present mitigating factors or may at least lead to some influence in determining what sort of penalty should apply if that person is found guilty.

The issues of deterrence and detention are also important. Too often we hear stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are, generally speaking—in the case of the Cook electorate—sent off to Cairns. They are often detained in circumstances where they are sent to the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre or Stuart Prison in Townsville, and the penalties which people receive are seen to be distant and remote from the community. To some extent this diminishes the effect of peer pressure and the shame and embarrassment of having to suffer a penalty within the scrutiny of one's own community, amongst one's own peers, elders and leaders and amongst one's own family members and friends.

We have moved to having correctional institutions closer to communities. We have the WORC scheme. We have places set up adjacent to Aboriginal communities. There is talk about a correctional centre in Cape York Peninsula, so that it is in closer proximity to where the offenders are committing their offences. All of those contribute to a greater sense of justice being seen to be done as well as being done.

I take the comments made by the member for Yeronga about certain reservations in respect of the Bill, but by and large the Opposition supports it. I take the opportunity to place on record my thanks and appreciation to the people in places such as Kowanyama, Thursday Island and places throughout the Torres Strait who have taken up the challenge and accepted the responsibility of undergoing the training programs and successfully completing them. I note that there are to be upgrading courses. I believe that it is important to maintain the currency of their training. They have made a big commitment. They have put themselves in a potentially difficult situation in certain circumstances. They have put themselves in circumstances that could put stress and tensions upon them within their own communities. They are prepared to stick their hand up and say that, in the interests of the better administration of justice both within their community and for the individuals within their community, they

are prepared to make those sacrifices. I think that is an important contribution that those people have demonstrated that they are prepared to make. I believe that that needs to be recognised.

I believe that we ought to recognise the role played by justices of the peace in remote communities, as mentioned by the member for Yeronga, in convening courts to deal with offences against local laws. Under previous systems that operated, often those people did so without any training. Once again, that was difficult but they were prepared to make a contribution.

I once again reiterate my appreciation for the people who have been prepared to put their hand up. I think that the Government needs to consider carefully continuing the training program so that we are able to extend our network of justices of the peace (Qualified) and justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) throughout the remote areas. Those opportunities should not be the preserve or domain of people who live in urban, suburban or rural communities. People who live in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and remote areas should also be afforded those opportunities. If the circumstances that this Bill will establish in places such as Kowanyama and Thursday Island prove to be successful—and I believe that with appropriate support they will be—it will be important to give other communities the capacity to administer justice in a similar fashion. I support the initiatives that have been taken here and trust that this Government will continue its commitment both in terms of training and updating of the training of justices of the peace (Qualified) and justices of the peace (Magistrates Court) in Aboriginal and Islander remote communities.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (4.33 p.m.): I would like to speak broadly to the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Remote Communities (Justice Initiatives) Amendment Bill. Before I do, I congratulate the parliamentary Public Works Committee for its comprehensive report on Cape York infrastructure. The member for Gympie and his parliamentary committee did a first-class job. I have read it from cover to cover. I recommend anyone interested in ATSI issues to do the same. I will be quoting a number of sections of that report, because it is so succinct and so comprehensive in its coverage of the issues. As I said, I will be speaking broadly to ATSI issues and to issues facing ATSI communities because of their remoteness.

The problems of remoteness can be resolved only through the provision of an all-weather road through Cape York. I will explain what it would mean to the people of Cape York and the Torres Strait if the Peninsula Development Road were upgraded to a road that was usable for 12 months of the year. That has been recommended by the parliamentary Public Works Committee. In relation to schools the report states—

"School principals in some of the schools that the committee visited expressed frustration in getting maintenance work done on their schools. They experienced long delays in

waiting for materials and work crews to come from Cairns."

In the summer, the wet season, the problem is worse, because access is available only by air. The report further stated—

"Construction work in Cape York is expensive. Remoteness, lack of a reliable, all weather road and power costs make it expensive to get materials, equipment, tools and skilled people to the building site and use electrical equipment."

That is another point that backs up the need for an all-weather road. A report published by Queensland Health in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their health shows quite clearly that in many respects the health of ATSI people is declining. Detailed comparisons between ATSI and non-indigenous community health statistics are quite startling. A large factor in the lack of improvement in health is the remoteness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Although many of the ATSI communities are moving forward and are very accountable, unfortunately some of the ATSI communities are not. With proper access via a road, much of that remoteness would be removed, especially in the wet season. That would result in a higher level of scrutiny of those communities. A lot of money has been put into health matters in that region. A lot more can be. I am not saying for a moment that a lot more work cannot be done up there, but I believe that a lot more scrutiny is needed in some of the communities.

The report went on to say—

"The lack of sealed road and all weather gravel roads in Cape York makes it extremely expensive to transport people, goods and building materials into and out of the area. Building infrastructure in Cape York is generally double the cost of building the same infrastructure in south east Queensland. Similarly the cost of fresh food—dairy products, meat, fruit and vegetables—is very high making it expensive for people in remote areas to maintain a balanced and healthy diet."

That backs up the argument that the State and Federal Governments spend a lot more to deliver services, capital equipment, housing, buildings and hospitals in the cape and the Torres Strait than they would if an all-weather road were provided.

The report further states—

"CYPLUS (Cape York Land Use Strategy) identified that poor quality of the Peninsula Development Road was inhibiting the further development of the mining, agricultural, horticultural, cattle, eco-tourism and forestry industries. Pastoralists on the peninsula rely solely on the Peninsula Development Road for the transportation of stock."

The report further states—

"The Peninsula Development Road is also the main route used by tourists which brings increased traffic and income to the area."

The Cape York Regional Advisory Groups—the authors of CYPLUS—stated to the Public Works Committee—

"... there is a desperate need for the Peninsula Development Road (which is some 600 kilometres long) not to necessarily be tarred but to have an all-weather surface and the major bridging structure necessary to allow the road to be open for twelve months of the year."

The report further went on to say—

"The Department of Economic Development and Trade submitted to the committee that it may improve the road between Weipa and Old Mapoon if Alcan decides to develop its Ely Bauxite Mine which lies to the north of Comalco's mining lease around Weipa. Similarly the proposed construction of a natural gas pipeline by Chevron from Papua New Guinea through the Torres Strait and Cape York and possibly as far south as Gladstone could necessitate improvements to the Peninsula Development Road and the Telegraph Road."

Further, the committee said—

"The Committee believes that improvement to regional road links in Cape York should be a priority for the State Government."

Basically, that is what I am saying. I am backing up that statement by the all-party committee. The road links in Cape York should be a priority for the State Government. In that regard and as a matter of urgency, a study should be undertaken as soon as possible.

I am also calling on the Federal Government to be brought in on this matter. If we want proper accountability in these communities, if we want increased and improved health facilities, proper maintenance on Government buildings and cheaper services, that is the only way that that is going to be achieved.

The lack of an all-year-round road to this region is also limiting the development of the area. Already, the potential development of a number of mines has been held back or been determined on the basis of the upgrade of the roads in the region. The report states further—

"Every year dirt roads need to be regraded and remoulded after the wet season. After the initial surge of water, some storm water stays behind and stagnates in pools on the roadside which provides a breeding site for insects which can transmit disease. Ross River Fever, Dengue Fever and Japanese Encephalitis are very debilitating viruses which can be fatal and can dramatically reduce a person's capacity to work or care for a family."

That is really what it is all about. The dirt roads are not only making service delivery more costly but also causing much of the health problems in the area. It does not matter how well the houses are built, including flyscreens and everything else, if potholes on the sides of the roads are continually filled with

water so that mosquitoes can continue to breed. It is very difficult, especially in places such as the Torres Strait and the north of Cape York, to stop the spread of those diseases.

It is timely to remember that only recently there was an outbreak of Japanese encephalitis in the Torres Strait and that on Badu Island alone two people died. Earlier this year on Darnley Island and Murray Island, there was also an outbreak of dengue fever. It is very easy for those diseases to spread into Cape York and into the rest of the Australian mainland. Only a couple of weeks ago on Badu Island there was a malaria outbreak. Those mosquito-borne diseases are a great problem, and the road structure is a major contributor to them.

In recent months we have also seen more and more newspaper articles and reports relating to the smuggling of flora and fauna, gun running and drugs for guns. The lack of road access to this area accentuates its remoteness. That means that an increasing number of people involved in those activities can hide from the proper authorities. Proper access into that area will allow greater scrutiny and improve the potential for tourism. By giving the general public greater access to the area, there will not only be greater wealth brought to the area but also greater public scrutiny of such issues. I might add that only recently 100 boat people arrived in the Torres Strait. It was not the authorities who discovered those people, it was the locals—the general public. So through giving the general public better access to these areas, scrutiny and accountability will be improved.

I would like to finish by calling on the Federal Government to assist in this area. Most of the issues that I have raised affect the Federal Government just as much as they affect the State Government. I believe that the Federal Government has a responsibility to assist us in the building of this road as a matter of urgency. On that basis, I call on the Federal Government to at least initiate a full feasibility study on this matter.

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (4.44 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support for this legislation. I also thank the member for Yeronga, the member for Cook and the member for Nerang for their contributions. The member for Nerang raised concerns about the works, housing and health issues in the Cape York and Torres Strait Islander communities. The member for Cook raised a number of issues. He referred to the timeliness of bringing accused people before the court, and the delays that can follow. I appreciate his concerns in relation to that matter. That is one of the reasons for bringing forward this piece of legislation. This Government believes that delays in justice in the communities and on the Torres Strait islands is an issue. If there is a delay of a month before an accused person can be brought before the court and if he or she is found guilty at the end of a trial, of course some of the effect of the penalty is lost because of the delay in the time between the event occurring and the accused being found guilty, if that is the case. In relation to that issue, the member for

Cook also raised cultural awareness issues, as did the member for Yeronga.

The member for Yeronga talked at some length about a number of issues. He referred to the lack of training of JPs (Magistrates Court). That is not the case. Recently in Kowanyama and on the Torres Strait islands, refresher courses for the JPs have been conducted. I cannot remember the exact figure, but I think something like \$60,000 was spent on those courses. Previously in this place I have said that when the coalition came to office only 16 people had been appointed JPs (Magistrates Court). Since that time, 462 appointments have been made, 112 of these appointments being made in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Of course, as I have pointed out already, one of the problems has been that, once those people were trained, an appropriate program was not put in place so that they could deliver services in community councils and on the Torres Strait islands.

Because there were some shortcomings with the legislative provisions governing community courts and the councils were experiencing resourcing and administration difficulties, many of the communities decided that they would not establish a community court. With respect, the former Government did not have in place appropriate procedures by which those situations could be rectified. This Government has looked at the matter, and that is why it has introduced this legislation. Initially there will be two pilot programs. Once those programs are up and running effectively—and I am sure that they will be effective—we can then extend them to other communities in remote areas and within the cape. So I am not sure what the member for Yeronga means when he said that there has been a lack of training. In fact, sometimes I think that means that we have to train everyone in these indigenous communities. I do not think that that is the case for the moment.

We do not need to train everyone; we need to train an adequate number of people so that they are appropriately qualified to fulfil the requirements of their position and deliver justice in the relevant courts. When we say that it is an ongoing program, some people seem to infer that we mean that everyone in those communities is going to be trained or everyone in Queensland is to be trained. However, we need to ensure that there are adequate numbers of JPs (Magistrates Court), and I think that we have done that. If there are inadequate numbers, then I am sure that we will be looking at training some more people to carry out the role of JP (Magistrates Court). Of course, once those people are trained, there is no point in simply having them, they must then be given tasks to do. This legislation allows for that to occur.

Some reference was made to the judiciary being culturally aware. That is certainly the case. I think that the member for Yeronga was trying to take a political shot about some changes that the Government made previously to legislation. Of course, had the former Government got on with the program and ensured that there were people in those places who were trained to sit on the bench and

deliver services, we would not be in this situation today. In fact, only a couple of weeks ago I was on Thursday Island to present certificates to those Torres Strait Islanders who had completed the refresher course.

The amendments to the Criminal Code restricted the summary determination of indictable offences to magistrates, not JPs, because the maximum penalty was increased from two years' to three years' imprisonment. I do not think it is appropriate for people who are not properly qualified to be handing out penalties of that magnitude. However, even if the current Bill had not been introduced, JPs would still be able to constitute a Magistrates Court to determine bail, adjournments, change of venue applications and such intermediate matters. Even under the Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations Act, JPs can only determine sentences if the defendant pleads guilty. They have no power to conduct a trial to determine guilt. This gives them the power to sentence offenders who plead guilty and also, of course, allows for committals to be conducted which, from memory, can be conducted without this piece of legislation in any case.

The issue of the goodwill of the Government was raised. I do not think that goodwill is required where appointments are concerned. Appointments are made and there will not be any interference in that process. Appointing a JP is like appointing a judge; judges determine the cases as they hear and see them. In these matters, JP magistrates will certainly be doing the same. There will not be any interference in that process—far from it, in fact. The Government is unable to interfere, just as it is unable to interfere with judges and magistrates before the courts. This is not a matter of goodwill; it is a matter of ensuring that we get on with the processes.

I look forward to the success of the two pilot projects, as I believe that they will be successful. Once they are successful, we can then look at extending the programs elsewhere within remote communities, including those of Cape York. I conclude by congratulating those who have been trained and those who have undergone refresher courses. I look forward to the success of the pilot projects so that we can extend them into other communities in the appropriate areas.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

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

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Mr FOLEY (4.54 p.m.): Clause 4 provides, among other things, that a justice appointed under subsection (3) must be a justice of the peace (Magistrates Court) who the Attorney-General is satisfied has appropriate qualifications. I ask the Attorney-General: by what means will the Attorney-General satisfy himself? Secondly, what is meant by the term "appropriate qualifications"? Thirdly, what

safeguards will be put in place to ensure that these appointments will be made fairly and that there is not any impropriety in the process?

In answering my questions during his reply to the second-reading debate, the Attorney-General said correctly that once appointed as a justice of the peace (Magistrates Court), a person is empowered to carry out those tasks. That is true, but it is not the whole truth. The whole truth is that before such a justice of the peace (Magistrates Court) can exercise powers under this Bill, that person must take yet another step—the step of being appointed by the Attorney-General upon the Attorney-General being satisfied that the person has appropriate qualifications. It is the integrity of that appointment process upon which I seek assurances in respect of both the manner of the process and the content of what is described in the legislation as appropriate qualifications.

Mr BEANLAND: From my point of view, this section relates to matters most likely to be associated with where a person resides and his or her character. For example, in the Torres Strait islands we may want to ensure that people on the Bench are from some of the remote islands and not only from Thursday Island itself.

I have not looked at the category of people who qualify as JP magistrates. However, the other day when I was presenting the refresher course certificates, I noticed that a number of graduates were from Thursday Island and a couple were from some of the outer islands. We will ensure that there is a mixture of people. I think that that is appropriate in a place such as that. In a place like Kowanyama, there would probably be no matters to look into at all because of the defined area of the community. In some of the remote areas of western Queensland where this might apply, there may be other issues to be looked at and perhaps some cultural matters. It may be that in western Queensland we need to ensure that there is a mix of indigenous people and other local Queenslanders.

From my point of view, once a person has qualified as a JP magistrate they have achieved that position. It is important that we have some sort of residential mix of people. That is the matter which comes immediately to mind and not any other matter. There may be some other matters that I am not aware of, but that is the one that comes immediately to mind. That could vary. For example, particularly in parts of remote Queensland, cultural matters may need to be looked at. Indigenous people in western Queensland might want to ensure that there are indigenous people on the Bench. It is important that we consider that point. I think the Opposition spokesman has acknowledged that once a JP is qualified, he or she is qualified and there is no way that we can interfere in that process; indeed, in no way do we intend to interfere in that process. I do not read too much into that subsection. Once a person has qualified, they are up and running.

I am mostly concerned that the two pilot programs are a success. If they are a success, we can get on with extending them. If they are not a success, we are back to the drawing board. We will

have to look at why they are not a success and what else needs to be done, which may mean more training. If they are not a success, we may have to go back and look at the training courses, the types of courses that are appropriate, and other issues that might come up during the process of the pilot programs. From my point of view, I want to ensure that the programs are a success. I am not proposing to interfere in inappropriate ways at all, because I do not believe that that would serve the needs of justice in this State.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the Attorney for his answer. I understand his answer to be that "appropriate qualifications", so far as he understands at first blush, means a residential qualification and perhaps some cultural qualification. I draw his attention to the fact that this is a most unusual provision. For the reasons that I stated previously, it is one that the Opposition is willing to allow to pass without dividing the Chamber. However, our system of justice must strive to be a system based upon law, not simply upon the discretion of men and women. In so striving, this provision confers a very broad discretion upon the Attorney-General.

I turn to the issue of the evaluation of these two pilot projects at Kowanyama and Thursday Island. I ask the Attorney: by what means will these projects be evaluated? By what mechanism will Aboriginal and Islander people have the opportunity to express their views upon the success or otherwise of these projects? Over what time frame will the evaluation occur? Will the Minister give an assurance to the Chamber that he will report to it setting out the written evaluation of that project, including feedback from the Aboriginal and Islander community? What steps is he taking for consulting with the Aboriginal and Islander community, both at the local level and at the level of peak advisory bodies?

Mr BEANLAND: We will certainly be consulting with the local communities. At the end of the day, the success or otherwise of these projects will be gauged by the local communities in those areas. We will also be having discussions with the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr Deer, because it comes within his area and no doubt he also will want to take a supervisory glance at this matter. No doubt we will be consulting, as we have already, with Mr Deer and the local communities. That is how we reached this stage. We will continue those processes. I can assure the member for Yeronga that, if this project is a success, I will certainly be talking about it in the Chamber. If it is not, I will probably not wish to talk about it until it is rectified in order to make it a success. I am happy to report back to the Chamber. I do not have any problems with that at all. I am hopeful that it will be a great success.

As to how it will be judged by the local communities—I do not have a step-by-step mechanism to put in place. No doubt it will be a matter for their judgment, as it will be a matter for the judgment of the Magistrates Court service and the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate. We should not forget the JPs themselves when speaking about the local community. It is most important that they see it as a

success. They are in regular contact with the registrar of the JP branch. We will be speaking at length with them to find out whether they believe it is a success. If they say that they do not think it has been successful, there would obviously be shortcomings in the system.

Mr FOLEY: Again, I thank the Attorney for his response and his willingness to report back to this Chamber upon the evaluation process. I press the Attorney to be a little more specific in respect of the time frame in which he will be reporting back.

Mr BEANLAND: We will run these programs for about six months. After six months, we will see how they are going. There is not much point in having a program that does not run for a reasonable period. It may go for a little longer than six months. For reasons beyond our control, it may be the case that it will be extended up to 12 months. The current thinking is that it will be trialled for six months and we will then see how the process has worked. At that time, I look forward, particularly if it has proved to be a success, to reporting back to the Chamber.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5 and Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

COURTS REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 30 April (see p. 1176).

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga) (5.07 p.m.): There is a curious irony about the Courts Reform Amendment Bill now before the Parliament. It makes a number of important and positive reforms. For example, let us take the case of appeals. In the Explanatory Notes to the Bill, the Government puts it this way—

"The proposals to divert criminal appeals from Magistrates Courts to the District Court, and to use video link facilities in criminal appeals, were raised in a Discussion Paper which was attached to the Annual Report of the President of the Court of Appeal for 1994/95. The Discussion Paper was widely circulated and attracted a number of submissions in response to it."

The irony is that the very mechanism which enabled that reform to be proposed is itself to be watered down very substantially in other parts of this same Bill.

We see positive aspects of the Bill in respect of streamlining the system of appeals, with respect to the use of video link facilities, in bringing the jurisdictional limits of the courts up to date, in providing for the appointment of a Supreme Court judge in Cairns, and in regard to facilitating dispute resolution. However, there are a number of negative aspects of this Bill which the Opposition will oppose

resolutely and on which it will divide the Chamber during the debate on the clauses.

This Bill removes the power for management of the Court of Appeal from the President of the Court of Appeal. It returns that management function to the Department of Justice. That, one might think, is a backward step in judicial administration. The Bill also weakens the capacity for case management in the Supreme Court by watering down the position and role of Senior Judge Administrator. Where does one find the justification for this? One looks high and low in the Government's material for some reference to the concerns of the ordinary citizen that justice be achieved speedily and at moderate cost. That was the impulse that led the Labor Government in 1991 to put in place a mechanism for improved case management so that we might have a Senior Judge Administrator to ensure that the work of the Trial Division could be better progressed. That was a response to the concern of ordinary men and women who are sick and tired of the costs and delays in our courts. It was time for action to be taken, and the Labor Government took that action. We see the current Government winding the clock back and seeking to justify it under the rhetoric of a so-called restoration of the authority of the Chief Justice of Queensland.

Similarly, we see the Government turning back the clock on an important reform to litigation. The concern of the Litigation Reform Commission under the 1991 legislation introduced by the Labor Government was to work to ensure that there could be a streamlining of litigation so as to minimise costs and delays. But, sadly, this legislation turns the clock back to the bad old days. It removes the Litigation Reform Commission and sends off all of its functions to the Law Reform Commission. So what we have is an odd mixture in this Bill.

Let me say that missing in the whole of the Government's approach to courts reform has been the single simple requirement that our courts must be responsive to the needs of ordinary men and women who wish to approach the courts for the resolution of disputes. It has been disturbing to read, for example, in the response of the Attorney-General to the concerns raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee in this matter a discussion of differing models of judicial administration. But nowhere do we see a sense of urgency about the need to cut costs and cut delays. Nowhere do we see a sense of the frustration that ordinary people feel so often in their dealings with the court system. It is not sufficient to turn the clock back, to simply remove reforms introduced by a Labor Government in the hope that the good old days will return because, frankly, we need to ensure that our system of judicial administration continues to improve. What we see here are a number of positive steps building upon initiatives introduced under Labor, but also a number of negative steps backwards in the course of this Bill.

Alert Digest No. 5 of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee tabled in this House identified a range of concerns and recommended at page 26 that Parliament delay consideration of the Bill to allow

public discussion and a further report based on the committee's considered views. In the light of that, I gave notice of a motion in this House to enable that course of action to take place. However, subsequent to that, I am pleased to say that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has given a more considered response to the Bill and has set out in Alert Digest No. 6 a range of concerns with regard to the independence of the judiciary and the question of compliance with fundamental legislative principles that are set out in Alert Digest No. 6. Accordingly, I shall not proceed with that motion of which I gave notice, as in large part it has been overtaken by events.

This sense of complacency on the part of the Government, this lack of urgency about ensuring that our courts work better, is indicative of the complacency with which this Government has approached its duties in the area of justice. One is entitled to expect that a Government would get on with the job of using the money that has been appropriated by the Parliament for it. But, sadly, the building of courthouses has been apparently a low priority for this Government, because although last year's Budget provided for \$47.417m worth of capital works, only \$24.843m of this was estimated in the Budget papers to be actually spent in 1996-97. That failure to spend virtually half of the department's capital works budget has not only deprived Queensland job seekers of much-needed job opportunities but it has also failed to deliver the capital works that are so important in respect of the courthouses at places like Rockhampton, Southport, Cleveland, Bundaberg and Gympie that the people of Queensland are entitled to expect.

It is scandalous that this Government cannot get on with the job of spending its capital works budget on the construction of courthouses, even when the Parliament makes that money available. Virtually half of the \$47m provided in last year's capital works budget simply went unspent. I draw to the attention of the House the forthright criticism made in the all-party Budget Estimates committee report. In the report of Estimates Committee B tabled in this Parliament today, the committee made this observation—

"It is deeply disappointing that virtually half of the Department's Capital Works Budget has gone unspent."

That is not a dissenting report of the Opposition members; that is the all-party parliamentary committee sending a very loud message to this Government that it is deeply disappointing that virtually half of the department's capital works budget has gone unspent. I urge the Attorney-General to do better. He can do a lot better. It is simply unacceptable that we have this delay in the capital works building program for the courts of this State.

The people of Queensland are entitled to expect basic competence from the Government. They are entitled to expect that if Parliament appropriates money for a certain purpose—in this case ensuring that our courthouses are modern and equipped for the job—the Attorney-General and

Minister for Justice should get on with the job. I say to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice that he should get on with the job of providing the necessary capital works for our court system. He should abandon the complacency which is so evident in this Government's approach to justice.

In ensuring that the court system works appropriately, it is important to ensure that we have support services for vulnerable persons going through our courts and, in particular, for victims of crime. Again, I draw the attention of the Parliament to the serious indictment upon the Minister of the all-party parliamentary committee in dealing with victims of crime when the committee said this—

"Notwithstanding the reference by the committee in last year's Report (page 3) there has been a decrease in budgetary provision for victims of crime support services from \$1.075m in 1996-97 to \$872 000 in 1997-98.

This is in direct breach of a Coalition pre-election promise made by Mr Beanland (Media Release tabled during committee hearing) to provide an annual additional State Government grant of \$1m to victims of crime support services."

Again what we see is an attitude of complacency. It was good enough for the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice when in Opposition to make promises to victims of crime, but the people of Queensland are entitled to expect that the Government will live up to its promises and that victims of crime should have appropriate support services for, in their dealings within our court system, they have been neglected and marginalised for far too long. It is about time that the Government actually got on with the job of doing what it has promised in its windy rhetoric for so long.

Here we have a Government that is turning back the clock on aspects of court reform, that is failing to spend virtually half of its capital works budget on courts and that is cutting budgetary provision for victims of crime support services. In terms of using our court system in a way which is accessible, it is very important that legal aid should be available to the community at large and, in particular, that we should have secure funding for community legal services, for they can assist in helping people to get access to justice which is after all what legislation in this area should be all about. But again we see the criticism from the all-party parliamentary committee at the removal of specific budgetary provision for community legal centres. Again I quote from the all-party parliamentary committee Estimates Committee B report where it says—

"The committee expresses its concern at the removal of specific budgetary provision for community legal centres (\$275 000 in 1996-97).

The removal of this as a budget line item puts community legal services' funding at the discretion of the new Board of Legal Aid Queensland. This reflects a lack of Government commitment to community legal centres."

This is very stern criticism indeed of a Government that is failing to provide proper access to justice. If we want people to use the court system in a way which is accessible to them and if we want them to get the benefits of our courts which are after all set up in order to hear and determine disputes between citizens, there has to be in place the machinery for adequate legal aid in appropriate cases and for adequate community legal centres to give citizens access and information.

We here in Queensland still wait to see whether this Government will move to allow ordinary Queenslanders to enjoy the same opportunities as those citizens in other States to have free Internet access to Queensland legislation and case law which would enable them to have access to the courts more easily, to have a better knowledge of the law and to have that access to law which is important in an informed community, one that is in a position to exercise its rights properly. Similarly, the committee noted the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Royce Miller, QC, for a further six or seven senior experienced prosecutors. It is highly relevant to note that there is expected to be a significant increase in the workload of our courts in the criminal jurisdiction with cases in the higher courts expected to go up by 900 and cases in the Magistrates Court expected to go up by 400.

These are the facts set out in the Government's own Budget papers and yet we see unfortunately this attitude of complacency on the part of the Government towards access to justice. The only area where we see this Government happy to spend taxpayers' money liberally in the area of justice is of course in the Connolly commission, where the Government is happy to see \$23,000 a day being spent on lawyers' fees in an inquiry which was said by this Attorney-General at the outset to last three months. Now it looks like going the best part of a year. It is an ongoing scandal that we have this spending machine out of control at a time when the Government is failing to spend its capital works budget on courts and withholding \$1.5m from Legal Aid over the course of the last year, notwithstanding its bold promises of increased funding. We see the costs of this Connolly commission going out of control because this Government simply did not put in place any adequate budget disciplines in order to control those costs.

The Opposition will be moving a number of amendments to this legislation in order to strive to improve it. The Opposition will move to reform the proceedings in the Magistrates Court to enable them to be started in any District or Magistrates Court irrespective of where the claim or cause of action arose. That reform is designed to overcome the procedural difficulties that can arise when a proceeding is commenced in the wrong geographic jurisdiction. It is the very same principle that has operated for some time in respect of the District Courts, and we urge it upon the Parliament as a sensible principle to ensure better access to justice.

The Opposition will strongly oppose the attempts by this Government to attack the management powers of the President of the Court of

Appeal, Justice Tony Fitzgerald. In 1991, when the Supreme Court Act was introduced by the Labor Government, innovations were put in place. They included the authority of the President of the Court of Appeal to manage the court's budget and to report directly to the Parliament. That reform is proposed to be abolished by the Government. The Opposition will strenuously oppose that course of action.

In recent years there has been a lively debate in the area of judicial administration as to whether the courts administration should be run by the courts themselves, whether it should be run by a judicial commission, or whether it should continue to be run by the Public Service. The provisions in the existing Supreme Court Act with respect to the management of the Court of Appeal were an important step in the right direction to enable the court to manage its affairs. This Bill winds back the clock on important reforms allowing the President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Tony Fitzgerald, to manage court administration effectively and independently of the Justice Department bureaucracy. The Bill effectively returns the management of the Court of Appeal budget to the Director-General of the Justice Department. This is a backward step in judicial administration.

The Bill also removes the authority of the President of the Court of Appeal to report directly to the Parliament, requiring instead the Appeal Court President to report to the Chief Justice, who reports in turn to the Minister and the Parliament. As I said at the outset, it is ironic that one of the very reforms to the appeals system upon which the Government relies for the legitimacy of its legislation came about through the Appeal Court President reporting in the way which is now sought to be avoided.

The reforms to cut court delays and costs are also wound back by the abolition of the Litigation Reform Commission. This shows a disappointing complacency on the part of the Borbidge Government towards consumers' demands for cheaper and speedier litigation. The Government's explanation for abolishing the Litigation Reform Commission is nonsensical and inconsistent. The Government's argument that involving judges in the reform of litigation laws is somehow a breach of judicial independence overlooks the simple fact that court rules in Queensland and elsewhere are made by the judges themselves and then approved by the Governor in Council. If the Government genuinely wanted to remove judges from litigation reform, why does the Bill transfer this function to the Law Reform Commission, chaired by none other than a Supreme Court judge?

The Borbidge Government is attempting, through the Bill, to turn back the clock on Labor's 1991 court reform legislation. It is disappointing that we have an attack by the Government on the case management role of the Senior Judge Administrator in the Trial Division and on the important work which was done by the Litigation Reform Commission. As we have seen all too often, this Government is intent on dismantling Labor Government initiatives without having regard to the basis upon which those

initiatives were premised. The basis upon which those initiatives were premised was the belief that business as usual is not good enough in judicial administration. It is not good enough to say that the old ways are the only ways. It is not good enough to say to the citizens of Queensland that they must accept cost and delays in our courts system and not expect that new structures will be put in place in order to ensure that our system of judicial administration rises to these challenges. That is why Labor in Government moved to put in place a Litigation Reform Commission designed to address the problems of court litigation. That is why it put in place the role of a Senior Judge Administrator with powers to address the tough issues of case management. That is why it put in place a new Court of Appeal and made management provisions there which would enable it to function effectively and efficiently. Accordingly, I foreshadow that the Opposition will be moving amendments in relation to those matters.

Let me turn now to some other aspects of the Bill and deal with them briefly. The Bill provides that all appeals from orders of Magistrates Courts in relation to simple and indictable offences are heard and determined in the District Courts. The reform in this respect is a sensible one, and the Opposition will support it. Because of the distinction between simple offences and indictable offences tried summarily, appeals lay to different courts, namely, the District Court and the Court of Appeal respectively. This makes a sensible provision that such matters can be dealt with in the District Court. That is likely to lessen costs without diminishing the high standards of justice that apply in our criminal courts system.

The Bill also compels the use of video link facilities in criminal appeal proceedings unless the court, in the interests of justice, orders otherwise. This is a more controversial area. It is true to say that there are many in the legal profession who shrink from the use of modern technologies such as video link facilities. But we do not live in a world without change. We live in a world where technology is transforming our workplaces and our homes, and the courts have to be responsive to this. The use of video link facilities in the manner contemplated, with appropriate safeguards, is an important reform in the interests of justice.

I well recall attending with the former Minister for Police and Corrective Services, the Honourable Paul Braddy, a launch of such video link facilities between the Magistrates Court and the correctional facility during the term of the Labor Government. Such an initiative has the potential to decrease costs and to improve security in respect of persons in custody. However, there must always be a discretion on the part of the court to enable an appellant to appear in person where the interests of justice require. No doubt there will be many circumstances in which, by virtue of difficulty with the English language or for cultural reasons, a person feels unable to express his or her case adequately through video link facilities. In such cases, a court should properly be empowered, as it is in the Bill, to allow such an appellant to appear in person.

It is important, however, that we be vigilant on the civil liberties issues involved in the use of video link facilities. We must never allow it to become a situation in which a person exercising his or her rights through video link facilities is in any way disadvantaged in comparison with other persons. The object of the use of such modern technologies must be to enhance the administration of justice, not to diminish it.

The Bill increases the jurisdictional limits of the District and Magistrates Courts. That is a sensible move. For example, the Bill increases the monetary limit of the civil jurisdiction of the District Court from \$200,000 to \$250,000. That reflects the passage of time and the changing quantum of the cases coming before our courts. Similarly, the Bill provides for the increase in the jurisdiction in the Magistrates Court from \$40,000 to \$50,000. Again, that is a sensible measure.

It is interesting that the Bill makes provision for the establishment of the position of a Supreme Court judge in far-north Queensland. It has taken this Government quite some time to get around to taking that step. Before the election, members opposite were happy to promise the people of Cairns a Supreme Court judge. Two years ago when in Opposition, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Mr Beanland, was happy to promise the people of Cairns a Supreme Court judge. However, we again see delay and complacency on the part of the Government in failing to get on with the job. Now, at long last, in July 1997 we see the legislation to enable that to happen being brought before the House. Who knows how long it will be before the Government actually delivers upon its promise to appoint a Supreme Court judge in far-north Queensland. Just as it delayed with respect to the Capital Works Program, just as it has been errant in its duties to provide better support services for victims of crime, just as it has shut out the community legal centres from specific reference in the Budget, we see another example of the Government's failing to move promptly and effectively to deliver upon the promises that it was so quick to make prior to the 1995 election.

The Bill also amends the role of the Dispute Resolution Centres Council and facilitates the referral by the courts of disputes for mediation in dispute resolution centres established under the Dispute Resolution Centres Act. That provision facilitating the referral by the courts of disputes for mediation is a sensible one. However, again it is disappointing to see the failure of the Government to ensure that there is an alternative dispute resolution system outside the court system. I draw to the attention of the House the forthright criticism by the all-party budgetary Estimates Committee B on this point. It observed—

"It remains a matter of concern that no provision for alternative dispute resolution services is made outside the Court system, thereby effectively alienating those people reluctant to approach the Court system for assistance in the resolution of disputes."

It is important that we have provision for the resolution of disputes both in conjunction with the court system and outside it.

The cause of justice in this State deserves a more energetic approach than that which has been demonstrated by the Government. Although this Bill has a number of positive aspects, it has been disappointing to see the willingness of this Government to move complacently to turn back the clock upon important reforms to judicial administration. I foreshadow a series of amendments on the part of the Opposition to strengthen this Bill, to remove the odious provisions of the Bill and to ensure better administration of justice in Queensland.

Hon. D. E. BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.48 p.m.), in reply: In referring to the comments of the member for Yeronga, I point out that this is the third time that I have heard his arguments prosecuted in relation to the Budget. This afternoon, the member for Yeronga raised a number of issues that he raised in relation to the Budget at the Estimates committee hearings. I have had a quick read of the committee's report in which they are raised. The arguments about the capital works budget for the courts were raised again today. The capital works program for the courts is proceeding. As the works are proceeding at Rockhampton and Southport, people have jobs who would not have otherwise had jobs. I am sure that the member for Rockhampton and members in central Queensland are pleased to see the courts proceeding. Hopefully, they will be completed by Christmas or the end of December. The courts at Southport are also well and truly on track to be completed by the end of this calendar year.

The honourable member mentioned Gympie. Of course, no work was set down for Gympie in the last financial year, although money was set aside for some preliminary work. That was done. We are now in a position to move on to the next step, which is the calling of tenders for construction of the Magistrates Court. As to Cleveland—the Labor Party allocated some funds, but that did not achieve much. We are getting on with it. I hope that this year we will spend if not all the money at least a proportion of the money that has been allocated to construct a new court facility at Cleveland. In order to cooperate with the local authority in that area and to proceed on the particular site on which the local government wanted the State Government to build the courts complex, a range of matters has had to be taken into account.

Some comments were made in relation to legal aid. Last year, additional funding for legal aid was made available and funding continues this year of some \$2m. In relation to community legal centres, the fact that one line has been changed and the funding is in one total vote does not move away from the fact—and already I have given two or three undertakings, I am not sure how many now, in this Parliament and in the Estimates Committee—that, from the State Government's point of view, it will make available the same money this financial year as it did the previous financial year. As I say, that is a fairly repetitious commitment. Over and over on behalf of the Government I have given those

commitments. I am not quite sure why the member for Yeronga continues to raise the same matters.

The member also raised a matter in relation to the Director of Public Prosecutions Office. As I recollect what was said at the Estimates committee hearing, the Director of Public Prosecutions indicated that he needed to upgrade staff. It was not so much that he needed additional staff; he needed to upgrade the level of staff that he had currently within the Director of Public Prosecutions Office. Certainly, there are funds within the Budget to allow that. I think that something like \$1.4m is available for additional funding for the budget of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions this financial year compared to last financial year.

The member for Yeronga referred to the role of the Litigation Reform Commission. I think it is fair to say that, under the former Government, in some respects the role that the Litigation Reform Commission played was rather disappointing. When the coalition came to office, it needed to get on with a number of projects, particularly implementing the uniform court rules. Although some work had been done, nowhere near enough work had been done. This Government has got on with that project. As we will see in due course, the uniform court rules will go a long way towards improving access to justice and streamlining the processes, and many of the problems that are being experienced currently will be resolved. For the member to say that nothing is happening is not true. I am sure that the member for Yeronga would be aware that for some months work has been ongoing. Civil uniform court rules for all three levels of justice is a very complex process. It is my understanding that, through the implementation of this procedure, for the first time in this country the three levels of justice will have uniform court rules. We are looking forward to producing those court rules in the not-too-distant future.

Comments have been made about case management. Of course, nothing in this legislation prohibits case management continuing in the way in which it has taken place. I understand that the uniform court rules will contain specific provisions relating to case management. Those rules will help to reduce delays and simplify procedures. The member said that by doing away with the Litigation Reform Commission in some way we are not speeding up the process and improving it. That is not the point at all; in fact, it is far from it. The reverse is the situation. Case management will be improved. I notice that the member for Yeronga proposes to move an amendment which, in any case, would have been picked up by the uniform court rule process. That amendment is just one of a whole range of amendments that need to be made to improve a range of processes within the courts.

The member for Yeronga referred to the role of the Chief Justice and of the Government in turning back the clock. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. We all know how the former Government treated the Chief Justice when it introduced amendments to the legislation in 1991. This legislation simply returns the role of the Chief Justice to what it was formerly whilst ensuring that

the President of the Appeal Court continues with his or her functions and the Senior Judge Administrator continues with his or her functions in the trial division of the Supreme Court. The fact is that the Chief Justice has a role to play. The position of Chief Justice should not be one with nominal status. The Chief Justice has a very significant role to play in the overall functioning of the courts. That role should be acknowledged, and this legislation does that. It puts in place appropriate processes which, to the shame of the former Government, it did not. It could have achieved all it wanted to achieve whilst keeping in place the position of Chief Justice. Indeed, it was a very black day when the former Government introduced legislation that changed the role of the Chief Justice. This legislation simply endeavours to put back in place what should be the appropriate position of the Chief Justice vis-a-vis other justices of the court.

The member for Yeronga made comments about complacency. When I took over as the Minister, to my horror I found that there was a 22-week delay in the Magistrates Court in Townsville. That is not something about which anybody can be proud. Talk about complacency! That situation existed when the member for Yeronga was the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. This Government has moved to rectify that situation. It appointed two additional magistrates to improve the processes. At the same time, it also put in place two additional District Court judges to improve the processes and to allow access to justice in that jurisdiction.

I think it is fair to say that the Government is very much aware of the need to get on with the processes. For some eight or nine months the former Government was in office without the popular will of the people when this Government could have been in office and getting on with these projects. This Government has got on with the projects. This Bill is just one of a range of major legislative initiatives that it needs to put in place. This legislation puts in place changes to jurisdictional limits; it allows a Supreme Court judge to be domiciled in Cairns; it provides for video links and a whole range of other initiatives to improve the processes of the courts and to cut back delays and costs.

The Government commends the Bill to the House. It is a piece of legislation that it believes goes a long way towards achieving some of the worthwhile initiatives which it promoted prior to the last election and which it will continue through other legislation that will be introduced into this House over the coming months.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTION OF MRS L. LAVARCH

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth)
(5.58 p.m.): I move—

"That this House note the election of Linda Lavarch as the Member for Kurwongbah."

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I now call the honourable member for Kurwongbah to give her maiden speech. I ask you to extend the normal courtesies.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah) (5.59 p.m.): Almost 10 years ago, I sat in the public gallery of our national Parliament as my husband Michael delivered his first speech to the House of Representatives. Tonight, he sits in the public gallery of this Parliament as I rise for the first time to address the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

To hold public office is a high honour and a great responsibility. I thank the people of Kurwongbah for their trust. I also know from Michael's experience that for the individual, public office is transitory. For this reason, the election of a person to Parliament is far more than a victory for a political party or an individual candidate; rather, it is a victory for the democratic process.

While we come here from different backgrounds and with different opinions and goals, we all share a common belief in the parliamentary system and the conventions and institutions which underpin that system. These are the conventions embodied in a representative democracy; a belief in free and open elections, governed by the rule of law and founded upon the right—indeed, the obligation—of participation by the citizen. Within this system operate the institutions of Government—the Parliament, the Executive and the courts—and economic and social institutions like trade unions, the churches and the banks. The Kurwongbah by-election occurred against a backdrop of profound uncertainty, even disillusionment, about these institutions. That uncertainty is centred not so much at their worth but at how well they serve an Australia which is in a state of transition.

The Kurwongbah result yet again demonstrated the deep unease in our community. There emerged three dominant issues of concern during the Kurwongbah campaign: the first was law and order and community safety, the second was unemployment and job security, and the third was the traffic congestion strangling Petrie and Strathpine. The traffic issue is a specific local concern and may or may not be an issue elsewhere in the State. However, I have no doubt that crime and unemployment are the principal concerns of Queenslanders wherever they live.

The law and order issue reflects a society that believes it is no longer safe. Popular opinion is that crime rates are soaring while the response by Government is totally inadequate. The elderly in particular feel at risk. Much of their anger at this risk is directed at young people who are perceived to be the perpetrators of crime. In Pine Rivers, concern about crime revolves around the role of youth gangs in public places such as parks, railway stations and shopping centres. There is also concern about property crime, particularly home burglary and car stealing. Yet the reality of crime rates is very different from the perception. Violent crime is not soaring; property crime has increased but is not rampant, nor is it out of control.

Fear about crime is a symptom of the deeper anxiety about the kind of Australia we want to be. Community demands to strike harshly at offenders are motivated in part by the frustration caused by the sense of wider uncertainty. This in turn is fed by sensationalist media reporting which shows high regard for ratings and little or no regard for responsibility. Conservative politicians, most notably those of the National Party and the current Police Minister while in Opposition, have shamelessly used crime to gain short-term political advantage. It is ironic that this Minister has most recently spoken out about the gulf between the reality and the perception of crime. Over the years, few have done more than he to bring about this gulf. Short-term political opportunism means long-term political problems for this Minister.

While perception and reality about crime may be two different things, unfortunately the perception of unemployment matches reality. Both are awful. Almost 10% of Queenslanders are unemployed and many more are fearful of losing their jobs, yet there are no easy answers. There is no one reason why unemployment has persisted at such high levels for almost two decades. Ironically, during the same decades, actual employment has grown steadily and more Queenslanders than ever before are part of the paid work force, both in sheer numbers and as a proportion of the total population. There is not a member of this Parliament who does not want unemployment tackled and beaten; there is not one who thinks community safety is not a top priority. What we lack is a consensus on how to achieve these goals.

Often the analysis of these problems focuses on the technological revolution, economic restructuring or the changed role for the family. Possibly, such examinations are still too shallow and do not identify just how fundamental the transition in our country has been. In his book, *The End of Certainty*, Paul Kelly argues that the last 15 years have witnessed the final destruction of what he calls the Australian Settlement. The settlement comprised the pillars of public policy upon which the States agreed to Federation and which directed Australian affairs for most of this century. These pillars were White Australia, industry protection, industrial arbitration and centralised wage fixing, Government paternalism and reliance on a foreign benefactor.

According to Kelly, the Settlement built a fortress Australia, isolated by our geography and protected by racially based immigration, trade barriers and the military power of first Britain and then the United States. Its endurance came from the Settlement's ability to accommodate contradictory and competing interests. Industrial arbitration secured both wage justice for workers and industrial peace for employers. In turn, this was economically sustainable by industry protection and Government subsidy. Equally, the obvious conflict of interest between farmers and manufacturers in the maintenance of high tariff barriers was also overcome by paying compensation to farmers in the form of marketing schemes and direct Government support. In this way, the cost of tariffs to farmers was cloaked.

Slowly at first but inevitably, the Australian Settlement has been dismantled. White Australia was abandoned outright because of its corrupt morality, and rightly so, and also because our national economic interests shifted decisively to the very region it aimed to exclude. The other pillars still remain, but they are weaker. Tariffs have fallen from the highest in the world to negligible levels in all but two industries. Similarly, various agricultural, marketing and pricing schemes have been abandoned. The industrial system is no longer principally based upon centralised wage fixing and even our defence posture is directed at regional self-reliance rather than our part in the wider western alliance.

Paul Kelly argued that, for all its strength, the Australian Settlement failed our national interest. Living standards relative to the world have fallen progressively since 1900 and national wealth creation was greatly retarded. In this analysis he is partially correct, but here tonight I raise the demise of the Australian Settlement not in an economic context alone but more in its mix of economic, social and political norms. The overwhelming feature of the policy pillars which formed the Settlement has been the level of national support it received over successive generations. White Australia, industry protection, centralised industrial relations and a universal welfare system were all beliefs shared in common by Labor and conservative parties alike, by workers and employers, the city dweller and the farmer, and even the rich and the poor. The uncertainty now so evident in the Australian community is caused by the failure of any clear alternative vision to the Australian Settlement to gain a national consensus.

In its place is an unresolved conflict between competing views of how Australia should be. The first view is held by those who not only hope for the return of the certainties of the past but also believe that a return journey is possible. These are the sentimentalists who ask: "Why can't things be the way they used to be?" The second view is held by those who contend that the forces of globalisation are unstoppable and that the old Australia will inevitably give way to international, economic and social realities. These are the internationalists who proclaim that there is no way back.

The struggle of the sentimentalists and the internationalists is far more than a moot debating point for elites. Rather, in my view, it is at the centre of community uncertainty. The resolution of the conflict between the sentimentalists and the internationalists lies in the answer to three threshold questions: should the Australian Settlement be replaced with a new model of national policy consensus or is the very idea now counterproductive? What might the policy consensus contain? If a consensus should be sought, how could it be developed?

For all its limitations and moral shortcomings, the Australian Settlement did unite us. In many ways, a social compact of competing interests embodied in the Settlement was unique among nations. In my view, the original Settlement may have outlived its

usefulness, but the concept of a Settlement is still important and useful for our nation. A new policy consensus must recognise the realities of the Australian condition while containing aspirations which can unite us. The contents of the consensus are, of course, open for debate, but I would like to outline my ideas.

The first pillar should be a clear articulation of Australian core values. That is particularly important in relation to how we handle racial and cultural diversity. The rejection of the White Australia policy also meant the rejection of a monoculture. Multiculturalism emerged in the 1970s as the successor to White Australia, but today many Australians still remain confused about what it means. Multiculturalism embraces cultural diversity. It does not mean that as a nation we do not have a set of core values to which all Australians, regardless of their cultural background, should commit. If those core values and the fact that multiculturalism complemented and was not contradictory to those core values were emphasised, I believe Australians would more universally embrace the strength that is cultural diversity. The core values of Australia are a commitment to democratic processes, a belief in individual rights and the protection of liberty by the rule of law. The values also include a respect for differences between people, be they on cultural, religious or political grounds.

The second pillar of a new settlement involves the redefining of the structures which govern the paid work force. I believe that there remains a vital and ongoing role for the institutions of trade unions and the Industrial Relations Commission. However, I accept that both of those institutions must be focused entirely on the needs of their members and the Australian community respectively. Such institutions do not exist merely as ends in themselves but as a means of delivering just outcomes for all of those involved in paid employment, particularly those who are not inherently in a strong bargaining position. Changes in this field also require the recognition of the relationship between work and family. Our industrial and employment institutions have responded very slowly to the reality that only 20% of Australian households now fall within the model of one partner being in full-time employment while the other partner is involved in family responsibilities.

The third pillar involves the embracing of international activism. The realities of globalisation mean that the standards that apply in Australia will increasingly be set at an international level. We have accepted this generally in terms of economic issues but find it more difficult to make the same adjustments in other fields, such as human rights and environmental standards. However, embracing internationalism does not mean that we meekly accept that we have no control in the formulation of emerging international norms. On the contrary, Australia must actively engage in all international forums, both at multilateral and bilateral levels, to ensure that we shape international outcomes to the circumstances of our own people. Equally, Australia has a set of values which have great appeal internationally, and we should seek to mould

international standards to reflect the best of what are Australian values.

The fourth pillar of a new settlement involves the role of Government. I firmly believe that Government must play a positive and central role in the building of communities and the shaping of economic outcomes. I reject the ideologically driven approach that has as a starting point that the Government is inherently bad and is to be wound back at every opportunity. At the same time, models of centralised control and cradle to the grave social welfare systems are also flawed. There is a middle course which sees Government acting as a protector and the provider of a needs-based social safety net which strives for equality of opportunity and the encouragement of individual enterprise. In essence, this means the Government involving itself heavily in fields such as health, education and the provision of public infrastructure in its widest sense.

The building of a national consensus is, of course, a national task. However, this does not mean that it is the job of the national Government alone, although I must say that we do need strong leadership at that level. There is an important role for the States and for local communities. Through the Council of Australian Governments, each of the States plays a vital role in the task of nation building. As the provider of the basic and most important services to people in fields such as community safety, education, health and public infrastructure, it is the States that have the responsibilities to actually lay the bricks in nation building.

That is also not a responsibility to be left only to the Executive Government at either the Federal or State levels. There rests a vital responsibility for local members of Parliament to play a leadership role within their communities to tackle feelings of community uncertainty and help the process of national policy consensus. The first task is to understand that local communities and individuals can easily feel powerless and alienated from the issues which are seen as State and national concerns. The best place to start is to explain openly the facts about difficult issues such as crime and unemployment.

The second step is to draw on the strengths of the community. There is no substitute for local knowledge about problems and how they impact on people. In essence, this is all about listening to people. This leads to the third step, which is to develop a local plan of action, a plan which recognises that a problem such as unemployment cannot be solved in an individual suburb or town, but that that is no reason to do nothing at all. Rebuilding a national policy foundation will work only if a consensus can be developed. A consensus will emerge only through the active engagement of each local community on issues such as unemployment and community safety.

Tonight, I wish to outline some of my plan for Kurwongbah. The plan for Kurwongbah is centred around the three dominant local concerns. The residents of Kurwongbah have a right to feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods, and they have told me that an increased police presence in the area

will go some way towards that. The State Government should honour its by-election promises in respect of police presence and a police shopfront in Strathpine without delay. That should be built upon by establishing a police community beat centred around the business districts, railway stations and parks within the Kurwongbah electorate. It is also my intention to encourage and support community groups initiating local programs aimed at crime prevention.

Traffic snarls need to be relieved. Again, that can be done by the State Government honouring its by-election promise to construct the Strathpine and Petrie bypasses. An effective road system in Pine Rivers requires the joint effort of the Pine Rivers Shire Council and the State Government. I have already met with officials from the Transport Department and the council, and will continue to do so. I aim to ensure that full community consultation takes place at each stage. Thirdly, it is my plan to improve local job prospects by promoting and supporting local businesses through a variety of measures, including the holding of business forums, to bring together Government and business.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the people who worked with me during the Kurwongbah campaign. In particular, I thank my local campaign team, State campaign director Mike Kaiser, party leader Peter Beattie and also Di Farmer, who did a tremendous job rallying the volunteers who are too numerous to mention but who are the essence of what is great about the Labor Party. Being elected to Parliament could not have occurred without the love and support of my family. Michael, I thank you for believing in me and helping me to believe in myself. But most of all I thank our beautiful and very clever children, Simon and Elizabeth, who keep my feet firmly on the ground. With the ongoing help of my family, local supporters and the Labor Party, I will strive to use my time in this Parliament to better my electorate, my State and my nation.

CENSURE OF PREMIER AND TREASURER

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (6.19 p.m.): I move—

"That this Parliament—

- (a) censures the Premier and the Treasurer for deliberately misleading the Members of this House and the people of Queensland over the impact of the Government's decision to sponsor the Metway/Suncorp merger in regard to branch closures, the loss of a significant number of Queensland jobs and increases in bank fees and charges; and
- (b) further censures the Premier and the Treasurer for their deliberate misrepresentation of the implications of the sale of Suncorp and the QIDC in their negotiations with the Member for Gladstone whose support for the merger was essential for the Government's objectives to be realised."

The Premier and the Treasurer should be censured because not only have they misled everyone on this issue but they also did it deliberately—a mega con for a mega bank. We know they did it deliberately because we know what they were advised by the Treasury Department and, of course, we know what they have told Parliament and the public. What they have told Parliament and the public is very different from the advice they received from Treasury. From what the member for Gladstone is now saying, it is obvious that she was misled in identical fashion.

On 30 May last year I warned in a media release that a 200-page Treasury submission estimated that well over 1,000 Queensland jobs would be lost if the merger between Suncorp, Metway and the QIDC went ahead. I revealed because of that advice that the previous Government had turned down the merger. That Treasury advice had obviously been given to the Premier and the Treasurer. But on the same day a newspaper reported that when a figure of 1,000 job losses was put to the Premier, Mr Borbidge, in Tokyo, he said—

"That is inaccurate. I am not aware of job losses to the extent that you mentioned; obviously there will be a degree of rationalisation."

So right from the start the Premier was deliberately misleading the State. Page after page of the Treasury briefing spells out the job losses which the Premier and Treasurer have denied would take place.

Let us look at what was said in this debate. Treasurer Sheldon promised that there would be no cost to Queensland taxpayers. That was the first promise. But millions of dollars have been spent on consultancy fees. That was the first broken commitment. Treasurer Sheldon promised that there would be no cost to Queensland taxpayers. But she sacrificed \$90m of dividends to prop up the share price. Subordinated shares receive only residual dividends, if any, for the first three years. That was another broken promise. Treasurer Sheldon promised that there would be no cost to Queensland taxpayers. But 40 million shares will be sold in December 1998 at a fixed price which is currently \$1.90 per share under the market price. I did not hear the Treasurer say anything about that. I note for the record, I note for the media and I note for the people of Queensland that the Treasurer is not in the House tonight for this debate.

Let us move on to the next commitment by the Treasurer. Treasurer Sheldon promised that people would not be losing their jobs. But 250 have already lost their jobs in the combined head offices. Treasurer Sheldon promised that people would not be losing their jobs, but the chairman and chief executive have both acknowledged that there will be further job losses. We estimate that up to 1,500 jobs are yet to go. Remember how Treasurer Sheldon promised that there would be no forced redundancies? But some of the 250 head office workers were forced out the door. Treasurer Sheldon promised that the Government would not be going out and sacking people. No—it left that to the new board to do! So in terms of all of those

commitments that the Treasurer gave in this House and in the community, every single one of them has been broken.

In Parliament today the Treasurer gave a prime example of how she is misleading everyone. The Treasurer claimed that I was telling business privately that Labor supports the merger and the privatisation of Suncorp. Wrong! Let me put on record that I have never supported the merger, and I would have thought that even the Treasurer would have got that message by now. Let me emphasise that I have never said that I supported the merger. What I have told business, including Suncorp-Metway—there is no secret about it—is that we do not support the Government holding a large stake in what Mrs Sheldon has turned into a State bank. This is the way interstate Governments behave, and we will not have a bar of it.

Mr Hamill: And the Reserve Bank won't allow it either.

Mr BEATTIE: Exactly. What I have told business is that because of this we would therefore support the selldown of the Government's holding if it was found that it was too late to unscramble the egg. Of course, that is the case.

Other points need to be rebutted and made clear. In a media release yesterday Metway claimed that we were inaccurate and misleading, but it did not deny that the vast bulk of its customers will be paying higher charges if their balances are under \$500. Who are those people? They are the people least able to pay—the pensioners and the battlers. We on this side of the House are the ones who are concerned about them. What are the Premier and the Treasurer concerned about? They are concerned about the share price. They are not concerned about the pensioners and the battlers. I can tell the Premier and the Treasurer tonight that we are concerned about the pensioners and the battlers, and we will continue to fight for them.

Metway claims that the charges apply only to certain accounts—the Action and Option accounts. But these are the major transaction accounts offered by Metway. The charges apply only to two major accounts, they say, but they happen to make up the majority of their accounts. Metway says that the changes were part of a normal annual fee review. Should we take this to mean that fee increases of up to 150% will normally occur each year? That is what Metway is saying. Metway says that customers can minimise or avoid fees by managing their accounts effectively. But every bank says that. If that were true, no customer of any bank would have a problem with bank charges, but that is patently not the case. It is all very well for the Premier to say that they should go somewhere else. Where do they go? Suncorp had a proud record of keeping charges off cheque accounts. I am a Suncorp customer and I know—I have a cheque account. All of that is being lost under this merger.

The reality for many people will be that their financial obligations are such that many transactions simply cannot be avoided, and they will simply have to cop the charges. When are banks like Metway going to stop handing out tips on how to avoid bank

fees and start telling customers how to get the most out of their bank accounts? Isn't the customer always right, or do we not care about customers and battlers and pensioners? Metway claims that pensioners continue to have fee-free banking with the Pensioner Savings Account, but do all pensioners use this particular type of account? Of course they do not! And is Metway saying that it is not picking up the revenue that would be gained by higher charges by adjusting other factors such as interest rates? Metway is ducking and weaving all over the place on this issue, but the plain fact is that it is simply mimicking the behaviour of the major banks.

I tabled in the House this morning the full internal document, the full proposal by Metway on the fee increases. That is their document. It is not my document; it is their document. They cannot deny their own document, because that is where the fee increases are clearly set out. I challenge Metway to disown its own document. That has been the problem with the whole merger from the start: it has turned a customer-focused local financial institution into just another big bank that does not care. Let me explain to the people of Queensland exactly what these increased charges are—the increases which we warned about. We warned about these increases and this loss of personal services right from the beginning, and we were attacked by the Treasurer and the Premier for warning Queenslanders that this merger would not be in their interests. But let us look at what will happen.

Let us take electronic debit transactions—ATM, EFTPOS, etc. The first eight electronic withdrawals in a month are free. Thereafter, there is a fee of 50c per transaction. Prior to this, there was no charge on these transactions. Let us look at cheque withdrawals. The fee was 50c per transaction. Now it is \$1 per transaction. That is a 100% increase—not bad if you can get it! In terms of branch withdrawals and transfers—that is, over the counter—the first four withdrawals in a month are free; thereafter, it will cost \$1.25 per transaction. Metway is hitting the people least able to pay, and that is what is wrong with this. That represents an increase of 150% from 50c per transaction. In terms of electronic withdrawals from non Metway-Suncorp ATMs, there will be a charge of \$1 for every transaction. Previously there was no charge. I table for the information of the House the rest of these fee increases.

I conclude by saying this: we will fight for the pensioners and we will fight for the battlers whether this Government likes it or not, and we will not be intimidated or forced into withdrawing our commitment to those people because the Treasurer comes in here and goes into a long list of personal attacks on me, which she did today, or any attacks from Metway. We are concerned about Queenslanders, even if the Treasurer is not.

Time expired.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.29 p.m.): I second the motion before the House. Mrs Sheldon's petulant performance this morning reveals a Treasurer under pressure. She has created a monster and now she is

trying to figure out how to let go of its tail. The Treasurer and the Premier put forward this merger proposal as a win/win for Queensland. They said there would be no cost to the Queensland taxpayer, no-one would lose their jobs and there would be no forced redundancies. But how the truth is slowly emerging! Already 250 Queenslanders have lost their jobs from the rationalisation of those three head offices into one. In line with our warning of higher bank charges, Metway has just introduced massive increases in bank charges and focused them on the most vulnerable in our community.

Now we are seeing the cost to Queenslanders: lost jobs and bank charges straight from the hip pocket or, in this case, straight from the bank balance. Right from the start Labor warned that privatisation of Suncorp and the QIDC would mean higher bank charges, and we were proven to be right. We warned that up to 1,500 jobs would go, with 400 head office jobs to go in the first six months. With 250 head office jobs already lost and more to come, our forecasts are right on target. Mrs Sheldon said that there would be no cost to Queenslanders, but there has already been millions of dollars spent in consultancy fees, \$90m sacrificed in relation to dividend prop-ups of the share price and the sale of 40 million shares in December 1998, as the Leader of the Opposition said, at a fixed price which is currently \$1.90 per share under the market price. These are all costs for Queenslanders.

The Treasurer attacks Labor for calling for an end to these savage price hikes, but strangely she makes no criticism of the member for Gladstone. It is not Labor calling for Metway customers to take their money elsewhere, it is the member for Gladstone. In fact, it is also the Premier. He was on TV last night saying that if someone does not like the charges they should go elsewhere. So it is the Premier actually encouraging Metway customers exposed to these increased charges to take their custom elsewhere. In making these comments the Premier is assisting Suncorp/Metway in its strategy of abandoning those customers who can only sustain small savings accounts.

That is what this is all about. It is a big bank strategy to squeeze out the pensioners and the low income earners. Suncorp/Metway used to be renowned as a customer focused locally based institution appealing to the mass market. How that has changed! Under this Government's plan, Suncorp/Metway is becoming more selective about which customers it wants and it is becoming just another big bank.

The Treasurer claims that Queensland Labor created a State bank. No, Queensland Labor did not create a State bank, the Government did. It created the State Bank. That is what is so ill conceived in this merger—the creation of a massive State bank with the Government exposed for billions of dollars in a scheme which few are certain will actually work. No doubt we will hear the Treasurer squawk about higher share prices. It is not hard to attract shareholder interest, however, if she can guarantee a higher fixed dividend and exclude 100 million Government shares from having equal opportunity to

share the profits. It is not hard to attract shareholder interest in a one-for-two share offer at a price, as I said, below the current market price for shares. The interesting question is: how long will the higher share price last once a couple of dividend payments have occurred? Then we will see the true value of these shares.

At the end of the day, this will end up in the hands of a large, probably foreign, bank. We already know that the Government has had discussions with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank and who knows how many other foreign banks will be approached as the Government tries to unload its shareholding while the market stays up. The Premier and the Treasurer called this a "State of Origin victory" when the Premier announced the Metway takeover of Suncorp and QIDC. Very few Queenslanders can see a victory in lost jobs with fees and charges skyrocketing.

Time expired.

Hon. R. E. BORBRIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (6.34 p.m.): The Government opposes the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and we do so for very simple reasons. What the Leader of the Opposition is asking the Government tonight is exactly what disgraced Labor Governments from one end of Australia to the other have done, and that is to meddle in the internal affairs of financial institutions—to interfere in the commercial decisions of a bank. How can we forget Premier Bannon in South Australia who for political purposes during the course of an election campaign issued a directive in respect of interest rates for political gain? We know the end result with regard to the State Bank of South Australia—the classic John Bannon/John Cain motivation, Tricontinental revisited. That is what the Leader of the Opposition is seeking to impose by way of this motion here tonight.

The hypocrisy of the Labor Party is absolutely breathtaking. Can the Leader of the Opposition tell me when once in the six years that the Labor Party was in Government did it issue a directive to Suncorp? When Suncorp put up its fees or when it closed its branches across rural Queensland, did the Goss Government raise the matter in the Parliament? Did the Goss Government issue political directives? Of course not!

Let us look a little further afield to Federal Labor Governments. Did Labor in Government in Canberra direct, interfere and meddle in the day-to-day affairs and administration of the Commonwealth Bank? With regard to other trading enterprises of the Commonwealth, when Qantas put up its airfares, did the Hawke Federal Government or the Keating Federal Government interfere in the day-to-day management decisions? Of course not! But what we are seeing is an indication that Labor under Mr Beattie will, that it is okay to interfere in the commercial decisions of banks. What we are seeing from the Leader of the Opposition tonight is exactly the political meddling, the political treachery, the political hypocrisy and the political incompetence that bankrupted the State Bank of South Australia and led to the massive problems in Victoria with respect to Tricontinental.

I want to bring to the attention of the House tonight an article in *Business Review Weekly* of 30 June 1997. Robert Gottlieb, probably one of Australia's most respected economists, says—

"Borbridge Vindicated

I always admire people who go against the trend, take criticism on the chin, make an unpopular decision they believe to be right, then come out on top. One example is Queensland Premier Rob Borbridge and his decision to merge Metway Bank with the Government's Suncorp and QIDC rather than allow Metway to go to St George Bank.

Last year, when St George upped the ante in its bid and the Queensland Government dithered in the days leading up to Metway's extraordinary meeting, Metway seemed certain to go to St George. But in the end Borbridge increased the Government's bid and won the day. In the process he was severely criticised for doing what governments should not do: invest in businesses. Yet Borbridge knew that Queensland badly needed at least one large financial organisation based in the state. His advisors told him that the merger of a bank and an insurance company pointed the combined group in the right direction.

...

The final proof of whether Borbridge was right will come in two or three years in the operational results. Meanwhile, the share price of the combined group has risen substantially. The State Government is showing a \$500-million paper profit on the deal ... "

I repeat: a \$500m paper profit. Just as the Labor Party sought to sabotage this from day one by selling out Metway to St George, New South Wales and New South Wales interests to deny the people of Queensland what we have always needed and never had, that is, a national player in banking, as we down sell our equity over a three-year period—there has been an ongoing campaign of sabotage and destruction by the economic vandals opposite—now we get this ridiculous motion where the Leader of the Opposition expects the Government to meddle in the financial affairs of a bank just like John Bannon did.

Time expired.

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (6.39 p.m.): This censure motion suggests that the Premier and I misled the House and misled the member for Gladstone on the impact of the merger on branch closures, jobs, bank fees and charges. I reject unequivocally any suggestion that the House was misled. The record shows that it was acknowledged that branches would be rationalised and that there would be resultant impacts on jobs. However, it was estimated that job losses in the branches could be accommodated largely through natural attrition.

All businesses must adapt to their competitive environment, and banks are no different. The three merger entities—Suncorp, Metway and the QIDC—

were each restructuring prior to the merger. In fact, during the last year of office of the previous Labor Government, Suncorp closed over 22 agencies and five branches. The Labor Government, of which Mr Beattie was a senior Minister, did not undertake to place a restriction on the commercial decisions of the Suncorp board.

Let us examine the facts. The first fact is that there has not been one branch closure specifically as a result of the merger. Indeed, some of the branches which can now offer the full range of financial services products are more viable than before. There will always be rationalisation of the branch network of any bank or other business. As I said, it was going on before the merger, but Suncorp-Metway has informed me that there have been no branch closures specifically as a result of the merger.

Another fact relates to bank fees and charges. The Opposition has acknowledged that Metway always had fees and Suncorp began introducing fees under the Labor Government. Neither I nor the Premier misled this House on the issue of bank fees and charges. The Opposition has suggested that the fees charged by Metway are excessive and will hurt the battlers, pensioners and people in rural and remote areas of the State. I effectively dispelled this myth in my statement this morning. Nevertheless, it is worth making a simple comparison with Queensland's other regional bank, the Bank of Queensland.

For over-the-counter withdrawals, the Bank of Queensland charges \$1.50. Metway is increasing its charge to \$1.25—still less than the Bank of Queensland. For over-the-counter withdrawals on a card, the Bank of Queensland charges \$1.50. Metway is proposing \$1.25—again, less than the Bank of Queensland. For withdrawals on a foreign ATM, the Bank of Queensland charges \$1. Metway is applying the same charge. For balance inquiries on a foreign ATM, the Bank of Queensland charges 50c. Metway has no charge for this service. The Bank of Queensland has no exemption for accounts with a minimum balance. Metway applies an exemption on accounts with a balance of more than \$500.

Is the Opposition going to suggest that we also force the Bank of Queensland to make uncommercial decisions? The Government owns 44% of the Bank of Queensland and owned those shares during the entire term of office of the previous Labor Government. What action did that Government take in relation to the commercial decisions of the Bank of Queensland on fees and charges, on branches and on jobs? What action did members opposite take when Suncorp closed branches and agencies while they were in Government? The reality is that the Opposition is not interested in the viability of Suncorp-Metway. In order to score cheap political points, it is prepared to constrain Suncorp-Metway with the inevitable result that its viability is put at risk, long-term job prospects are diminished and the market is left to the big banks. That is what the Opposition is prepared to countenance.

The Government's aims in proposing the merger were to—

increase the viability and the value of all three businesses—Suncorp, the QIDC and Metway;

provide a major funding boost for infrastructure across the State, including vital schools, police stations, hospitals and roads from Thursday Island to Coolangatta and Mount Isa to Gladstone;

give Queenslanders a major new company the size of MIM with the ability to provide finance for Queensland companies and people; and

provide the opportunity for growth and sustainable jobs in the longer term.

This was the case put to the member for Gladstone, and this was the case presented to this House. This is what the merger has achieved, and the Government stands by the decision to save Metway and provide a major Queensland-based bank to ensure that we, as a State, control our own future. Good Government is not always about making the safe or necessarily short-term popular decisions. It is about making the right decisions, and that is what this Government has done in the merger of Metway, Suncorp and the QIDC.

It is interesting to note that this group in Opposition feel that they can simply abandon the important principles associated with corporate governance and ignore commercial reality. On the issue of Labor's record in Government, it is worth reflecting on what members opposite did for the bush and the battlers. Need I remind them of the thousands of jobs shed in the railway and electricity industries under Labor? Need I remind them of their decision regarding rail branch line closures that would have ripped the hearts out of some rural communities?

Time expired.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich) (6.44 p.m.):

Almost exactly a year ago the Parliament debated a motion that was put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. In that motion, debated on 11 July last year, the Leader of the Opposition moved, among other things, that the proposed merger of Metway, the QIDC and Suncorp does not result in job losses and branch closures in Queensland, particularly in rural and provincial Queensland. In his speech, the Leader of the Opposition made the point that 1,600 jobs would be lost, about 100 branches would be closed, and there would be higher bank charges. At that time the Treasurer and other members of the Government disputed those figures from the Leader of the Opposition. They peddled a simple line which was this: that there would be no redundancies, just natural attrition. The Treasurer kept claiming that it was the heads of agreement that would protect the jobs of those employees of Suncorp and the QIDC.

On that day when the motion was debated in the Parliament, the member for Gladstone stood in the House and moved an amendment. Her amendment was that there should be no forced redundancies or forced retrenchments and diminution of services. Who seconded the amendment moved by the member for Gladstone? The member for Broadwater! It was adopted by the Government in the vote that took place. That lot opposite voted for the amendment of the member for Gladstone. Yet one year later, what do we find? The

Government flouts the motion for which its members were prepared to vote 12 months ago. That is what its word is worth in Queensland—nothing at all!

In fact, when members debated the legislation that enabled the merger to take place, I stated that the heads of agreement, on which the Treasurer relied, was not worth the paper on which it was written, because there was a big out clause in the heads of agreement. That out clause was this—and I ask members to remember these words: "These provisions are subject to an overriding requirement that the board of the merged entity act commercially and prudently and in the best interests of the shareholders of the merged entity." In other words, let the board do what it likes, because the Government was not prepared to implement the very motion that it supported in the Parliament and which was moved by the member for Gladstone.

If any further evidence is required of the tactics of this Government, I invite members to have a look at the answers to questions on notice. Up to October last year, the Treasurer would deign to answer questions about employment numbers in the QIDC and Suncorp. But then, in November, December and January, when the honourable member for Ferny Grove, the honourable member for Gladstone and I asked questions about employment numbers, what was the answer? "It is at arm's length" or "It is a matter for the board of the merged entity. It is not a matter for the Government." What a cop-out! What a betrayal!

The Premier talks of hypocrisy and treachery. He would know about both, because it was the hypocrisy of that lot opposite who supported the member for Gladstone's amendment 12 months ago and the very treachery that cut the ground out from underneath the member for Gladstone and the Parliament when the Premier had no intention whatsoever of fulfilling the commitment that he gave in the Parliament 12 months ago. He stands condemned for his treachery.

The Premier and the Treasurer deserve this censure motion. Members opposite who voted for the amendment moved last year by the member for Gladstone are collectively culpable. Each one of them is culpable for his or her treachery and betrayal. They should tell that to the people who lost their jobs in the QIDC in Townsville. They should tell it to the 250 workers in the head office who were made redundant as of 30 June—in direct breach of the amendment, in direct breach of the will of the Parliament and in direct breach of the commitment that the Premier gave in this House.

Time expired.

Mr HARPER (Mount Ommaney) (6.49 p.m.): This censure motion is about the Government's motives for proposing the merger and the reasons it gave to this House and to the member for Gladstone for taking this initiative. The genesis of the merger was in a comprehensive review of the State-owned financial institutions undertaken by Treasury. I would like to remind the House of the main findings of that review, which were—

1. Suncorp and the QIDC were under significant competitive pressure from other regional banks and non-bank financial institutions competing for a share of the Queensland market.
2. These competitive pressures would impact on the profitability of Suncorp and the QIDC over time and, accordingly, the dividend and tax equivalent payments from these organisations would be reduced.
3. Rationalisation was occurring in many areas of the financial services industry. For example, investment in technology was leading to rationalisation of branch networks. Further branch rationalisation was inevitable in Suncorp, Metway and the QIDC, even if they remained as separate entities, in order to reduce costs and meet competitive pressures.
4. It was likely that Metway would be lost to a southern financial institution, with the consequent loss of a major Queensland company and, with it, many Queensland jobs. Consistent with this prediction, St George did make a bid for Metway.
5. Suncorp and the QIDC were in need of capital and, at the time of the review, had sought significant capital injections from the Government.
6. The combination of forecast declining earnings and the likely requirement for capital injections from Government meant that these organisations were likely to be a significant burden on the State Budget.

In the light of these findings, it was clear to the Government that it had a small window of opportunity in which to act to secure for Queensland a major financial institution and, at the same time, maximise the value of the Government's investment in those businesses.

Those institutions were clearly at risk. Their viability was at risk. Jobs were at risk. The merger represented an opportunity to secure jobs in the longer term, jobs that could not have been guaranteed by Suncorp, QIDC or Metway in their pre-merger form. As the Treasurer indicated this morning, this latest bout of Suncorp-Metway bashing does nothing more than demonstrate the hypocrisy of Labor. It was the Labor Government that corporatised QIDC and gave QIDC and Suncorp strictly commercial objectives. I have not heard anything about that from the other side of the Chamber. As the Treasurer has stated, the Labor Government allowed Suncorp to close branches and agencies for bottom line considerations, for the achievement of a commercial rate of return. Have we heard that discussed tonight? No!

Those agencies were operated by small-business people. However, the Labor Government was not concerned about the impact on these small-business people or their employees. Now, in Opposition, Labor has done an about-turn and demanded that Suncorp-Metway not act in

accordance with commercial principles. It wants this Government to follow the interventionist lead of failed Labor Governments in the south. The irony is that the merger has produced a significant new enterprise that is better placed to remain viable in an increasingly competitive market. The merged group is better placed to provide sustainable employment in the longer run. It is better placed to understand and meet the needs of Queensland business and indeed all Queenslanders. The merged group is better placed to service rural Queensland. In particular, the benefits of the merger are reflected in new products and services previously unavailable through QIDC. QIDC clients now benefit from access to integrated, full banking services and, likewise, under the new arrangements, Metway and Suncorp clients do also. QIDC's rural focus has also been reinforced as a result of a recent move to decentralise its regional operations.

The motion of the Opposition has no basis in fact. It is a political point scoring exercise that blatantly ignores the facts. This House and individual members were not misled. The merger was an important initiative taken in the long-term interest of the State. The Premier and Treasurer should be applauded for their vision and for their conviction in carrying through to make the merger a reality. I encourage the House to reject the motion.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone) (6.52 p.m.): I thank the House for the opportunity to address this motion, which I acknowledge is a very serious one. I had intended to move an amendment, which was circulated to the leaders of both sides of the House; however, both have refused to give their support to that amendment. Therefore, we are left with the motion to consider. More than any other person involved in this motion I have been aggrieved by the process that has been adopted. I have no doubt that, if St George had taken over Metway, jobs would have gone and services would have been lost to rural Queensland. I do not deny that there have been advantages to people in Queensland because of the merged entity. However, as I said before, I still have some problem with the process that has led up to today's debate.

The motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition states that the Premier and the Treasurer have deliberately misled. I cannot categorically support that. I believe that they have at least failed to fully appreciate the implications of the proposal that they have put up. I intend to support this motion not because I have a lack of confidence in the Premier or the Treasurer but because I am disappointed with the events that have occurred in the process leading up to today and because the implications of the merger in relation to jobs, services and costs to our community need to be acknowledged in the House.

Motions have been moved that have expressed the will of this Parliament in relation to the merger with regard to the protection of branches, jobs and services to rural Queensland. Those previous motions and the issues that we have addressed in the last few days need to be highlighted. On that basis I will support the motion. However, I say that I cannot give evidence that the two members have

deliberately misled the House. I believe that it has been a failure to fully understand—

Time expired.

Question—That Mr Beattie's motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 45—Ardill, Barton, Beattie, Bird, Bligh, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Campbell, Cunningham, D'Arcy, De Lacy, Dollin, Edmond, Elder, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Goss W. K., Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, McElligott, McGrady, Mackenroth, Milliner, Mulherin, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Welford, Wells. Tellers: Livingstone, Sullivan T. B.

NOES, 43—Baumann, Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, 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 **affirmative**.

PRIVILEGE

Censure of Premier and Treasurer

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (7.01 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. The matters that have just taken place in the Parliament this evening are particularly serious. I want to assure the House that I respect very much the views of this Parliament and the institution of Parliament. A censure motion against a Government, let alone a Premier and a Treasurer, is particularly serious. It is an issue that I am not prepared to leave up in the air. If necessary, there must now be a reference to the Parliament or to the people.

CONFIDENCE IN BORBIDGE/SHELDON GOVERNMENT

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (7.01 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That this House has confidence in the Borbidge/Sheldon Government."

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Ashgrove under Standing Order 123A. I call for order.

Mr BORBIDGE: The member for Ashgrove will never tempt me. I want to make a couple of observations in respect of the role of Parliament and the responsibility of Governments. I have to say that I am disappointed that the Parliament saw fit to carry the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Notwithstanding that, the Parliament has expressed its will. Therefore, I think that it is important—and I do not want to unduly delay the business of the House tonight—that the Government test its numbers in this place. I want to know whether I still have the confidence of the Parliament to be Premier. I am sure that is the situation in respect of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Therefore, I have

moved this motion. I hope that it will not be unduly delayed in being finalised because, if necessary, I have made preliminary arrangements to call on Her Excellency later tonight.

Hon. J. M. SHELDON (Caloundra—Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for The Arts) (7.03 p.m.): I rise to second this motion. At all times in this House the Premier and I have acted in good faith. We have never misled this House. We have governed for the people of Queensland. At times, the decisions that were made were difficult decisions. However, as I said in my speech tonight, it is not a good Government that just makes popular decisions. A good Government is a Government that governs for the people, makes the tough decisions, looks after the interests of the people in this State and does not indulge in the cheap political point scoring that we seen today in this House by the Leader of the Opposition and his cohorts.

The Leader of the Opposition has effectively misled the people of this State. He has used political rhetoric in order to spread untruths. He has affected very severely the future prosperity of this State in terms of jobs and financial ability. I think that the electorate will certainly tell him in no short measure exactly what they think of him in the very near future.

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—Leader of the Opposition) (7.04 p.m.): This motion before the House, moved by the Premier and seconded by the Deputy Premier, is unnecessary. It is a desperate bid by the current Government to try to in some way attract—and this is the only rational argument that I can understand for it—some sympathy for its position. What the Opposition sought to do today, and it was a very considered—

Mr Borbidge: Have you read Erskine May?

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, I have read Erskine May. I understand Erskine May very clearly. Today, the Opposition has sought to stand up for the battlers and the pensioners of this State.

Government members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Well may they squeal, but the Opposition will stand up for the pensioners and the battlers in this State. The Opposition will not be intimidated by the rantings and ravings of a Government that is not fit to govern. It is not fit to govern, and it knows it.

As I said, the Opposition's censure motion did not bring down the Government. However, it sent a clear message to this Government that it has to tell the people of this State the truth. The Opposition sought nothing more than to have the people of this State and the members of this Parliament told the truth.

Right from the beginning, all we have had is the Treasurer and the Premier misleading the people of Queensland over this Suncorp-Metway deal. How does the Opposition know that? Because the Treasury officials who put the proposal to this Government put the same proposals to the previous Goss Government. In common with many of my colleagues, I was in Cabinet when that proposal was put to it. The Goss Government rejected it. Why did

it reject it? Because it was going to cost Queenslanders jobs.

The Goss Government faced up to it and told them the truth. The Treasurer and the Premier have never told them the truth. Tonight, they have found themselves in this position because they did not tell the truth. The Goss Government opposed it because it knew that, down the privatisation road, down the economic rationalist road, the Suncorp-Metway merger would lead to increases in fees—the sorts of hikes in fees that we are seeing now which have caused this debate right from the beginning.

So this Government has brought itself to this position because of its own dishonest behaviour. It has no-one to blame but itself for being dishonest. My Opposition, the future Government of this State, will not be intimidated by these half-smart tactics by the Premier and back off. When it comes to abuse of the guidelines by Ministers, the Opposition will not back off, nor will it back off when it sees abuses by directors-general—heads of departments. The Premier can strut around all he likes and threaten to drop whatever he wants in this House. Tonight, I say to the Premier that if he has any material, which he has threatened he has, then he should take it to the CJC or table it in this House. He should not get down in the gutter. The people in this State are looking for leadership. They have not had any leadership from this Government.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order on my right!

Mr BEATTIE: Well may Government members squeal. They know that it is true. Not once since the coalition has been in Government has it had any leadership. The coalition is not only not up to Government—and we see that every day with Ministers touring the world looking at rhinos and all sorts of other nonsense and not focusing on their jobs—but also we have directors-general who do not understand propriety. The Government is not up to the job. We see it every day. Every opportunity that the Government has to turn back the clock, it will turn back the clock.

Let us look at the test. What has happened with unemployment under this Government? It has gone up. What has happened to the young people in this State? More than one in three of our young people cannot get a job. What is the Government doing about it? It is not doing anything about it! The Government does not care about young people. What is happening to the training programs? The Government is ripping them up! This year, there are 15,000 fewer opportunities for young people to do TAFE courses. There are no opportunities for our young people to be trained. The Government does not care about the unemployed. I tell the Premier that the Opposition does care. When it is in Government next year, it will implement its \$200m community jobs plan, it will have training plans and it will make certain that young people are looked after.

However, it is not just the fact that the Government has ignored unemployment. What do we have in the health area? The Health Minister's greatest achievement is to juggle a group of people

from one waiting list to another. His capital works program is a sham. Officers in the Health Department say that they have to talk to the Health Minister very slowly because he does not understand. The Minister has moved a group of people from one waiting list to another. He has ignored people on Category 2 and Category 3 waiting lists.

The other day one of Brisbane's leading doctors said that the Health Minister did not know what he was talking about when he was talking about cardiac waiting lists. Those are not my words. A leading doctor in this State said that the Minister did not know what he was talking about when it came to waiting lists for cardiac surgery, and that is true. The Health Minister has destroyed the capital works program; his hospital rebuilding is years behind. Not only has the freeze that the Treasurer imposed led to a slowdown in economic activity in this State but it has also destroyed the effective capital works program that the Labor Party had in place—it has delayed it by years. This Health Minister will go down in history as the worst Health Minister that this State has ever had.

While I am on the subject of an incompetent Ministry that cannot perform, I wish to talk about law and order—an issue in regard to which we hear many promises but do not see any delivery. There are no extra police, there are no police on the beats, there are no police where they are needed. Prisons are run with an open-door policy. People go in one side and come out the other. Only this week, another four prisoners escaped. The Government runs prisons like a holiday farm; people walk in and out as they choose.

The Attorney-General believes that it is appropriate that there be a lawyers' feeding frenzy at the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. A sum of \$23,000 a day is paid in legal expenses to the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. Who authorises that? The Premier, the Treasurer and the Attorney-General! However, can rape crisis centres or women's health services get any money? No, they cannot get any money! Can young people get any money for training schemes?

Opposition members: No!

Mr BEATTIE: Can young people get into TAFE?

Opposition members: No!

Mr BEATTIE: Can teachers get properly paid?

Opposition members: No!

Mr BEATTIE: Yet the Government can find \$23,000 a day to pay lawyers at the Connolly/Ryan inquiry! Those lawyers are like sharks circling in a feeding frenzy and the Minister is paying the bill. The Connolly/Ryan inquiry is not costing "only" \$23,000 every day. With the other expenses of office and security, it is costing \$50,000 a day. The Government pays \$50,000 a day for a needless inquiry that should never have been set up. The work should have been carried out by the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee.

Can we have confidence in the Government? No! How can one waste that sort of money when throughout the State there are people with

disabilities who need assistance, people who need all sorts of home medical aids, people on hospital waiting lists, people who need police, people who need extra teachers to reduce class sizes, and when attention needs to be paid to the environment? The Government took \$8m out of the Environment budget in the last State Budget. The Government cannot fund those things, but it can fund its lawyer mates down at the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. I can tell the Premier this: when he finally gets around to having the fortitude to call an election, on behalf of the alternative Government I will say that if the Connolly/Ryan inquiry is still going when we get elected, the first thing that I will do is close it down. It will be closed down and finished and the work of that Connolly/Ryan inquiry will be carried out by the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, as it should have been right from the beginning.

This Government does not understand such things as integrity and honesty in Government. It does not understand the values that are important. The Premier has been saying that he has introduced tough new requirements for Ministers and public servants. Tough requirements, my foot! In 17 months he has shown no leadership. People have been swanning off to see the three tenors, Ministers have been swanning off looking for black rhinos and people have been abusing the public purse. The Premier has had no standards right from the beginning.

The Premier should not misrepresent the position and say to the few people who are prepared to accept his word—and they are getting fewer and fewer—that there were no standards during the years of the Goss Government. There were standards. Ministers did not have credit cards issued under the guidelines that the Premier has talked about. Under the Goss years, directors-general were not able to put private expenditure on their credit cards. What does the Premier introduce? What is his new measure? It is all smoke and mirrors. It is all hot air which means nothing. It is all designed for the six o'clock news where he gets his quick fix and then goes back to his office and pretends that he has done something. The Premier has not lifted the standards because he is weak and ineffective. He has given no leadership to the rabble who sit behind him and who travel around the world as if it is their God-given right to do so as it is the last opportunity that they will have before they leave office. That is what it is about.

My colleagues and I regularly talk to a wide cross-section of the community. I talk to the business community, and it has no confidence in this Government. I talk to health groups, community groups, disability groups and groups who serve the community, and they have no confidence in this Government. School teachers have no confidence in this Government. Nurses have no confidence in this Government. Firefighters have no confidence in this Government. People involved in essential services have no confidence in this Government. TAFE workers have no confidence in this Government and nor does the average Queensland worker. What did the average Queensland workers get out of the Government? They got Queensland work

agreements which mean that young people who get a job for the first time in their lives are forced to try to negotiate their own pay and conditions. What sort of heartless Government is this?

This is a mean Government. This is a Government that, like its coalition colleagues in Canberra, wants to charge people \$26,000 for entry to a nursing home. This is a mean Government that is prepared to see battlers and pensioners pay increases in fees whenever they use their banking services. This is a mean Government because it does not care about the unemployed or the young people who are trying to access TAFE opportunities. This is a mean Government because it does not care about people with health problems and people with disabilities.

The Opposition had no warning of this motion being moved tonight. I had no intention of standing up in this House to oppose a motion of confidence in this Government and nor did other Opposition members. This is a cheap trick being played by the Premier. This debate tonight is totally unnecessary and totally uncalled for. However, since this debate has been brought on, it is important that we set clearly on the record the fact that not only is the Government not up to the task but it has also betrayed the people of Queensland. It has betrayed the faith of the people who supported it, both in the Mundingburra by-election and in the general election in 1995. As I mentioned before, the Government does not care about the battlers and the pensioners.

I have a list of 120 promises broken by the coalition Government as at 5 December 1996. I table that for the information of members, along with the end of year report on Cabinet Ministers. We talk about a Cabinet, but it is more like Monty Python in action!

When one looks back to seven months ago, one can see that the Government was not interested in providing the services that the people of this State want.

Mr Hamill: You could fill another volume.

Mr BEATTIE: You could fill another 10 volumes. The Government is out of touch. It is a Government that does not care and a Government that is not prepared to get its priorities right. This Government is prepared to abolish the toll in Mrs Sheldon's electorate at a cost of up to \$400m. It puts that money into abolishing a toll with one hand while it cuts road funding with the other. Do we hear the former Country Party members, now the National Party members, arguing about the loss of funds to roads in country and provincial Queensland? This year, \$20m has been lost. All the funding went into paying off the tollway in Mrs Sheldon's electorate and the funding for country roads was lost. When do we hear National Party members arguing about road funding? They are all quiet. They are all wimps; they are not prepared to stand up to the Liberal Party and the Treasurer. That is the sort of lack of priority that this Government has demonstrated right from the beginning. It is certainly not up to the job.

Let us deal with the issue of tourism. At the moment, because of a drop-off in the number of

Japanese tourists, a number of tourist operators in Cairns are facing crisis. One of the major tourist areas of the State is facing a crisis. But where was the Minister for Tourism? Was he in north Queensland talking to the tourist operators? No! Where was he? He was in South Africa looking at rhinos. That is another example of the Government's lack of priorities.

What did we see in respect of the electricity industry? The Government divided one of the most effective and efficient industries in this nation into three parts. The Government divided AUSTA into three parts. Why? It did so because its long-term plan was to privatise it. Why will it not do that now? It will not do that now because it does not have the numbers in this House to do so. If it fluked re-election, it would privatise the industry. What happened in Victoria when the electricity industry was privatised? Who owns the electricity industry in Victoria?

Mr Schwarten: The United States.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right; it is owned in the United States. That is where our industry is going unless we win and preserve the public ownership of the electricity industry. Let there be no doubt that we would do that.

Let us examine the gross conflicts of interest that the Ministers in this Government have demonstrated. Government Ministers do not care about propriety and standards. What did we see in relation to the Land Act? A land grab introduced by the Minister for Natural Resources! He ran around country areas misrepresenting what had happened in this State. He knows as well as I do that he should not have voted in that—

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I find those words offensive. I seek a withdrawal from the honourable member.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has asked for a withdrawal.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw whatever he found offensive. However, that does not take away from the fact that the Minister came in here with a conflict of interest and behaved inappropriately and wrongly. The Minister is absolutely unfit to be in the Ministry.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I find those words offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has found the words offensive.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw. The fact remains that the people of this State will make their own judgment about the Minister's behaviour. I know what judgment they will make. It will be a judgment that agrees with me and not with him. Since the Fitzgerald inquiry, the people of this State have expected standards from members of Parliament.

Mr Hobbs: You wouldn't know what a standard was.

Mr BEATTIE: The Minister could not grasp the concepts in the Fitzgerald report or any other

standards if he ran over them; he does not understand what a conflict of interest is. The Minister has turned back the clock to the bad old days, because he does not understand the difference between right and wrong.

When it comes to delivering on issues such as economic development and trade, this Government is missing in action. Where is the Government's support for the Chevron gas pipeline? Why is it not making the Comalco project a reality? It is not making those projects a reality. The only projects that this Government has seen to fruition were ones started in the Goss years.

As I said, this debate was unnecessary. This Government does not enjoy the confidence of the people of Queensland or the Opposition. I understand that, in these circumstances, the member for Gladstone will vote with the Government. However, let me say very clearly that this Government does not deserve to be governing. It is unfit to govern. It does not understand propriety or appropriate behaviour. All it is good at is turning back the clock to the bad old days of corruption that we got rid of.

Time expired.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone) (7.24 p.m.): In speaking in the debate on the previous motion before the House, I said that I would have preferred to be debating and voting on the amendment which I circulated to the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. That amendment stated—

"That the Parliament—

objects to the failure of the Premier and the Treasurer to fully explore the implications of the Metway/Suncorp/QIDC merger in regard to potential branch closures, job losses and increases in bank fees prior to negotiations with the member for Gladstone and presentation of the proposal to this House;

notes that projected benefits as outlined in these discussions have not been fully achieved; and

requires the Board of Metway to take account of Government policy relating to job losses, branch closures and service provision announced at the time of the merger of Metway, Suncorp and QIDC."

The Premier explained that members of his party could not object to the actions of its leader, and that is quite understandable. I can only assume that the Opposition chose not to support the amendment because there was more political weight associated with the words of the motion censuring the Government. That is fine, because I can understand each of those political angles. However, to say that the motion we are debating now should not be moved fails to give credence to the fact that the previous resolution was serious and it is quite logical that the Premier seek that this debate follow upon it.

This morning, the media asked whether the censure motion would bring down the Government. My response was that I did not believe that it should;

that it was not my intent to bring down the Government over this sort of issue because the people of Queensland deserve better than that, but that I felt that the issue of the process with the Metway/Suncorp/QIDC merger deserved to be debated; that it was important that not only the outcome but also the process be acknowledged.

Unfortunately, I think most people observing politics would say that, generically speaking, politicians believe that the end justifies the means. The public is disappointed by that rationale from both sides of the House—that is, from all elected members—and would much rather have elected members who say what they mean and mean what they say.

On many occasions, the House is required to debate patently political point scoring motions. We see that occurring in particular during question time and during the debate that takes place between 6 o'clock and 7 o'clock. Those debates often do not resemble the reality of the issues before the House. Baseless questions will be asked just to take the opportunity to get the question on record; the old theory goes that, if enough mud is slung, some will stick. Again, that is a generic statement. Politicians of all persuasions have done that at some time or another. It is my firm belief that the community is patently tired of that sort of behaviour. The Premier was accused of moving this motion as a cheap trick. I put it to the Leader of the Opposition that his bringing a dummy into the House during question time was also a trick.

The issue before the House at the moment is whether the current Government has the confidence of the House. As I said, my supporting the censure motion was not intended to indicate a lack of confidence in the Government. When the Government changed, I indicated some of the reasons why a motion of no confidence that would bring down the Government would be supported. Those reasons included gross misconduct of an illegal nature or inappropriate behaviour—for example, the mishandling of funds and that sort of thing.

Mr Elder: And that leaky roof in the hospital.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: That issue was just used as an example. Unfortunately, that interjection indicates the way in which issues are turned around, politicised and brought out in isolation. They are dealt with in isolation and not in the context in which statements are made.

It is not my intent to provoke the House tonight. It is not my intent to inflame what is already a fairly sensitive situation. Again, in supporting the censure motion, I wanted to highlight that process is as important as outcome. It was not my intent to support a censure motion that would indicate a lack of confidence in the Government, and I will certainly be supporting the motion before the House.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (7.30 p.m.): After listening to the member for Gladstone, I seek an assurance from the Premier, the Treasurer and the member for Gladstone

that this no-confidence motion was not canvassed prior to its being moved.

Mr Braddy: It is a confidence motion.

Mr ELDER: Sorry, this confidence motion. It appears to me that there is every prospect of its having been canvassed prior to its being moved by the Premier. The censure motion itself would not have brought down this Government, and the member for Gladstone has articulated that point. But I seek an assurance that this particular stunt was not discussed with her in terms of obtaining her support prior to its being brought on. I might be enlightened in that regard a little later. I say to the member for Gladstone that this is the Parliament—surprise, surprise—and from time to time politics are played in the Parliament—surprise, surprise! She is as adept at doing that as are any of the other 88 members of this Parliament.

When this Government came to power, it said that it would hit the ground running. It said that it was ready to govern. Instead, the Government just hit the ground, and it hit the ground hard. Since day one this Government has been inept and its performance has been poor. Across every portfolio the Ministers have not lived up to the expectations of the relevant communities of interest that they serve. Under this Government ministerial performance is probably no better than it was in the Bjelke-Petersen years. In fact it is probably worse in terms of the lurks, the perks and the mates that have been looked after.

Mr Gibbs: And the administration.

Mr ELDER: And the administration—the way in which Ministers go about conducting their portfolios.

One has to look no further than the first decision made by the Treasurer when she came to Government to realise how one decision could hurt every Queenslander. I refer to the capital works freeze. When the Treasurer decided to freeze all of those projects, she stalled the economy of this State and stopped it in its tracks. The fact that the economy remains stagnant is acknowledged by the business community—the community that the Government is there to support; the community that it says are its strongest supporters. The Government so often takes the business sector for granted. One only has to reflect on the Yellow Pages Index to realise that business operators are crying out for help, but those cries are falling on deaf ears. Nine out of every 10 business operators believe that the year ahead will be worse than the previous year. That is a sad indictment on this Government.

The Government should support value-adding industries in order to expand and diversify the economy. That is another sector that the Government takes for granted. One example is manufacturing industry. That sector has seen a massive drop in employment of 6.4%. There are 11,800 fewer people now employed in that sector than there were a year ago when the coalition came to Government. The Government has walked away from the sector that is most critical to the economy in terms of diversification and expansion. A lot of that comes back to one decision—the freeze on capital works which was imposed from day one. The

Treasurer herself has let down Queensland industry. It is the Treasurer, along with her Industry Minister, who has taken that sector for granted and treated it with contempt.

While all of those industries have been suffering, where have the Ministers been? The Treasurer has been to Paris on at least two occasions. Other Ministers have been to New York. They have been right through South East Asia. The Industry Minister himself is only just out of Africa. All of the concerns that have been raised with them time and time again by the business community have fallen on deaf ears. The Treasurer claims that she knows what they were saying in the boardrooms. I bet she knows what they are saying in the boardrooms, because what they are saying is that this Government is out of touch. It was given the benefit of the doubt and it has failed them and that is it. Over the next 12 months those in private enterprise will be walking away quickly from what they see as an incompetent Government that does not have their interests at heart.

The Health capital works program was critical. Many of those companies that had been working with the Goss Government to ramp themselves up to meet the commitments that were laid down by us in Government have had to send their employees offshore looking for opportunities in Asia or to New South Wales looking for opportunities under the Olympic building program. Many of them have had to downsize because of the decisions that this Government has taken.

Mrs Edmond: And the health tax.

Mr ELDER: That is the other little sting in the tail. The Government delayed the Health capital works program and forced those companies to downsize, and now it wants to gear them up to deliver on a \$4.5 billion capital works program which it has no hope of delivering. For a start, the Government cannot administer it. If the Government could not spend those funds last year, there is no way in the world it is going to be able to do it this year. Apart from that, over the last 12 months the Government has deserted the people on whom it relies to spend those funds. It has forced them to reshape their businesses. Then along comes the capital works charge or the Horan health tax. Because the Government wanted to pork-barrel in Noosa, Beaudesert and Caloundra, it is going to force all the hospitals going through the construction program—those in the electorates of many sitting on this side of the House—to pay a tax. That tax is going to come straight out of the recurrent budgets of those hospitals. That is the type of maladministration that we have seen in this State. That is an example of the poor administration that we have seen in this State.

But it does not stop there. In this year's Budget the Treasurer has struck right at the heart of our future financial stability and security with her decision to borrow \$850m in what she called lazy equity—but we know it was a straight-out borrowing—from the electricity industry.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr ELDER: I take the interjection—stolen from the electricity industry. She has essentially undermined the structural balance of the Budget. For the first time we now have debt in Queensland. For the first time we have a black hole. The incoming Labor Government will have to deal with that black hole.

But does the Treasurer stop there? No! After borrowing that \$850m and compromising the Budget, next year the Government will engage in a sell-down of Suncorp and Metway shares to do exactly the same thing. The member for Whitsunday is right: we will have a billion-dollar hole. That is the legacy that this Government will leave Queensland. What disappoints most of those thinking people in the business community is the fact that the Government has compromised every fiscal protocol that had been put in place right back in the early Joh years. Joh would not have done it, Ahern would not have done it, Cooper would not have done it, Goss did not do it, but Sheldon and Borbidge were quite prepared to compromise the integrity of the Budget and quite prepared at the end of the day to let Queensland down. That is what the Government has done: it has let down every Queenslander.

What has been lacking from day one in this State has been leadership from the Premier. Time and time again he has told his Ministers that they do not go overseas unless there is a demonstrable benefit for the State. Time and time again he has told his directors-general that they do not go overseas unless there is a demonstrable benefit for the State. Time and time and time again they have ignored him. Time and time again—as did the Minister for Tourism—they get on a plane and they go. Because of the numbers in this supposedly harmonious coalition, all the Premier can do is slap them on the wrist. All he can do is chastise them—say, "Tut-tut, don't do it again"—and send them on their way.

The Premier is under pressure from the Health Minister. The Treasurer is under pressure from both the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Clayfield. All of them are arguing across-the-board, that is the Nationals and the Liberals. Honourable members only have to look at their previous conferences to see how distinct the differences in policy approaches are. All of them are at each other's throat and, at the end of the day, it comes back to the fellow who leads them, the fellow who has misled this Parliament on the issue that is being debated today, and his counterpart, the Leader of the Liberal Party, who has misled this Parliament again in terms of the issue that is before the Parliament today. It all comes back to one thing in this State, that what this State needs for once in its lifetime is leadership.

It had leadership under the previous Goss Government. It will have leadership under a Beattie Government; it has lacked leadership for the last 18 months. Typical of the performance of Ministers is that of the Small Business Minister who gets two reviews of his department done and blames everyone else, including his director-general. Loftus Harris was the last person to be blamed for the review of his department. The Minister blames everyone else—

An Opposition member: Did he mark off the rhino trip as well?

Mr ELDER: No. I doubt he would have gone on the trip if Loftus were there. He would have given some sound and reasonable advice. At the end of the day, we now have a report before us that says that his department has been moribund and the Minister says, "Don't blame me, I've only been here 18 months. It is not my fault." That is just typical of the type of management that we have in every portfolio right through this entire Ministry—Ministers who do not take the blame and Ministers who are not up to the task. Another classic example of that is the Minister for Transport, who has taken a roads budget, poured it all into one road, thus deserting his own rural constituency. There is \$20m less in the budget this year for them.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. I will have the honourable member for Capalaba and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition know that our roads budget this year is some \$50m more than last year and \$100m more than the Opposition's ever was.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We are not debating road funding. There is no point of order.

Mr ELDER: He will need a retread after this.

If one looks at the rural roads program, one will see that at the end of the day there is \$20m less than was spent last year. That is deserting the rural constituency. The best example to judge this particular Government comes back to one issue crystallised in my mind, and that is speeding tickets. The one issue that can crystallise the difference between the transparent and accountable Government that we had in Queensland for the six years under the Goss Government and what we have seen now—it has just been an insidious slide with this Government—is the Treasurer's handling of her own speeding ticket. That to me crystallised the difference between what we had in Queensland when we were in Government and how the Government goes about business, that is, lack of accountability, lack of transparency in terms of that accountability and lack of integrity.

Mr HAMILL: Don't forget the arrogance of it.

Mr ELDER: And the arrogance of the Treasurer to say, "Well it did not matter, chum. I got away with it and every other Queenslander didn't." That is exactly what in my mind crystallises the difference between the previous Government and this particular poor—I was going to say "hapless" but that would be far too kind to them—

Mr Bredhauer: Incompetent.

Mr ELDER: Members of the Government are incompetent. I will not prolong the debate today except to say that, if a motion of confidence is being debated and if it comes to down to a vote, the Queensland people should not have any confidence in this Government to be able to look after their interests, and its performance over the last 18 months has demonstrated that.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich) (7.44 p.m.): Earlier this evening I called upon members' sense of

history when I canvassed the motion which had been put before the Parliament almost 12 months ago to the day in relation to the question of job security in what was then the proposed merger of the QIDC, Suncorp and Metway Bank. My sense of history was further rekindled by the Premier's moving this confidence motion this evening. But one thing that struck me as being rather different was that the last time the Premier and the Treasurer moved a confidence motion in themselves, they waxed lyrical about what the new coalition Government was going to do for Queensland, how confidence in Queensland would be restored, and how we would enter a new golden age now that the Liberal and National Parties were again sitting on the Treasury benches. They took a considerably longer period than the three or four minutes that they used tonight when they moved the confidence motion.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr HAMILL: I take the interjection of my colleague the honourable member for Cook because I think it is instructive that when a Government brings forward a motion of confidence in itself, one would think that it would be prepared to debate the issue. One would think that it would be prepared to tell the Parliament and, in turn, the people of this State why the Parliament should have confidence in its administration. But what happened tonight? The pair of them were virtually struck dumb. One may well wonder why they were struck dumb because I suggest to the House that there is not that much to really crow about from the last 18 months of maladministration which Queensland has endured under this ramshackle coalition Government.

Where are all those fine objectives and goals that we heard about in February last year? They have evaporated. As they have evaporated, so too confidence in the coalition Government has evaporated in the wider community. Where were those goals and objectives in the debate tonight? As I said, they have evaporated. They have evaporated in the same way that the electoral support for this Government has evaporated over the last 18 months.

I make some comments perhaps particularly to the honourable member for Gladstone, who has already participated in this debate. I remember about 18 months ago that we had the most edifying spectacle of the member for Gladstone telling us why she could not support the Goss Labor Government's continuing in power following the Mundingburra by-election. She indicated that there were a range of issues, perhaps some big, some small, some perhaps quite trivial; they were all worthy of canvassing in that press conference, everything from whether the high school should be in one spot or another or whether the roof was leaking at the hospital or not. I think probably the most telling point that was made by the member for Mundingburra—sorry the member for Gladstone; what a slip that was—was the recent result in a State by-election that had been held in the seat of Mundingburra, a result which no doubt had had some considerable bearing on the deliberations of the member for Gladstone as to how she would vote if a motion of confidence was put in the Parliament.

I could only assume that the matter which was most telling for the member for Gladstone when she weighed up these weighty issues was that the Goss Government had lost the by-election in Mundingburra, that the Goss Government could no longer command in its own right an absolute majority in the Parliament. I presumed that this was the most weighty issue that was bearing down on the member for Gladstone, that she considered that the people in Mundingburra had cast a judgment, and in the judgment of the people of Mundingburra at that time they believed that the Goss Government was wanting. I respect the views of the people of Queensland as a whole. I also respect the views of the people of Mundingburra as expressed in that by-election. After all, they indeed have the right and I respect their right to vote as they want.

But let the member for Gladstone think about a couple of other things. There have been two other by-elections since Mundingburra was determined and, on both of those occasions, in Lytton and more recently in Kurwongbah, people whose opinions are just as worthy and just as valuable as the opinions of the people of Mundingburra have expressed their opinions and they have been expressed loudly and clearly. What did those people say? They said that they do not have confidence in the Liberal and National Party Government. They said that in Lytton within months of the coalition coming to office with the support of the member for Gladstone.

Recently in Kurwongbah, with the benefit of over 12 months of maladministration from the coalition, the people of Kurwongbah emphatically rejected the Liberal and National Parties. Indeed, I think it was the case that the Liberal candidate—the official Government candidate—in Kurwongbah got barely one quarter of the vote. One in four people in Kurwongbah who voted thought that the coalition candidate was worthy of their support. If that is not an indictment, if that is not a vote of no confidence, then I do not know what is. I hope that the member for Gladstone might think about that when next she weighs up these important issues. Does she consider that a 25% vote for the coalition candidate in a seat which had traditionally been held by the Liberal and National Parties is not worthy of consideration?

I suggest that what we are seeing here in the member for Gladstone is a member who deals in double standards—a member who will take action capriciously to support the coalition. We are seeing it again tonight. After all, what precipitated the Premier's motion tonight? I will tell members what it was. It was a feeling by the members of this Parliament—the majority of the members of this Parliament, including the member for Gladstone—that they have been sold a pup by the Premier and the Treasurer in relation to what the implications were in relation to the Suncorp/Metway merger.

I spent some time going through the Hansard before that debate, and I came across statements that the member for Gladstone made in the debate of 11 July last year. She said at that time that she had received a briefing from the Premier, the Treasurer and some Treasury officials on 23 May about the proposition of selling out the public interest of

Suncorp and the QIDC and potentially throwing it together with the Bank of Queensland and Metway. The member said at that time that she had been given some assurances that there would be no forced job losses and no forced redundancies. What did she say to the Parliament at that time? She said, "I will hold the Government to that." What did she do in that debate at that time? She moved an amendment. I do not quibble with that. She moved an amendment to the motion which had been moved by the Leader of the Opposition. That amendment was to the effect that there should be no forced redundancies or forced retrenchments or diminution in services. I think that was the effect of the amendment moved by the honourable member for Gladstone.

Who seconded that amendment? It was none other than the member for Broadwater. It became the Government's amendment. Yet tonight we have the Premier and the Treasurer pointing the finger and accusing everybody else of being hypocrites. They are saying that the board of Suncorp/Metway should be given free rein to do what it likes. Some members of this Parliament actually believe that, because the Government has a bit more than two-thirds of the shareholding of Suncorp/Metway, maybe the directors who are appointed by the Government may take some notice of what the Parliament and the Government said that they would insist upon in relation to the Suncorp/Metway merger.

Why should members of this Parliament not feel betrayed when the Government tonight says, "But really, it would be outrageous to tell our directors what they should do" and that we should basically allow them to ignore the express will of the Parliament. I am talking about the will of the Parliament as expressed by a Government member seconding the amendment of the member for Gladstone. What short memories members opposite have. And they wonder why people in the wider community have lost confidence in them!

During the 1995 State election, the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, the member for Surfers Paradise, talked about his contract with Queensland. I have had a look at that contract with Queensland, and I could not even see in the fine print that the coalition was planning to sell out Suncorp and the QIDC. But that is not the only broken promise. There is a litany of broken promises—some major, some minor. I want to canvass but a few of them.

What we have in this coalition Government is a group of people who learnt nothing. In the case of the National Party, its members learnt nothing in six years in Opposition. In the case of the Liberal Party, collective amnesia would have to be the order of the day. We have a Government which, last year, came to office promising, for example, that there would be no new or increased taxes. Yet at the first opportunity, it rolled out a Budget which contained a massive increase in tobacco tax, a significant increase in motor vehicle registration, and a very significant increase—a 35% increase—in the bank account debits tax. That is the most insidious and unfair of them all, because the people on small

incomes and those who rely on accessing cheque accounts and electronic transactions to do much of their business are the people who suffer most. That is not to mention the increased costs of attending TAFE, or the would-be additional taxes in relation to oil and tyres which this Government, because of its incompetence, could not put in place.

I think this speaks volumes for the priorities of this Liberal/National Party coalition Government and, indeed—I will use a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition—the intrinsic meanness of that lot who sit opposite. Last year, they made a major tax killing at the expense of those in the community on modest incomes, those in the community who write cheques and use electronic transfers, by slugging them with the bank account debits tax. This year, the Government distributes its largess by providing a \$37m windfall to a handful of taxpayers who happen to own investment properties—not those who are owner/occupiers of a family home, but those who are basically in the business of speculation, including a range of companies and so on—by lowering land tax.

Mr T. B. Sullivan: His mates down the coast.

Mr HAMILL: That is right. One wonders who the mates are. The mates are basically in Surfers Paradise, with a few at Caloundra.

That meanness has become the hallmark of this Government. Selfishness has also become the hallmark of this Government, and that is no better exemplified than by the actions of the Treasurer herself. The Treasurer was twice censured in the Parliament this evening for her part in the duplicity of misleading the Parliament, the people of Queensland and, I might add, the member for Gladstone in relation to the Suncorp/Metway deal. There is no better example of the selfishness of this Government than the actions of the Treasurer in featherbedding her own electoral nest at Caloundra at the expense of the rest of Queenslanders in the shameful decision to saddle the cost of the Sunshine Motorway on the general roads program of the State. An initiative of the National Party Government of the 1980s is being slung back and paid for largely by country, rural and regional Queensland.

Let us look at the other promises that have been breached. Where were those jobs that we were promised last year? In a Budget that promised jobs, jobs and jobs we find that, when the next Budget comes down, there are 20,000 fewer full-time jobs in Queensland than there were when the September Budget was delivered last year. We have a Treasurer who runs around saying that there will be 2.5% employment growth this year, claiming 50,000 additional new jobs, when even her own figures which were produced in the Budget papers show that 50,000 is not the 2.5% growth outcome that one would see if we could believe the Treasurer's own Budget. If we have the most fundamental breach of faith and the fundamental breaking of the contract with the people of Queensland, then we have it in terms of the overall fiscal management of the State. This Government brought down State finances in deficit in this year's Budget despite the fact that it raided \$850m from the State's electricity industry. That was not unprecedented.

What it did this year is what it did last year. Last year it used the moneys obtained from the sale of Queensland Nickel shares and the State gas pipeline. It finalised the Queensland Infrastructure Financing Fund. It used those moneys in last year's Budget. This year it went further: it took \$850m from the electricity industry, but it did not provide an \$850m boost to capital works. What it did—and what the Treasurer knows that she did—was to use some of the money to increase the level of capital spending as stated in the Budget. However, a lot of the rest of the money was used to hold up an otherwise unsustainable level of current spending. She is running the Government on bankcard. She is borrowing for social infrastructure. That is something that last year the Treasurer promised that, when in Government, the coalition would not do.

What will happen next year to maintain the unsustainable level of spending on the current Budget? Of course, the target will be Suncorp-Metway. The heritage of the State, the assets of the State and the taxpayers of Queensland will again be squandered in a big spend up, presumably announced prior to the State election if it is called in July next year. It is bad politics. It is bad economics. If the Government continues to go down this irresponsible fiscal path, that is a formula for ultimate insolvency on the part of our State.

While I am on the subject of capital works, I will make a couple of other points before I conclude. If ever there has been a mark of a Government's mismanagement, it can be seen in this Government's total mismanagement of its Capital Works Program. One would have thought that a Government which claimed that it was interested in job creation might have recognised that the State's Capital Works Program constitutes through its spending about 40% of activity in the construction industry of the State in a year. Yet what did the coalition do when it came to office? It abandoned an Accelerated Capital Works Program and put a freeze on general capital works spending. That ground the economy to a sudden halt. Unemployment jumped up and it has not come down. The unemployment trend under this Government has been consistently upward.

This year we have seen no better performance in relation to capital spending. Three times we have seen the Premier chastise Ministers for not delivering their capital works budgets in a timely fashion. As is so typical of this Premier, he instructs his Ministers to do something and his Ministers—such as the great white hunter, the Honourable Minister from Noosa—go and do the opposite. There is no control; there is no leadership in this ramshackle coalition Government. In the meantime, of course, it is the ordinary people of Queensland who are suffering. Those who rely on capital works are finding that they are not being delivered. Those who want the services—the new hospitals, the new schools—are finding that they are being delayed without any good reason.

Mr Speaker, if you want good reasons why this motion of confidence should fail, I reckon there are a dozen of them. If the Premier cannot defend his Government in the time that he has at his disposal,

this Opposition has plenty of reasons why this motion of confidence should fail, and fail miserably. The Government has lost the confidence of the people of Queensland. It has lost the confidence of the Parliament of Queensland—at least of most thinking members of the Parliament of Queensland. Quite frankly, members opposite do not deserve to be sitting on the Treasury benches of this place. Their track record in Government has been parlous and lamentable. Quite frankly, the Government's performance, whether it be in terms of accountability or any other measure, has been appalling.

Time expired.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth) (8.05 p.m.): The motion moved by the Premier tonight—that the Parliament has confidence in the Government of Queensland—should fail. It should fail on two fronts. Firstly, I believe that the people of Queensland have lost confidence in the Government. The Government talked much about the two-party preferred vote at the last election of 54%, but the polls have shown quite clearly—both recently and for a while—that the people of Queensland have totally lost confidence in this Government. The motion that has been moved by the Premier tonight was moved because the Parliament, the majority of members, censured this Government for not doing what it told the Parliament of Queensland it would do. Certainly on that front, I believe that we should pass a vote of no confidence in the Government and not vote for the motion of confidence.

We need to consider what voting against this motion tonight means. Since the Premier moved this motion, I have spoken to a couple of members of the Government who have said to me quite clearly, "You blokes don't want this to get up, because you don't want to go to an election." Voting for or against the Premier's motion tonight does not mean that there will automatically be an election. If the Premier were to go to Government House tonight and say that he does not have the confidence of the Parliament of Queensland, that he has lost that confidence, the Governor would need to consider her options. Her No. 1 option would be to call on the Leader of the Opposition and ask him whether he has the confidence of the majority of members of this Parliament. Then we would have to see whether the Leader of the Opposition had the confidence of the majority of members. Then we would need to start to consider the matters that have been spoken about tonight, the matters on which I believe the people of Queensland have lost confidence in the Government: what the Government has not delivered on, what it has not done. After the Parliament considered that, we would then have to decide whether the Opposition Leader should become the Premier of this State.

If we consider tradition, irrespective of whether we had a situation in which the Leader of the Opposition became the Premier to continue on in Government, we would realise that he certainly should become the Premier to go to the election instead of the current Premier, because the Labor Party was elected as the Government at the last State election. That is the process that should be

followed. It is not a process of voting against the confidence motion and suddenly having an election in 27 days. The Governor would need to ask Mr Beattie whether he has the confidence of the Parliament of Queensland. Then the member for Gladstone, if she were to vote against the confidence motion tonight—and she has no confidence, because she has censured the Government—would need to make another decision.

I have heard the member for Gladstone talk on a number of occasions about how people play politics in the Parliament. Unfortunately, the parliamentary process is politics. It is about making one's point. It is about standing here and using the processes to make one's point. The current circumstances of 44 Liberal/National members, 44 Labor members and one Independent will always put the weight on her shoulders. I have been here for a few years. The last time that I can remember a member of a political party voting against his or her party was in 1983. It has been 14 years since we have seen a person cross the floor. People vote with their party. There are 88 members who have been elected to this Parliament who play politics every day; it is not just members of the Labor Party. I point out to the member for Gladstone that she plays politics in the way that she manipulates situations. That is the way it goes, and that is the way it is.

In relation to the issue before the House tonight, the Government promised the member for Gladstone something. It voted for her amendment a year ago, and promised her that it would deliver. It has not delivered. That is why we moved a censure motion against the Government. Surely we have lost confidence in the way that the Government has operated in relation to that one issue. We have lost confidence in the way that the Government has operated not just on that issue but on all issues. In terms of delivering services to the people of Queensland, this Government has been the worst Government in history.

Mr FitzGerald: Oh, you are playing politics now.

Mr MACKENROTH: I am a politician. Since I have been a member of this Parliament, this Government has been the worst Government in terms of delivering services to the people of Queensland.

Mr Gibbs: Do you think there would be any deals if there was a House full of Independents all doing deals with each other about who would get what?

Mr MACKENROTH: That is what happens. When there is a pile of Independents in the House, one ends up with a group of them getting together and making a deal. That is the way in which politics works. If honourable members do not believe that, they should go and read the Prince.

As I have said, if the House votes against this motion and resolves that the Parliament does not have confidence in the Government—and some Government members have said to me, "Look, we would really like to have an election. We would like

to see this motion lost. We do not care if it is lost tonight"—

Mr Springborg: Tell us who they are.

Mr MACKENROTH: I would not want to embarrass the main man. However, I would say that members should ask the member for Lockyer, who has been a member of this place for a long time, to show them the Liberal Party memorial toilet, which is where members go when they want their Government to lose. Mr FitzGerald knows where it is.

Mr FitzGerald: I have not been there.

Mr MACKENROTH: No, the member did not go there. His party has always stuck. Certainly, back in 1983 the Liberals ran to that place. If members opposite really want this motion to be defeated, they should send a couple of their colleagues to that place and we will see what happens after that. What will happen is that Peter Beattie would be asked to form a Government. That is the way in which the process should operate. So let us not be fooled by—

Mr Springborg: Given that prospect, they won't be going to the toilet.

Mr MACKENROTH: The Whip is now going through the numbers. He will be on the beepers to make sure that the members come back to the House.

Tonight I think we should be considering one thing, and that is the performance of this Government. If we decide this vote of confidence on the performance of this Government, the Government will lose. It has been a very poor Government. It has lost the confidence of the people of this State. It has lost the confidence of business people in Queensland. One only needs to walk around the top end of town and talk to business people to find out that they believe that nothing is happening in this State and that nothing will happen until this Government changes. I think that that delivers very bad services to the State. That is very bad in relation to the way in which things operate. Tonight I think that all members should consider that and should vote against the Premier's motion.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga) (8.13 p.m.): This is the third time in 16 months that this Parliament is debating the question of its confidence in this Government. The member for Chatsworth was absolutely correct when he said that, if the motion is defeated, the proper course of action that any Governor would take would be to invite the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Brisbane Central, to form a Government and to test the confidence of the House. However, even in the event that the confidence of the House were not forthcoming, in my view the proper course of action would be for any Governor in these circumstances to seek from the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Brisbane Central, as to whether in the circumstances he would advise an election were he to be commissioned to form a Government.

I have confidence in the member for Brisbane Central to form a Government. I have confidence in the member for Brisbane Central to constitute an alternative Government in this State. I do not have

confidence in the Government led by the member for Surfers Paradise. It is a remarkable lack of self-confidence that we see on the part of the member for Surfers Paradise. Here is a man who is so lacking in self-confidence in his own Government that he requires the reassurance of the Parliament. For the third time in some 16 months, this Parliament returns to the question of whether or not it considers that this is a just and competent Government.

The Constitution of Queensland gives power to this Parliament to make laws for the peace, welfare and good government of the people of Queensland. Upon those criteria, how are we to judge the Government, which now lacks confidence in itself and seeks from this Parliament a reassertion of its confidence? How does this Government perform on the great issues of the day? Does it offer peace, welfare and good government to the citizens of Queensland? On the issue of peace, surely that is founded upon the rule of law. Yet this Government is presided over by a member who has shamelessly attacked the highest court in the land. The member for Surfers Paradise should be giving an example to young people of respect for the rule of law. How on earth are we to inculcate in the young a respect for the law when the highest office holder in Queensland attacks the highest court in the land and accuses it of theft. The member accused the High Court of judicial theft. Peace is built upon the rule of law, hence *pax Romana*, the Roman peace; hence *pax Britannica*, the British peace. Peace does not come without an adherence to the rule of law and a commitment from the highest in the land to the most humble citizen that: be you ever so high, the law is above you. It is this fundamental lack of self-confidence on the part of the Premier that brings his Government back to the question of whether or not it can seek a boost, it can seek the confidence, of the House.

The stain of Mundingburra still hangs about this Government. It recoils from the rule of law because it obtained power in circumstances in which the Leader of the Government, Premier Borbidge, stained his own hands in a secret and sleazy deal designed to wind back the forces that combat corruption. How vaulting ambition hath leaped itself, this Premier may seek to wash the blood of that stain from his hands but he keeps coming back wanting the reassurance of this House. This is the Premier who sat around the Cabinet table with the Police Minister and nobbled the Carruthers inquiry by setting up the Connolly inquiry. This is the Attorney-General who sat mute while the Premier and the Police Minister sat around the Cabinet table and set up an inquiry designed to nobble the Carruthers inquiry. The Premier comes back to seek reassurance from the House after this House has just delivered a mighty rebuff, after this House has just branded him and the Treasurer as persons who have misled the House with respect to job losses, with respect to bank closures and with respect to bank costs in the Suncorp/Metway merger. So the basics of confidence in the maintenance of peace and the rule of law are not there.

There are times in our history when to achieve peace it is necessary to reassert fundamental principles of justice. We live in a time when the great

divisions between black and white Australians are being made even greater because of the arrogance and hatred that is peddled in the thoroughfares of this land, and because of the grossly misleading and inflammatory attacks on the High Court and the decision with respect to native title in the Wik case. That has been inflamed up and down this State by the Premier. Instead of building a framework of peace based on the rule of law, the Premier was willing to inflame divisions when healing was required. He was willing to mislead when he needed to inform.

Earlier this evening we heard a magnificent speech from the member for Kurwongbah who identified the issue at the core of modern politics, namely, the quest of ordinary working men and women for certainty and security. Instead of a Government committed to building a rule of law that would establish that certainty and security, this Government has embarked upon a very different path. What of the duty of providing for the welfare of the people? This same Government attacks the family pay packet through its attacks on the award system and through weakening workers' rights to collective bargaining. There is nothing more basic to family welfare than the capacity of the breadwinner to earn a decent wage and to have a secure job. Again, this Government has been tainted by its inability to stand up for the basic rights of ordinary working men and women so that they can achieve a modicum of the certainty and security of which the member for Kurwongbah spoke so eloquently.

Good government is the third great aim that the Constitution empowers the Parliament to make laws to pursue. Good government requires that Government be free from dishonesty and corruption. It requires that Government will not engage in the misleading of the Parliament and the people. Earlier this evening the judgment of this Parliament was that these senior Ministers have, indeed, been guilty of misleading. Is it being urged upon us that we should have confidence in people who, in the judgment of the Parliament, have misled it? That would be nonsensical. I have confidence in the member for Brisbane Central to form an alternative Government. I have confidence in the capacity of the Australian Labor Party to offer to the men and women of Queensland a decent alternative.

It is extraordinary that the Premier comes back for the third time in 16 months to seek the source of power from the Parliament. That shows a remarkable lack of self-confidence which cannot be cured simply by the expression of the will of the Parliament, for it is a deep-seated lack of confidence. It is a lack of confidence that is based upon a lack of adherence to the fundamental principles which make for good government, namely, the simple principle that follows: be you ever so high, the law is above you.

Try as this Government may to wriggle away from the stain of its origins, it will never do so. It obtained power as a result of a sleazy, secret deal and it hung onto power through nobbling an independent inquiry into its own conduct. It will be forever tainted by that action. It may move motions of confidence in itself from now till the next election,

but it can never supply the moral legitimacy upon which good government is founded. This is not a Government which should command the confidence of the House; this is not a Government which delivers peace, welfare or good government to the people of Queensland. Accordingly, I take much pride in joining with the Opposition in opposing this motion of confidence in the Government.

Ms BLIGH (South Brisbane) (8.25 p.m.): It is now 18 months since the Parliament was first invited to consider the capacity of the Queensland coalition to administer the State. On that occasion, not having taken very much time to think about it, the Opposition was quite clear in saying, "No, you do not have our confidence." I must say that nothing has changed my mind in the intervening period. Nothing has been provided by this Government that has given me a different view of its capacity to lead Queensland.

During the past 18 months, it has been my honour to be a member of the Labor Opposition's front bench. During that time, I have held a number of portfolios and I have shadowed three Ministers of the current Government. Although I do not have that much time tonight, when I sat down to think about some of the actions of those Ministers and whether or not those actions could lead me to have confidence in their ability to continue to lead the Government or administer their portfolios, the greatest challenge was in managing to narrow down some of the more spectacular problems and debacles.

In the first instance I was shadowing the hapless Minister for Public Works, the member for Nerang. As everybody will recall, his troubles started when he was unable to attend a division of this House. However, his real problem as Minister was his capacity to deliver on the important issues in his portfolio. He came to the portfolio sprouting that he would deliver at long last to the subcontractors of the State. He oversaw a shonky, demoralised, hopeless review of subcontractors' legislation and, in the end, he delivered nothing. He lied to the major players in the industry, he lied to subcontractors, he lied to the Parliament and, in the end, he was forced into a humiliating backdown. There is still nothing for that industry by way of relief.

The former Minister was completely unable to deliver a capital works program. Over and over again, the Premier was forced to call his Ministers in, to write letters to them, to plead and beg with them to spend their capital works funding. The Minister for Public Works was unable to support the Premier by getting any of his funding spent in the way it should have been and in a timely fashion in order to deliver infrastructure to the people of this State. The member, along with the Minister for Police, was then faced with the embarrassment of a censure motion before the Parliament for delivering shonky consultancies to his old mates. Again, he spent money from the public purse to look after people who delivered nothing back to the public of this State. This was followed, of course, by the Roma Street debacle when the former Minister got approval from the Brisbane City Council to change

what was one of the great visions of the previous Goss Government to build a park.

Mr FitzGerald: The Minister did not, and you know it.

Ms BLIGH: If the former Minister did not, it makes him an even greater joke! If the former Minister allowed those plans to go to the Brisbane City Council, it makes him an even more hopeless Minister and it is an even greater blessing to the State that he is now on the Government's back bench.

I then had the opportunity to shadow the Premier in relation to the administration of the Queensland Public Service. One of his first actions as Premier of the State was to bring into the Parliament a Bill which actively sought to diminish the independence of the quasi-judicial bodies involved in the administration of Queensland. There was no other possible interpretation of the clauses of the Bill that he brought into the Parliament, but over and over again he sought to mislead the people of Queensland. Every time the issue was placed before the public by myself, the member for Yeronga or leading players in Queensland's public life, including the Director of Public Prosecutions, the leader of the Bar Association and others, the Premier said, "No, don't you worry about it. No, it is nothing of the sort. No, it will not have that effect. This is all politically motivated mischief."

In the end, what happened? The Premier was forced into a humiliating backdown in the House! He was forced to admit that his critics had been right. He was forced to admit that he had been motivated to, in fact, undermine the Westminster tradition of the Public Service in this State and he was forced to accept all of the amendments that watered down the legislation and returned some kind of sensible public administration. He misled the people of this State in relation to that legislation in exactly the same way as he has misled them over the Suncorp/Metway merger. He tried to mislead the Parliament then in exactly the same way as he has tried to mislead it this evening and as he did a year ago when this issue was considered by the House.

I now have the challenge of shadowing the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, whose administration of that portfolio cannot give me any confidence in his ability. His administration has been characterised by lies to the Queensland community, particularly disabled Queenslanders and their families. At the 1995 election, he promised \$34m a year for three years to Queensland disabled people and their families and the organisations that support them. After 18 months in Government and after two Budgets, he has delivered less than a third of that amount. That was nothing more than an absolutely dishonest attempt to win votes. He has not even pretended that he will deliver on that promise. His administration has been characterised by incompetence.

As recently as during the hearings of Estimates Committee G, it was exposed that, under his administration, \$680,000 has been allocated to community organisations to accept the transfer of foster care children into the auspices of those

community organisations. While that is a commendable proposal, the Minister went ahead with it without getting any legal advice about the capacity of the department to do so. The funding has been administered and the money has been spent, and he still has no legal advice confirming the capacity of the department to do so.

The Minister is unprofessional, incompetent and hopeless. But worse than that, the Minister's administration of his portfolio has been characterised by one of the worst rortings of a funding program that this Parliament has ever seen. Over and over again, I have brought to the attention of this Parliament—and I intend to keep doing this—and the people of this State the fact that the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care is up to his armpits in one of the shonkiest funding rorts that we will ever see in this State through the Family Support Worker Program. The Minister is delivering over and over again without any reference to guidelines or his own legislation and without any public advertisement of the availability of funds.

The Minister is delivering money from a seemingly endless bucket to organisations that make personal representations to him or, worse, to someone his director-general knows personally. The director-general's largess in the area in which he lives is something that I documented this morning. It has no basis in thorough, rigorous and accountable administration. The Premier's continuing willingness to turn a blind eye to it reflects very poorly on his capacity to lead.

The Director-General of the Department of Families is gradually being revealed as nothing more than a disgrace to his office. In the time during which he has led the department, his own organisation, the Shaffesbury Centre, has experienced a leap in funding from the department from \$80,000 per year when the Labor Government lost power to a stunning \$450,000 allocation in the last 12 months while he has been director-general. That is a five-fold increase.

Does the Premier even take the time to say to the people of Queensland when this is brought to his attention, "Something seems awry here. I will look into it"? No! Does the Premier turn a blind eye? No, it is worse than that. At every opportunity he has had to say that he thinks it requires his attention, the Premier has decided to defend the indefensible. He has told this Parliament and the people of Queensland that that man who is rorting public money for his own purposes is a great Australian. Those words will come back to haunt this Premier.

In spite of all of those actions in respect of portfolios for which I have shadow responsibility, I am now being asked by the Premier and his deputy to express confidence in this Government's capacity to continue. All I can say is that I am incredulous at their audacity. They ask me in the face of their incompetence and corruption to raise my voice on behalf of my constituents to support what must be one of the most hopeless administrations that this State has ever seen. They are asking me to express my confidence in a Government that is regarded as a national joke.

In my view, what we are seeing here is nothing more than a contempt for the Independent member of this House. In her speech to the motion before the House prior to this one, the member for Gladstone said that her views were not about confidence in this Government. Bringing on this confidence motion is nothing more than a stunt by the Premier to drag back the member for Gladstone and to embarrass her. When he stood here in this Parliament an hour ago threatening this Parliament that he would head off to Government House, when he tried to rattle his sabre and say that he would be going up the hill, it was not the Opposition he was threatening, it was his own back bench. He was saying to his own troops, "If you want to take me on, then you've got a lesson to learn."

This is a pathetic and transparent attempt to shore up the Premier's falling stocks. He is a weak leader who, as I said earlier, has had to constantly ask, beg and plead with his Ministers to do what they are paid to do, that is, spend their capital works money. When the Premier was faced with a backbench revolt over the school cleaners issue, he caved in. When he wanted to support a motion apologising to the Aboriginal people of this State for the stolen children, he backed down in the face of opposition from three of his rednecks. Every time he has an opportunity to stand up and show leadership, he falls over.

It is all very well for the Premier to ask for the confidence of this House. Extraordinarily, this debate has been going on for an hour and a half, yet sometimes the Premier has not even managed to have in the Chamber more than three to five members of his back bench. The number of Government backbenchers in the Chamber at the moment is the best he has had all night. I point out that this is an extraordinary circumstance. A Premier is facing a no confidence motion, yet his backbenchers have not turned up for the debate. I do not blame them. The Premier will not let them speak in the debate. How can he ask them to have confidence in him when he has no confidence in their capacity to defend his Government? But I do not blame the Premier for gagging them. If I had to face the prospect that the member for Beaudesert might stand and support my Government in the way that he did at his last opportunity, I would make sure there were no other Government speakers, either.

The sequence of motions before this Parliament this evening presents us with a very clear choice. We can either take a series of logical steps, or we can do something totally bizarre. It simply makes no sense to express confidence in a Government led by a Premier and a Deputy Premier whose integrity has been found so wanting that it warrants the censure of the Parliament. In fact, the only Government speakers who have stood up in the House to express confidence in this Government have given as their reason for doing so that we should give the Government our confidence because it has just faced a censure motion. That is extraordinary. It simply makes no sense to express confidence in a Government whose leadership—not only the Premier but also his Deputy—warrants the censure of the House. To do so would be a patent absurdity. I will

not be a party to such an absurdity and the Labor Opposition will not be party to it, either.

Mr BARTON (Waterford) (8.38 p.m.): I rise to oppose the motion of confidence in this Government, and I do so because there is no better example of a failure to learn the lessons of the past, a failure to provide leadership and a failure to honour promises than the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, whom I have the privilege, on behalf of the Opposition, of shadowing.

In the time since this Government was handed power, the Minister's portfolio has been in disarray, in particular the Department of Corrective Services. The Minister runs like a bull at a gate at everything. He always has an enormous number of projects, or balls, in the air, none of which he is capable of catching or of knowing where they are at any point. He juggles the issues while appearing to be giving leadership and introducing reforms to one of the most crucial areas for ordinary citizens.

As the new member for Kurwongbah said tonight, there is no issue more in the public mind right now than that of law and order. During his time in Opposition, the current Minister made great promises about what he would do with regard to law and order. He has failed to deliver on most of those promises. He is promising much but delivering little, and he is still doing so even today. I want to remind him of a few basic facts, because he continues to run around this State—and he did it again this morning in his usual Tuesday morning ministerial statement—perpetrating a myth about police numbers. He did generate—and I have to believe the figures that he put on the table this morning—160 additional police during the past financial year, mainly by poaching them from interstate and getting himself into trouble with Police Ministers and Police Commissioners in other States. But when one puts it into perspective, what the Minister delivered was 13 additional police per month. Yet he has the audacity to perpetrate the myth that Labor in office allowed police numbers to fall.

During the six years of the Labor Government, police numbers rose by an average of 17 per month compared with the current Minister's delivery of 13 per month. Police numbers in Queensland during the six years of Labor rose by 1,118 additional sworn officers. If one takes into account the impact of civilianisation—which the Minister did not invent; it went on for years during Labor's time in office—in effect the number of operational police increased by 1,598. The Minister has a long way to go yet in terms of matching the performance that was delivered by Labor in office on the basic issue of police numbers. He is running the risk of slipping back to his past performance in 1988-89, when he delivered the grand total of one additional police officer per month for Queensland.

We need to go back and have a good look at just what the Minister's priorities were when he came to Government. His primary priority was to deliver his and the Premier's Mundingburra memorandum of understanding with the Police Union, which included the dismissal of the Police Commissioner and four assistant commissioners. That is documented.

Mr Grice: You don't believe that.

Mr BARTON: The Minister, along with the Premier and some of their other colleagues, including the member for Broadwater, spiked the umpire—they got rid of commissioner Ken Carruthers before he could bring down his report on their activities.

Let us examine one of the other issues that raised its head again in recent weeks in a press release put out by none other than the Minister himself. He claims that some of his old mates, who he admits in his press release gave him a lot of help during the period when he was in Opposition, are now threatening him. The Minister is calling for police action to be taken against his old mates. He promised them jobs for the dirty deals that they did with him. They are still expecting those promises to be honoured. They are not being honoured, and it has reached the point at which the Minister is complaining that they are threatening him once again. We also should not forget that nice gentleman, Matthew Heery, because he was put on the Minister's staff and then was removed. In fact, when one looks at the documentation, he appeared to be off the Minister's staff before he got on. This is a Minister who is prepared to do shady deals and get up to any sorts of tricks with his mates. He got into bed with them, believed their nonsense, ran it very hard, made them promises that he should not have and is now paying the price for it.

The Minister has failed during this period of office to keep some other promises that are very important to people. Every member of this Parliament will remember the debate last year on the transfer of the control of juvenile detention centres from the Department of Families to the Corrective Services Commission. During that debate members from both sides expressed concern about adult cultures moving into juvenile detention centres. We found out several weeks ago that the Minister was very open once questioned—but he tried to hide the information in his Budget documents—about the fact that juvenile detention centres are now to be privatised. Tenders are going to be called from the private prison operators that operate in this State and the other private prison operator that operates in this country to take over the management, control and operation of juvenile detention centres. I cannot think of a better way to ram an adult culture into those juvenile detention centres than putting them into private hands, into the hands of the private prison operators that run adult prisons in this State and in other States of Australia.

We also have the promise of the Minister, along with Treasurer Sheldon and the Government, that massive numbers of jobs—some 40,000 of the 50,000 jobs for this coming financial year—will be created by the Capital Works Program of the Government. In the case of this Minister, of his total capital works budget for last year, \$43.7m was not expended. That is a lot of jobs that did not happen in the last financial year because of the inability of this Minister to get his capital works budget together.

Policing issues are very straightforward. What the public want and are entitled to is increased police visibility as a deterrent to crime. They want police

assistance when they call for it. They want safety in the streets and at railway stations. Most importantly, they want to feel safe in their homes. As the member for Kurwongbah said earlier tonight, this Minister was mainly responsible for creating the fear of crime that exists in the community. He made outlandish statements and made outlandish promises that he simply now cannot deliver. But he is still running around the State promising more and more police that he has no intention of delivering and cannot deliver. We heard during the recent Budget Estimates hearings how he is claiming to have delivered huge numbers of police at particular stations in central Queensland, yet his own documentation shows that there was an increase of five for the entire region involved. That is further proof of the fact that this Minister is prepared to misrepresent his position to the public and to this Parliament. He is again running around—and he did so again in his ministerial statement this morning—making promises of extra police over the next year that are simply way above the 252 additional police that were promised in the Budget.

But instead of getting activity out there on policing issues, what have we seen? We have seen yet another flood of reports and proposals that are nothing more than stunts. We have seen the Bingham report. I must say that that is one report to which the Opposition gave strong, qualified support when it stressed the need for greater emphasis on community policing. But we have seen only lip-service on community policing. We are seeing a scatter-gun approach. We are seeing the proposals for community policing partnerships put forward, but the communities involved in those proposals will have to meet most of the cost. They are starting to rebel against those proposals already. We are seeing ill-defined proposals put forward for volunteers in policing. We are seeing regional consultative committees that are not receiving the support that they deserve to directly involve the community in policing issues.

Late last year this Minister announced that the corporatisation of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission—which was to become Queensland Corrections—would take place from 1 July this year. It is 8 July today, and I have to ask: where is the Minister's corporatised Queensland Corrections? He could not even get that right after some 16 months in office. The staff are expecting it. They are wearing their new uniforms. Instability has been created in the work force of the Corrective Services Commission over the changes that have been announced, but those changes have not occurred because this Minister was not capable of putting all the underlying work into them to make sure that they came forward.

We have a very serious situation in our prisons today. They are in absolute disarray. We have been warned of potential riots. We know that inmates are storing petrol and materials. The main reason for that is the uncertainty that has been created in the prison populations about the possible new parole guidelines, the future of the graduated release program and the delays that are already taking place for some people who had an expectation—who

behaved themselves all the way through—that they would have had their potential release or reclassifications considered by now. That is information that I have discussed with the director-general and deputy director-general of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission because of my concern when such information is passed on to me from very solid, reliable people.

It is not hard to resolve that problem. It is a question of getting the information out to the inmates so that they know what the proposals are. But we have at present an awful hiatus that is causing problems with the inmates of the prisons and causing severe concern among the staff of those correctional centres at this point in time. The Minister has created the instability that is out there right now. He has his on-again, off-again corporatisation. He has the introduction of 12-hour shifts that have just been brought on which have created a lot of fear, concern and instability in the prison work force, and he has the stalling of the new parole standards and the graduated release program. He has not got his eye on the ball in the main game. He has too many balls in the air and his departmental leadership does not have time to concentrate because it is too busy chasing all of the additional balls that he is throwing in the air on an almost weekly basis.

I think we have to have a rethink when we look at what sort of a prison system has been delivered to the Queenslanders under this Minister's leadership—or lack of leadership. We have had the Woodford prison riot where he was warned time and again that that was likely to occur and he had hard information on it. It occurred. What was his response? He did not take responsibility himself but sacked his director-general, Keith Hamburger. We had the Parole Board about which he was warned time and time again, including in this Parliament, about the weaknesses that were occurring. A major problem occurred. His reaction was not to take any responsibility but to sack the Parole Board. He did that while he had the Mulholland report sitting on a shelf collecting dust for some 16 months, which he ignored and allowed to be ignored. Yet now he says it is a good report and that he will be implementing its recommendations. He should have introduced them during that 16-month period instead of waiting until after the community faced a major disaster that resulted in the Minister having major problems, causing him to overreact.

We have had incident after incident in prisons. We have had the incident at Lotus Glen where a shipping container full of alcohol was left in the prison grounds, which resulted in a drunken party and a bonfire. We have had the Rockhampton prison incident where a naked woman was found under a prisoner's bed, and she had been there for three days. We had the Borallon incident where a tractor was left in the compound and prisoners were able to get their hands on it. They started it up and tried to knock over the fence and prison officers were injured when they tried to stop those people from escaping. That tractor should not have been there, but that is an example of the slackness that has crept into these departments under this Minister's leadership.

We also saw the farce of the marijuana crop being left at Finch Hatton Police Station. When I raised it in this Parliament the very next morning, the Minister's interjection to me—and I am sorry it did not get recorded in Hansard, but he whispered it across the Chamber—was, "It is just a couple of the local larrikins. We know who they are and we will round them up in the next few days." We have seen what a couple of larrikins they were as a result of the Carter inquiry, which this Government did not want to fund until it was put under such pressure that it had no alternative than to provide the CJC with the funding to allow the Carter inquiry to go forward. That might not have occurred had we not raised so forcibly the fact that something smelt very bad about where that marijuana crop was stored at Finch Hatton Police Station.

In terms of security in police watch-houses, it is currently no better than the security in some of the prisons. We had the incident at Beenleigh where a truck was put into service which was too large to park in the secure area of the watch-house. Two villains got loose and escaped when the truck was parked and unloaded in the car park at the police station. We had the Townsville incident where five prisoners, acknowledged to be dangerous, one who was charged with murder, were put into a cell which was known to be insecure, and the five of them naturally got loose and ran riot around Townsville for a few days. We do not know who is to blame yet for the Townsville Watch House incident because the Minister is having yet another inquiry. I am sure that he will blame somebody other than himself for the slackness that has been allowed to come in.

With regard to this motion moved by the Premier, we have the Police and Corrective Services Minister, one of the most senior Ministers in this Government and a former Premier, who is incapable of performing his role properly. He provides no better example of the failure of this Government—of its going back to the past, to shonky deals, jobs for mates, shonky mates, rewards for dirty tricks in the past, stunts, broken promises, failure to provide leadership and departments in disarray. He is one of this Government's most senior Ministers and—I stress again—a former Premier of this State. If he is one of the best, for those reasons and for all of the other reasons that have been put forward by my colleagues in this debate tonight, this Government deserves to fall.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Premier) (8.55 p.m.), in reply: I will respond to a number of matters raised by the Opposition by making a couple of observations, but I do not want to unduly delay the business of the House tonight. Listening to members of the Labor Party is interesting, because over the years I have been told repeatedly and consistently that those of us on this side of the House do not respect the institution of Parliament and that we take Parliament for granted. This must be the first time that a National Party Premier has been condemned for respecting the Parliament and respecting the conventions of not only this Parliament but also the Westminster system under which we operate.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member who is so desperate to go overseas that he is doing backroom deals might just like to read Erskine May.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: If honourable members opposite want to play that game, I am quite happy to reciprocate. Any honourable member who has studied Erskine May would know the seriousness of a censure motion moved against any Government, a censure motion moved against any Minister and particularly when a censure motion is moved against the Premier and the Deputy Premier. Indeed, tonight the interjection came across the table from an Opposition frontbencher, "Well we have got two of you for the price of one."

I think that the antics of the Opposition tonight have been absolutely fascinating, because when I moved the motion, what was the reaction of the Leader of the Opposition, the alternative Premier? He said, "We didn't really mean it; it was not that important at all." That was the reaction of the Leader of the Opposition. He comes up with this smart trick to try to generate political instability in Queensland, to undermine the Suncorp/QIDC/Metway merger because he wanted Metway to go to St George in New South Wales. The only policy that we have heard from the alternative Premier tonight is that a future Labor Government would meddle in the affairs of a bank. That is the only policy decision that he has announced. He had 20 minutes; the shadow Ministers all had 20 minutes. Did they tell us their vision? Did they tell us their policies? Did they tell us their blueprint? Did they tell the people of Queensland what a Labor Government would do? No, we got the politics of hate, the politics of vitriol! Of course, once again the member for Gladstone was on the receiving end as she copped abuse from members of the Labor Party opposite.

The reason for moving this motion has been simple. It is that I regard a censure motion against the Government and a censure motion against the Premier and the Deputy Premier as central to the legitimacy of the Government itself. For that reason, I took the view that it was in the best interests of political stability in Queensland that the Government submit itself to the will of the House. What we have seen tonight is just typical of the arrogance—of the conceit—of the Labor Party. The honourable member for Yeronga, who is not a bad fellow, tonight questioned the moral legitimacy of this Government, as he has done ever since this Government came to office.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The fact is that honourable members opposite, including the spreader of venom opposite who interjects about corruption and shonky deals without any evidence or proof—not the gentleman, the lady—have never accepted the result of the election. They have never accepted the result of the Mundingburra by-election. Honourable members opposite still cannot accept the fact that, two years ago when the people of Queensland went to the polls, we got 54% and they got 46%. Tonight

we see the massive hypocrisy of honourable members opposite in questioning the legitimacy of this Government to govern. Tonight, this will be the third occasion on which a confidence motion has been before the Parliament. That is precisely the arrogance that led the Labor Party to the Opposition benches.

What we saw tonight was so typical of Labor. We saw not one policy from the Leader of the Opposition, except that he is going to tell banks what they can and cannot do. Just like former Premiers Bannon and Cain, he is a purveyor of untruths, a pedlar of deceit, and a person who will stop at nothing to destroy the Suncorp/Metway/QIDC merger, despite the fact that he told the boardroom of that organisation that, in Government, he would support it but in Opposition he will try to wreck it. That was confirmed to me—

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Order on both sides of the House!

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I understand that the Premier is emotional, but he is misleading—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will state his point of order. I do not want an assessment of the Premier's emotions.

Mr BEATTIE: The Premier has misled the House. What he just said is totally untrue and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition has—

Mr BORBIDGE: How sensitive we are! We have listened to honourable members opposite call us corrupt. They have called us crooks.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: I tell the truth, but they cannot stomach it.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: The Leader of the Opposition is the biggest political hypocrite who has walked in here for a long time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition has found offensive the remarks that the Premier has made and has asked for them to be withdrawn. The Premier will withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: I withdraw the remarks. I simply say to the House that if the Leader of the Opposition is right, the CEO of Suncorp-Metway, Mr Steve Jones, must have been wrong on two occasions. The record and the reputation of the Leader of the Opposition speak for themselves: massive hypocrisy. He says one thing in this Parliament, and one thing when it suits him, but when he is in a little boardroom somewhere then that is all okay.

Let us have a look at the contribution of honourable members opposite: personal attack upon personal attack, hate and hatred built upon hatred.

We did not see any alternative policies. We saw shadow Minister after shadow Minister engage in the politics of deceit, the politics of hatred.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Brisbane! Does the member wish to be named?

Mr BORBIDGE: All they have left to play, as they drop in the polls, are the politics of personalities. They know that we are doing better in health, we are doing better in law and order, we are doing better in infrastructure, we are doing better in roads, we are doing better in education, we are doing better in family services, and we are doing better in justice and emergency services and other portfolios across Government.

Let us talk about the record of this Government, which honourable members opposite were so quick to ridicule. When we inherited what was left of the public administration in Queensland, in terms of hospital waiting lists we had the worst in Australia. When Minister Horan became Minister for Health, we had over 46% of Category 1 patients waiting for surgery after 30 days. What is the figure today? It is 2.6%. That is the record of this Government. We abolished Labor's regional health authorities. We reopened operating theatres and hospital wards from one end of this State to the other. The Health record of this Government speaks for itself. Labor ruined it, and this Government has made the public hospital system in Queensland once again the finest in Australia.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I will tell a couple of the other empty vessels a thing or two tonight. The honourable member who tried to bankrupt the Workers Compensation Fund said that we had not spent our Health budget. Someone else said that we had not spent our Education budget in terms of capital works. Well, do I have a surprise for them! The figures coming in show that not only have Health and Education—two of the big-spending Government departments—spent their capital works budgets; they have in fact overspent their capital works budgets for this year. So that was another lie. I know what the questions will be in the House tomorrow. They will ask, "Why have you overspent your capital works budget?" I can see the strategy committee saying, "We've got them now. They've spent too much money."

In regard to law and order—what was the wonderful achievement of the Labor Party in Government? It gave us a law and order crisis. Over about three years, and over three Budgets, Labor spent nearly \$1 billion more on law and order to give us 78 fewer police. Brilliant management! What is the record of this Government in respect of police? We provided 160 extra police in 12 months—in excess of our target of 135.

In terms of the legislative program in this State—Labor's dreadful juvenile justice legislation, which was the product of social engineers who drove the Goss Government to oblivion, has been rectified and amended. In terms of the Criminal Code—we now have a Criminal Code that works and

meets the expectations of the community. In terms of penalties and sentences legislation—which, again, members opposite opposed—we removed what Labor put in, which was an instruction to the judges and the magistrates of Queensland that, where possible, offenders were to be kept in the community and that gaol was a last resort. That legislation is gone. It has been replaced by this Government with a new riding instruction to the judges and the Magistrates Courts of Queensland that the primary consideration has to be the protection of the community. That is our policy, not Labor's policy. Labor's policy was to leave offenders out there in the community. The record of this Government speaks for itself.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the Minister for Transport reminds me, for six years we had a system in which the balance was tipped in favour of the perpetrators of crime, not the victims of crime. That was the policy of the Labor Party, and that is the policy that has been reversed by the National/Liberal coalition.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The member presided over it. He was the Attorney-General who presided over a Government that was soft on crime. We had Supreme Court judges saying that the laws were inadequate. The member was the Attorney-General who sided with the perpetrators of crime instead of the victims of crime. Now someone who created such enormous misery in Queensland has the incredible cheek to say that we have no moral legitimacy to be in Government.

Mr Beanland interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Attorney-General reminds me that, after helping to create the law and order crisis in Queensland, he went on to supervise the Workers Compensation Fund. We know what happened there. He misled a parliamentary Estimates committee when he was in possession——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will refer to the honourable member for Yeronga.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member for Yeronga misled a parliamentary Estimates committee in respect of the real status of that fund when he had evidence to the contrary.

Mr FOLEY: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue and offensive. I ask the Premier to withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Premier, the honourable member——

Mr BORBIDGE: If the honourable member is so touchy, I withdraw. He destroyed the fund. He put the fund \$105m into hock, because he knew that that fund could not meet its obligations under the legislation over which he was presiding. He knew that, but he and his colleagues wrecked the Workers Compensation Fund. The honourable member talked about corruption and called us crooks. If a private company had done to a fund what the previous Labor Government did to the Workers Compensation Fund, it would have been facing charges under the Companies Code. The members opposite talk about

decency and standards in Government! The record speaks for itself.

What policies did we receive from the alternative Government tonight, as one by one the members opposite indulged themselves in an orgy of political hatred? Nothing! We heard allegations across the Chamber that we were corrupt, that we were doing shonky deals.

Mr Nunn: You are corrupt.

Mr BORBIDGE: They are saying it now.

Mr Nunn interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Hervey Bay under the provisions of Standing Order 123A.

Mr BORBIDGE: I will not be as thin skinned as the Leader of the Opposition. I welcome the member for Hervey Bay to test that particular observation outside the Parliament following the adjournment of the House tonight. No doubt he can back up that very serious allegation that he has just made. We do not take the member for Hervey Bay too seriously at all. The people of Hervey Bay look forward——

Mr NUNN: I rise to a point of order. I take offence at that statement and ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear any statement that requires a withdrawal.

Mr BORBIDGE: That was the second longest speech the honourable member has ever made in this place.

Throughout this exercise tonight we have heard no policies from the Leader of the Opposition, the man who arrogantly masquerades in this place and the wider community as the alternative Premier of Queensland, the person who takes the people of Queensland for granted. He has had two hours tonight.

Mrs Bird interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member who interjects came to see me today, too, to ask whether I would approve an overseas trip for her. The hypocrisy of honourable members——

Mrs BIRD: Once again the Premier lies in this place. I asked for permission to visit Japan on my way to Mauritius to talk with Nippon about the Bowen meatworks.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume her seat. Before I listen again to a point of order and not a debate, I ask the member to withdraw the remark that she made in relation to the Premier. It is unparliamentary.

Mrs BIRD: With respect, Mr Speaker——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No "with respect"; I have asked the member to withdraw.

Mrs BIRD: I withdraw my comments in relation to the CPA trip.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member wanted my permission to go to Japan. The members opposite are hypocrites. Every chance they get they are criticising the Minister for Tourism, the Minister

for Trade, the Minister for Mines, yet they are coming up to me on the side saying, "But can I still have my overseas trip?"

Mrs BIRD: I rise to a point of order. The Leader of Government Business is also going on the trip.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BORBIDGE: He is not going to Japan. I would suggest that the honourable member go back to Whitsunday and lobby for the rhino park. We know that she wants it; she said so up there. She supports the Minister for Tourism in trying to achieve a rhino park for Queensland. In that regard, we should be grateful to the honourable member.

Mrs Bird: No!

Mr BORBIDGE: Aren't they touchy! They say that I am corrupt, that I am a shonk, that all the members of the Government are rotting the system, but no, the members opposite did not ask to go anywhere; they do not want to go overseas. They do not want this done; they do not want that done. I say to honourable members opposite that their hypocrisy does them no good. If they continue to indulge in such hypocrisy, I reserve the right to bring it to the attention of this place.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Not at all. Aren't they touchy! We have sat here for two hours and copped the biggest load of—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I heard that remark from the honourable member for Cook. It is unparliamentary. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr BREDHAUER: I withdraw.

Mr Elder interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have heard too much persistent interjection. I now warn the honourable member for Capalaba under Standing Order 123A. I call the Premier.

Mr BORBIDGE: We have sat here for two hours and listened to a litany of abuse from—

Ms Bligh interjected.

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

Mr BORBIDGE: The members of the policy-free zone opposite do not even have the decency to allow the one Government speaker in this debate to be heard in reasonable silence. If they want to interject, I am quite happy to let them. There are still a few more members opposite who want to go overseas who have not yet interjected. I am quite happy to take interjections, so they should feel free to make them.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: We saw that today. We saw the double standards today. I had lied to the Parliament; I had misled the Parliament; I had said the most shocking things about the Leader of the Opposition. Guess what, Mr Speaker! He made a mistake, and now they will repay the money. If the

Leader of the Opposition applied the same standards to himself that he applied to Kevin Davies, he would be writing out a letter of resignation himself tonight. The Leader of the Opposition's ride on the gravy train, his sin—and I accept that it may have been a genuine error and that he did not know what he was talking about when he said that I was lying—is no different from that for which he has condemned the Director-General of the Department of Public Works and Housing in recent times. It is no different at all. I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that if he is going to start applying his own standards around this place, he should start applying them to himself. The Government felt obliged to bring on this debate tonight. It is important that the Parliament reconsiders its confidence in the Government.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Well, look who is interjecting: the Speaker who never let us move a motion like this in the six years that he occupied the chair. We were never permitted to move a motion. The Speaker who was the Premier's man interjects here tonight. That these motions can be debated in this place and that Governments have to be accountable says something for the institution of Parliament. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the Premier's motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 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

NOES, 44—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, Lavarch, Lucas, McElligott, McGrady, Mackenroth, Milliner, Mulherin, Nunn, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Purcell, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Smith, Spence, Sullivan J. H., Welford, Wells. Tellers: Livingstone, Sullivan T. B.

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer—Leader of Government Business) (9.25 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Gold Reserves

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur) (9.25 p.m.): Our community is experiencing profound uncertainty and great anxiety. The previous debate illustrated the uncertainty and anxiety that exists in our community. Of course, tonight the newly elected member for Kurwongbah, Mrs Lavarch, also made that point. On behalf of all of the members of the Opposition, I take this opportunity to congratulate the member on her maiden speech. I think that it was

a very important and interesting contribution to this Parliament.

Five days ago the Reserve Bank announced that it had sold two-thirds of its gold reserves. In other words, it had sold 167 tonnes of the 247-tonne reserve of gold that we hold in Australia. What has the Howard/Costello coalition Government done about that? Why has the coalition in Queensland not commented on the selling down of our gold reserves? What has happened to the Minister for Mines and Energy in Queensland? He has been singularly silent on this important issue. Of course, the fact is that none of those people have done anything about this sell-down of our gold reserves in Australia.

As I have said, in the community there is profound uncertainty and anxiety about what is going on. That fear is spread by such a sell-down of our gold reserves. I think it is an action that is difficult not only for all of the members of this Parliament but also everybody in the community to understand. We know that the official position is that the Reserve Bank of Australia is too reliant on gold as a hedge against inflation and that inflation is not the threat that it was in the past. What has been the effect of that decision? We have seen doom and gloom in mining houses throughout Australia. We have seen a flight of capital away from mining companies, particularly goldmining companies, in Australia. As at this afternoon, we have seen something like \$2 billion in investment wiped from the value of gold stocks in Australia.

Of course, we have had to put up with those sycophantic economic writers in the daily press who have even praised the move. An example of that is Terry McCrann, who stated that the more fundamental reason for the sale is that there is no good reason for the Reserve Bank to hold any gold. I think that this decision raises serious questions. The obvious question is: what have been the losses incurred by the Reserve Bank of Australia in unloading its gold reserves?

I think that this action deserves great debate in the community. It questions the legitimacy of Government. I believe that the role of Government is to provide a level of confidence in our community, in the fabric of our society. That is part of the role of the Prime Minister, it is a role of the Premier of this State and, of course, it is a role of the Reserve Bank of Australia. Another question is: does the Reserve Bank have any role to play in the development and maintenance of a significant export industry for Australia? The reality of life is that gold produced in Australia made a positive contribution to Australia's balance of payments. McCrann's argument is that, because there is no inflation, we do not need a hedge against it. Does anybody in this place believe that we will never again have inflation? Of course not!

This is a very serious issue. The history of gold has been that it has been a store of value and an international medium of exchange. I think that everybody who has undertaken any sort of education or schooling in this State would have been taught that. The signal that has been given by the

Reserve Bank of Australia through this sell-off is that, for that purpose, gold is no longer relevant in a modern world. Today, a member of this Parliament said to me that he does not understand this new way of thinking because it is simply not correct.

Time expired.

North-west Queensland Sports Education Tour

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers) (9.30 p.m.): Regional sports networking forums held in both Townsville and Mount Isa have highlighted the delivery of sports education to rural and remote communities in north-west Queensland as an ongoing concern. Those forums consisted of representatives from regional sporting organisations, peak bodies, regional coaching and development officers, schools and local government authorities. The main issues identified included the costs involved to both the participants and the presenters to deliver these courses and the distances travelled and the time taken to reach these communities.

The 1997 North-west Queensland Sports Education Tour was about addressing those two issues head-on through the pooling of resources of the regional coaching and development officers and the regional peak body representatives. In February, an analysis of sports education in rural and remote sections of the north-west region was conducted. Data collected highlighted that minimal opportunities existed for people in rural and remote communities to participate in sports education courses unless they were prepared to travel to Townsville. Minimum participation numbers of 15 to 20 are often placed on those courses. If those numbers of participants are not achieved, the courses are then cancelled. In the north-west Queensland area, it is very unrealistic for some small communities to participate in these courses. On the 1997 North-west Queensland Sports Education Tour, if only one person was available for accreditation in a particular sport, the course was held.

The North-west Queensland Sports Education Tour commenced on 10 June 1997. The tour ran for 10 days and travelled to the communities of Pentland, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek, Cloncurry and Mount Isa. It brought together parents, children and teachers from as far south as Bedourie and north to Normanton and included small schools such as Prairie State School, Cameron Downs State School and the Homestead State School. Families of the School of Distance Education of Charters Towers and Mount Isa travelled into their nearest town to take part. When mapped, the area covered the equivalent of the State of Victoria. The tour spent four days in Mount Isa before its completion.

An orientation trip to the above communities was conducted by Ben Laidlaw in early March. The response was overwhelming, with shire councils, schools, sporting groups, community service clubs and youth groups all indicating support for the tour. The types of activities conducted in each of the communities included AUSSIE SPORT sports expos for primary children, careers in sport workshops for

secondary children, level 0 and level 1 coaching accreditation courses for various sports, a teacher in-service course, sports dinners, coaching clinics, coach and athlete development workshops and registration for correspondence courses.

In 1997, the North-west Queensland Sports Education Tour was jointly funded by the regional sports development officers; the Mount Isa Sports Federation, which was a major sponsor donating approximately \$1,000; and the Office of Sport and Recreation, which was responsible for administering the project. The 1997 North-west Queensland Sports Education Tour resulted in approximately 500 secondary students attending careers in sports workshops, 2,500 primary school children attending sports expos, 250 athletes attending coaching clinics, 200 people participating in coach education programs, 27 coaches and lead agencies participating in and being exposed to the tour and 75 local sporting organisations participating in events. The tour generated enormous media coverage and public support and interest. The tour's budget of approximately \$9,000 clearly highlights the benefits of cooperation and coordination. Estimated totals to service each sport in the equivalent area in isolation would be \$50,000.

The 1997 North-west Queensland Sports Education Tour was intended to provide a model for service delivery to isolated areas. Although initial intentions were purely to demonstrate the effect of cooperation and coordination between sports——

Time expired.

Sporting Achievements

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay) (9.35 p.m.): In July last year, I drew the attention of the House to the fact that three citizens of the Mackay area, Sandy Brondello, Baeden Choppy and Cathy Freeman, were representing Australia in sporting endeavours. I claimed it to be some sort of record for such a small part of Australia to comprise such a large contingent of the national Olympic team. Each athlete did his or her country and home town proud. Cathy Freeman won silver in athletics, Baeden Choppy won bronze in hockey and Sandy Brondello won bronze in basketball. Since then, three more citizens of Mackay have won international acclaim in their particular sports.

Dave Ronald, a staff member of the Mackay Fire and Rescue Service, was named the Toughest Firefighter Alive at last year's world firefighters' games in Canada. As the title suggests, this is one of the most gruelling tests of stamina of any individual contest in the world. Each year, firefighters from all around the world take part in those games and the Toughest Firefighter Alive title is decided on a time-trial basis for a series of events. Full firefighting gear comprising helmet, boots, coats, overtrousers and so on is worn by contestants in each event. One of the trials included carrying hoses up the steps of a multi-story building with a breathing apparatus pack on the contestant's back, complete with cylinder, mouth piece, et cetera. As Mackay has no real high-rise buildings, the ingenious Dave Ronald trained for

this event by running up and down the ladders on the sides of the grain silos at the Mackay Harbour. Such dedication and will to win deserved the ultimate award. Dave Ronald is defending his title in South Africa later in the year. He will leave with the best wishes of all the folk of Mackay.

Just over a fortnight ago, two Mackay women represented Australia at the power lifting world titles in South Africa. One came home with a gold medal, the other with a silver medal. Katrina Robertson can now lay claim to being the strongest woman in history after her herculean effort at these titles. She smashed two world records in the 90 kilogram plus division and became the first woman in any division to deadlift more than 260 kilograms. Her final deadlift of 262.5 kilograms—20 kilograms heavier than her personal best—won her the gold medal in her division, with a world record total of 647.5 kilograms in three lifts. The previous world record was 640 kilograms.

Katrina, who has been power lifting only since 1994, had to overcome critical health problems before she entered this most arduous of women's sports. This makes her triumph at the world titles all the more remarkable. Before taking up power lifting, Katrina displayed considerable talent in discus throwing. However, a serious bike accident at the age of 18 brought her discus-throwing career to an abrupt end. At 37 years of age, Katrina started visiting the Starbodies gym which is owned and operated by a former Mr Universe, Ken Ware. Under Ken's guidance, she was soon in training for major power-lifting events.

Julie Deakin, another Mackay competitor at the power lifting world titles, produced an outstanding performance to take a silver medal for the deadlift in her division. Julie, an 82.5 kilogram lifter, produced a deadlift of 200 kilograms and, as she is very much a newcomer to the sport, her effort to win the silver medal was described as nothing short of sensational.

Last Friday, Dave Ronald, Katrina Robertson and Julie Deakin were given a civic reception by the Mackay City Council. Afterwards, Dave, Katrina and Julie were given a huge show of appreciation by Mackay residents who turned out in force to line the streets for a ticker tape parade. These three world-ranking sports people have had a great sporting culture and background in the Mackay area. Dave Ronald, Katrina Robertson and Julie Deakin continue in the great tradition and prowess of other nationally acclaimed sportsmen and sportswomen who call Mackay home. Some of the sporting greats from the Mackay area now joined by Dave, Katrina and Julie include: in athletics, Cathy Freeman; basketball, Sandy Brondello; body building, Ken Ware; boxing, Paul Lovi, the Moodie brothers, the Taylor brothers and Geoff White; cycling, Jim Cross, Geoff Edmonds, Kerry Meares and Teddy Rodgers; hockey, Tracey Belbin and Baeden Choppy; javelin throwing, Sue Howland; horse racing, jockeys George Moore and Tommy Hill and trainer Dick Roden; rugby league, Martin Bella, Owen Cunningham, Brett Dallas, Ron Griffiths, Elton Rasmussen, Wendell Sailor and Dale Shearer; and swimming, Justin Lemberg.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr MULHERIN: Yes, Dick Roden trained McDougall when it won the Melbourne Cup.

Mr Nunn: He went to Gatton College.

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for that information.

Holland Park Meals on Wheels

Mr RADKE (Greenslopes) (9.40 p.m.): I wish to draw attention to the excellent community work by the Holland Park Meals on Wheels and its request for a review of how the subsidy paid per delivered meal is calculated and distributed. Over the past 27 years, the Holland Park Meals on Wheels has been providing a community service for people, including many elderly people, who still enjoy living in their own homes. That means a lower cost to taxpayers. In 1997 the service provides hot lunch-time meals for five days a week and frozen meals for two days a week. The number of meals prepared is approximately 380 per working day. Those meals are delivered over 10 routes.

On behalf of Holland Park Meals on Wheels, I sincerely thank their volunteers who deliver the meals, for without their help meal costs to the recipients would have to increase substantially. Volunteers are exactly that—volunteers—and they are not just a meal delivering service. These volunteers talk to each recipient and often build a personal rapport with and provide outside contact for our house-bound constituents. The aim to keep people in their own homes for as long as they can cope is a good idea.

The cost to prepare each meal in 1996-97 was \$4.68, and the recipients paid \$4.20 per meal. The Government subsidy is \$1.25 for each delivered meal. The Holland Park Meals on Wheels requests a review of the Health and Community Care—HACC—funding arrangement. As stated earlier, currently a subsidy of \$1.25 is paid for every delivered meal. There exists an inherent problem with this historical subsidy policy. The nagging issue is that not all Meals on Wheels associations actually cook the meal they then deliver.

Those Meals on Wheels which only deliver can purchase the meal from any supplier—for example, hotels, hospitals or restaurants. These "deliver only" Meals on Wheels may then pass on the full purchase price to their recipients and then retain the full subsidy of \$1.25 per delivered meal. It is reported that these "deliver only" Meals on Wheels may then pass on this accumulated HACC subsidy for delivering meals to non Meals on Wheels associations. Surely this scenario is an inappropriate use of taxpayers' money, as the HACC funds are meant to subsidise the final price paid by recipients of meals.

Based on this, a review of how the subsidy is distributed should be implemented. I will be writing to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care requesting that such a review take place and so that equity is delivered to those Meals on Wheels which cook and deliver. The Holland Park Meals on

Wheels would appreciate a new HACC subsidy arrangement which pays 65c per cooked meal and then 60c per delivered meal. Such a realignment of subsidy payments would mean that Meals on Wheels services which cook and deliver would obtain funds for equipment replacement.

I am advised that at the moment no subsidy is available for equipment replacement, which is a large financial burden on non-profit organisations. Such a new HACC subsidy arrangement would help "cook and deliver" Meals on Wheels groups to remain economically viable and, most importantly, provide that much-needed community care focused service to our communities. Therefore, I support Holland Park Meals on Wheels' request for a review of how the HACC subsidy is calculated and distributed.

Proposed Bruce Highway Realignment, Gunalda Range

Mr DOLLIN (Maryborough) (9.44 p.m.): I wish to draw to the attention of honourable members and in particular the Honourable Minister for Transport certain concerns of landowners and citizens in the Gunalda area who could be adversely affected by the realignment of the Bruce Highway to be constructed in the near future. On the north side of the range, the mountain range creates a pocket that leads to a climate which is considerably warmer than that on the south side. That pocket does not experience frost, yet the other side of the range does. The fruit growers have a great concern about the effect that a deep cutting in the mountain would have on the climate, as there is the potential to let frost and fogs into the fruit-growing area.

In February 1996, the previous Federal Government commissioned an independent company, Maunsell Pty Ltd, to develop a concept plan and to assess the environmental impact of improving that section of the highway. That company employed consulting engineers, planners, environmental scientists and project managers. Their tasks were incorporated as part of this study. The report stated—

"The alignment of Route B is considered to have a less desirable visual impact than Route A. Route B, with a 33 per cent deeper cutting, will be more likely to affect the climate and therefore route A must be preferred in this regard."

I turn to page 50, which states—

"If the objective is, for example, to provide a safe, least cost solution with the best economic return but with acceptable environmental impacts and minimal disruption to the community and land use, then Route A should still be chosen, as the cost disbenefits over Route B are small but the environmental and land use impact are significantly less."

Maunsell has strongly recommended Route A. Main Roads officers informed the affected landowners that Route A would be the route taken. On 23 January, Main Roads called a meeting at Gunalda attended by landowners, fruit growers, Main Roads officers, the Federal member for Wide Bay, Warren Truss, and

me. Half an hour after the meeting, a Main Roads officer informed landowners to their great amazement that Route B would be the route taken and not Route A, as they had been advised formerly. These people are asking why there has been a sudden turnaround against the recommendations of an independent company, Maunsell, which was commissioned to choose a route under strict guidelines at some considerable cost to taxpayers.

This recommendation has been returned to Maunsell, as I understand it, for a reversal of its recommendation, mostly on the advice of Mr Truss. Many people in the area believe that this turnaround was directed by Mr Truss, the Federal member, to look after a couple of mates. At further expense to the taxpayer, Main Roads employed SCI Plan Pty Ltd to carry out a further study hoping, I believe, to get the result that suited Mr Truss' agenda. I know that a report has been completed by SCI Plan and passed on to Maunsell. I have also been informed that 10 of the 11 criteria it was asked to study favoured Route A.

I ask the Minister for Transport: will Route A now be the route chosen for the road, as the two companies, at fairly great expense to taxpayers, have now recommended that route? I request that Minister Johnson table the document and move to adopt the SCI Plan recommendations. The State Transport Minister needs to take action and advise Mr Truss to get his nose out of State business, to stop interfering with recommendations that are scientifically based and to not worry about the couple of mates whom he is trying to protect.

Papaya Fruit Fly

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook) (9.49 p.m.): By the end of 1997 it is expected that another significant area of north Queensland will be declared free of the papaya fruit fly. The zone between Silkwood and Ingham, incorporating most of the coastal banana plantations—worth millions of dollars to the Queensland economy—will once again be open for business without the impost of strict quarantine guidelines. Already a deblocking effort has established area freedom for an area between Rollingstone and north of Ingham. This region returned to area freedom in the latter part of 1996.

When the fly was discovered in late 1995, a vast quarantine area was declared, covering most of north and far-north Queensland but falling short of Townsville and the fertile Burdekin delta. To enable their fruit to reach southern markets, growers in the quarantine area have been required to enact strict harvesting and packing procedures, often at significant personal expense. The upside of these efforts has been reports from the southern markets of a high-quality product, which has built on the

already sound reputation enjoyed by Queensland growers. However, the hardships faced by growers cannot be underestimated. Their problems were compounded earlier this year with the onslaught of Cyclone Justin. But the growers have weathered the storm in true battling fashion to survive for another year. The possibility of area freedom is a light at the end of the tunnel for many of these people.

The Papaya Fruit Fly Unit has commenced area freedom procedures which will free an area from Silkwood south from quarantine measures. The effort has commenced with the removal of methyl eugenol blocks, a vast task in itself considering that more than 100,000 blocks need to be removed. When the blocks are removed, an intensive monitoring program will commence from Ingham to a line north of Babinda and west to the quarantine boundary. All going well, fruit from properties south of Silkwood should be able to move without PFF quarantine measures by the end of the year. Planning is also well advanced for the establishment of two new inspection stations within the boundaries of the new quarantine zone. The inspection station at Cardwell will be moved further north to Babinda, with most staff either relocating to the new centre or Rollingstone, which will also continue operating. To regulate fruit travelling from the Atherton Tableland to the coast, another inspection station will be established on the Palmerston Highway.

The Papaya Fruit Fly Unit is to be congratulated on its coordination and implementation of strategies which have controlled the spread of this pest. The inspection station workers in particular have had difficult times of late, with many subject to criticism on a daily basis. They have handled their jobs with enormous professionalism and have been vital components in the control of the fly. Members of the general public are, at large, aware of the need to dispose of fruit locally. The message has also started to filter through to tourists, thanks to a large publicity campaign initiated by the department. While the growers in north Queensland have borne the burden of the outbreak in a responsible and committed manner, the fly's containment saved the Queensland horticultural industry as a whole from serious damage.

I want to move on to the important area of the preparation which is in place for the sterile insect release program, with the department's facility on the Atherton Tableland on schedule. This facility is located at Walkamin. When fly numbers reach an appropriately low level, millions of sterile male flies will be released to breed out the last remaining colonies of this pest. This program is scheduled when we reach the point at which numbers are low enough for it to be enacted.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.54 p.m.