

## TUESDAY, 4 AUGUST 1998

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. R. K. Hollis, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

### PANEL OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMEN

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pursuant to the requirements of Standing Order No. 13, I nominate the following members to form the panel of Temporary Chairmen for the present Parliament—

Dr Lesley Ann Clark, member for the electoral district of Barron River;

Mr Reginald John Mickel, member for the electoral district of Logan;

Ms Lindel Helena Nelson-Carr, member for the electoral district of Mundingburra; and

Mr Philip Gerard Reeves, member for the electoral district of Mansfield.

### COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I remind honourable members that there will be a meeting of the Queensland branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association at 12.50 p.m. today in this Chamber. The purpose of the meeting is to elect a member to complete the three-year term of regional representative vacated by former member Mr Tony FitzGerald. All members are entitled to attend.

### PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

#### Tinaroo Falls Dam

From **Ms Boyle** (49 petitioners) requesting the House to take note of the absolute rejection of Queensland Fisheries Management Authority's advertisement for expressions of interest from persons wishing to harvest red claw from Tinaroo Dam on a commercial basis, on the grounds that (a) Tinaroo Dam is the most important red claw recreational fishery in north Queensland and that commercial fishing would most probably result in a serious depletion of stocks; and (b) the value of the resource to the local economy, as a recreational fishery, far exceeds the potential value of the resource, should it be allowed to be exploited commercially.

### Tiaro Shire Councillors

From **Mr Mackenroth** (183 petitioners) requesting the House to investigate their allegations against the majority of the Tiaro Shire councillors.

### Powerlines, Port Douglas

From **Mr McGrady** (400 petitioners) requesting the House to instruct the Far North Queensland Electricity Board to return to their previous practice of annually pruning the trees beneath the powerlines in Port Douglas or to put their powerlines underground.

Petitions received.

### PAPERS

The Clerk informed the House of the tabling of the following documents—

#### PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

The Clerk informed the House that the following papers, received during the recess, were tabled on the date indicated—

31 July 1998—

Report of the Auditor-General on Audits of Aboriginal Councils and Island Councils Performed for 1996-1997

Report of the Auditor-General on Audits Performed for 1996-1997 (including Universities and Grammar Schools)

Board of Trustees of the Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School—Annual Report 1997

Late tabling statement from the Minister for Education regarding the 1997 annual report of the Board of Trustees of the Rockhampton Girl's Grammar School

Sunshine Coast University College—Annual Report 1997

Late tabling statement from the Minister for Education regarding the 1997 annual report of the Sunshine Coast University College

University of Queensland—Annual Report and Appendices 1997

Late tabling statement from the Minister for Education regarding the 1997 annual report of the University of Queensland

#### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

British Probates Act 1898—

British Probates Regulation 1998, No. 218

Lotteries Act 1997—

Lotteries Rule 1998, No. 221

Public Trustee Act 1978—

Public Trustee Amendment Regulation  
(No. 1) 1998, No. 219

Public Trustee (Fees and Charges Notice)  
(No. 1) 1998

University of Southern Queensland Act 1989—

Proclamation—members of the Council  
constituted under section 8 of the Act  
assume office on 10 July 1998

Water Resources Act 1989—

Water Resources (Rates and Charges)  
Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1998,  
No. 220

#### MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT

The following response to a parliamentary  
committee report, received during the recess,  
was tabled by The Clerk—

interim response from the Minister for  
Public Works and Minister for Housing (Mr  
Schwarten) to a report of the Public  
Works Committee entitled The operations  
of Q-Build.

#### PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the  
table—

- (a) Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing  
(Mr Gibbs)—

Brisbane Cricket Ground  
Trust—Annual Report and Financial  
Statements for the year ended 1  
March 1998

- (b) Minister for Environment and Heritage and  
Minister for Natural Resources  
(Mr Welford)—

Administration of the Foreign  
Ownership of Land Register Act  
1998—Annual Report for 1997-98

- (c) Minister for Families, Youth and  
Community Care and Minister for  
Disability Services (Ms Bligh)—

Preliminary Report on allegations of  
abuse of former residents of St  
Joseph's Orphanage at Neerkol,  
Rockhampton, in the 1940's, 50's and  
60's.

#### ST JOSEPH'S ORPHANAGE, NEERKOL Report

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP)  
(Minister for Families, Youth and Community  
Care and Minister for Disability Services)  
(9.35 a.m.): I table the preliminary report of the  
Children's Commissioner on allegations of  
abuse of former residents at St Joseph's  
Orphanage at Neerkol, Rockhampton in the

1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and I move that it  
be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Trade and Tourism Summit

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—  
ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: Recently  
the Government held a trade and tourism  
summit. I have been greatly encouraged by  
the very positive response to the special Trade  
and Tourism Summit that the Government  
arranged on 22 July at the Brisbane  
Convention Centre. The purpose of the  
summit was to examine—

the effect on Queensland of the  
economic crisis which has affected several  
countries in South East Asia;

the effect on Queensland of international  
media reports on the State election result,  
and to determine a strategy to overcome  
these problems.

Among those addressing the summit  
were Deputy Premier and Minister for State  
Development, Jim Elder; the Minister for  
Tourism, Sport and Racing, Bob Gibbs; the  
Brisbane Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley; and, of  
course, myself. The summit started the  
process of creating opportunities to drive  
Queensland forward to overcome the  
economic and perceptual problems in the  
Asian region which the summit identified. The  
summit revealed the extent of the challenges  
that face the public and private sector as a  
result of the Asian economic downturn and  
adverse international media reports about the  
Queensland election. The great success of the  
summit was the positive approach taken by  
the speakers and the many constructive  
suggestions for new opportunities, growth and  
links with our Asian trading partners.

The summit proved we are a can-do  
State, prepared to go out and make things  
happen. I believe we have sent a very loud  
and clear message to Asia that Queensland  
wants to do business, we are a great place to  
visit and a great place to invest and we are a  
friendly people. I will build on this message by  
visiting Hong Kong and Japan from 17 to 22  
August to send the clearest possible message  
to Asia that Queensland is a friendly State full  
of friendly people who will welcome students,  
tourists and businesspeople from Asia. Other  
Ministers will follow my lead by reinforcing the  
message in other countries.

To drive the message home, the State  
Government will mount a full-page advertising

campaign in publications such as the Far Eastern Economic Review, Asian Business, Time International and Business Week to coincide with my visit to Asia. We need to encourage trade because trade means jobs for Queenslanders. Every time a jumbo jet full of tourists arrives in Queensland, they are supporting about 25 full-time jobs for Queenslanders.

Among the many positive outcomes mentioned at the Summit were—

A \$300,000 State Government contribution to help Brisbane City Council host the Asia Pacific Cities Summit to be held in February/March next year to forge links to encourage further economic growth.

Urgent consideration by the State Cabinet Budget Review Committee for funding to help in a tourism marketing campaign for Brisbane.

The formation of a task force to investigate redevelopment of Brisbane port land.

Universities have clubbed together to produce a package of accurate information for distribution to media outlets throughout Asia and to combat some disinformation from southern universities.

The first Cabinet meeting of the State Government allocated an extra \$5m to promote our tourism elsewhere in Australia and abroad, a sum expected to produce 1,400 jobs and \$56m of extra expenditure in Queensland.

The Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation is developing a Visitor Hospitality Program to encourage all Queenslanders to make tourists feel welcome.

Macquarie Bank is the first corporation to provide funding for scholarships in a new program for talented Asian students to study at Queensland tertiary institutions and thereby develop long-term relationships which will produce jobs and tourist numbers as well as students.

I am encouraging other corporations to provide funding to enable a student from each of Australia's top eight trading partners in the Asia-Pacific region to study here.

The program complements the scholarships announced as a State Government initiative whereby young Queenslanders under the age of 25 will be able to spend six months gaining

experience in Queensland's overseas trade offices learning how to conduct business with our trading partners. The State Government and private sector will pressure the Commonwealth to review existing visa costs and delays of six months or more.

A new slogan to foster Queensland's image will be chosen through a Statewide competition for Queensland schoolchildren. We will arrange coordinated visits to Queensland by senior news journalists to complement existing visits by travel writers. There will be a greater effort by the public and private sector to identify and target emerging tourist markets. We will aim for closer consultation between primary producers and Government to promote Queensland's export capabilities.

All these positive approaches have been complemented by the Government's success in establishing a number of jobs in other areas. I indicate to the House today that 150 jobs have been created through the Burton coal expansion project; 400 jobs will come from the Stellar Communications link which will be established in either Brisbane or the Gold Coast; 3,000 apprenticeships will come out of the construction training levy; and 1,800 jobs will come out of the Goodwill Games when they are held in the year 2001.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Expo 2002 Bid

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: Following media reports in the Courier-Mail in relation to the costs of the Expo 2002 bid, I telephoned Sir Llew Edwards just after 6.30 this morning and then met with him at 9 a.m. to discuss the matters raised. I made it clear that, as Leader of the Opposition and as Premier, I supported the Expo bid which was an important initiative for Queensland and, indeed, an initiative of the previous Government. Sir Llew Edwards briefed both the then Government and the Opposition on the bid and worked incredibly hard for Queensland, and today in the House I acknowledge his contribution.

I table the report that Sir Llew Edwards provided to me at our meeting this morning in relation to the Expo bid. There are a number of concerns about this matter, however, and they do not relate to Sir Llew Edwards or his team; rather they relate to the Government's handling of this matter. The Government did not have the necessary approval mechanisms

in place. For example, Executive Council approval was not sought for the Expo 2002 bid in total. Secondly, Executive Council approval was not sought for expenditure incurred in excess of the delegated levels of the director-general or the Premier. Thirdly, Sir Llew Edwards's contract and subsequent extension was approved by the then director-general. Expenditure incurred in this contract is more than the director-general's delegated authority. Fourthly, the Queensland Audit Office—QAO—raised concerns regarding the engagement of consultants, in particular the preparation and processing of invoices by a departmental officer on behalf of a contractor. I note that the National Party's advertising agency, Kelly Gee, was paid a consultancy fee of \$534,885. I will be asking the Auditor-General to closely examine these financial concerns and when that report is provided to me I will be tabling it in the House.

I think it is important, however, that I also draw to the attention of members certain aspects of Sir Llew's report. Because of the seriousness of the matter I will deal with these matters briefly for the benefit of the House. In his report Sir Llew points to this—

"... the lack of understanding and lack of support from some officers in Queensland Government made the Bid difficult and damaged. Senior officers of the Premier's Department just did not understand or comprehend the mechanism of an international Bid. Their behind doors delays and meetings with Hoko did not help.

Similarly the indecision and delays and the so-called need to call tenders for projects for which it was impossible to call tenders, added to the frustration of the team preventing me as Chairman from spending more time in lobbying. Their inflexibility and obstruction despite flexibilities afforded this type of project by both the Financial Audit Administration Act and Treasurer's Instructions with massive delays in approval (sometimes up to seven weeks) and aggressive and inaccurate letters to me from departmental officers, trying to justify their position and their poor advice given to the Departmental Head by officers with no understanding of the project, made this project almost an impossibility. I only achieved deadlines by either ignoring the demands placed on me by unreasonable, inexperienced and possibly incompetent officers or by having continual arguments resulting in bitterness and further obstructions.

No major project is ever going to be undertaken in Queensland if this attitude and those people are involved.

Evidence can be produced where some of these officers had luncheons with Hoko without ever discussing this with me with the receipt of account for the lunch, being the only evidence of the meeting with no report ever placed on file.

Secondly, a Cabinet submission was taken to Cabinet and approved regarding Hoko land, seeking to gain approval for purchase of part of the land without any discussion with me at any time. If we would have won, this decision would have made it impossible to honour commitments given.

Furthermore, as leader of the team I could not be given a Corporate Credit Card but officers of the Department could have one. This meant that expenses recoupment was delayed up to eight months.

Whilst none of these issues caused the loss of the Bid, they caused loss of goodwill, lower levels of support and meant that time was lost on these foolish small-minded demands of people who did not understand major projects and who indicated that they did not care if this meant the project failing by delays, stupidity and inflexibility. Their response was 'so be it'.

My concern is very simple. Such projects need to be won by this State and I will do everything I can to make certain that this never happens again.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Rights of Victims of Crime

**Hon. M. J. FOLEY** (Yeronga—ALP)  
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: I take this opportunity to inform the House of one of the first justice initiatives undertaken by the Labor Government to address an area neglected by our predecessors, namely to shift the focus of the criminal justice system back towards victims. On 23 July, at the Victims of Crime Association office in Fortitude Valley, I launched a discussion paper on the Criminal Offence Victims Act, an initiative designed to strengthen the rights of victims of crime. Community forums will be held throughout Queensland to ensure that the Government receives a wide range of views on how best to achieve this aim. For too long, victims of crime

have found themselves on the outer in the criminal justice system.

In 1995, the Criminal Offence Victims Act introduced a set of fundamental principles of justice for victims of crime. Our aim, through the launch of the discussion paper and community forums, is to give those principles teeth and to ensure that the principles operate in a fair and practical way throughout the justice system. The principles include: informing victims when an offender is due for release into the community; informing victims if an offender has escaped custody or an alleged offender has absconded before trial; informing victims about the sentence imposed on an offender and the date on which it comes into effect; and advising victims about the progress of investigations—for example, the name of the person charged and the charges laid, the date of court proceedings and any reasons for not pursuing a charge, changing a charge or accepting a plea to a lesser charge.

This initiative is about a change in culture when dealing with victims of crime. Close consultation is being held with crime victims, prosecutors, police and correctional officers to ensure that the reforms are practical and fair. People wishing to make a submission have until 4 September and can obtain a copy of the discussion paper from the Policy and Legislation Division, Department of Justice, PO Box 149, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001. I lay on the table of the House a copy of the discussion paper.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Child Abuse

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: I earlier tabled for the information of honourable members the Children's Commission's preliminary report on allegations of abuse of former residents of St Joseph's Orphanage at Neerkol, Rockhampton, in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. This report is an important first step into a full examination of allegations of child abuse at Neerkol and other Queensland institutions.

I take pleasure this morning in congratulating the Children's Commission upon the report. I say it is an important first step because, as the Children's Commissioner himself has acknowledged within the report, substantial findings have not been possible because of the lack of available information.

There has been much public comment about the inability of the Children's Commission to access files from the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. Unfortunately, much of this comment has been ill informed, falsely alleged deliberate cover-ups and impugned the personal reputation of officers of the department.

Unfortunately, some statements in this report could be misconstrued in such a way as to continue these popular misconceptions. I therefore welcome the opportunity in presenting the report to outline the truth of these matters because they go to the very heart of why the Children's Commission legislation must be overhauled.

The reality is that the officers of my department have no legal authority to provide personal records to the Children's Commission because of their legal obligations under the Children's Services Act 1965. In fact, to do so could expose these officers to criminal proceedings and possible imprisonment. Members may be unaware that officers of my department are required to swear an oath of secrecy on employment to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the clients of the department and the deeply personal information collected about them. Far from a desire to obstruct the commissioner, officers of my department sought to assist in the face of this legal impediment. They proposed an alternative method which would give the commissioner and others legal access to the documents. Former residents could access their records from the department through freedom of information and then provide this information to the Children's Commissioner should they choose to do so.

A total of 176 FOI requests were made by former Neerkol residents, and these have been given priority by my department. Generally speaking, the only material to which former residents were not given access was private information relating to people other than the applicants themselves. All applicants were advised of their appeal rights and, in sharp contrast to public claims regarding a lack of access to documents, only one application for internal review of departmental decisions and no applications for external review were made over a five-year period. Undoubtedly, however, this process is understandably frustrating for those involved and unsatisfactory as a means to go forward into the future. However, it has been the only legal avenue available to all involved.

Both the Children's Commissioner and the former Government were well aware of this

fundamental flaw within the Children's Commission legislation. They were briefed upon it by the Crown Solicitor as early as 13 June 1997. The former Minister, the member for Beaudesert, took no action to rectify these legal difficulties for 10 months. Some 10 months later, and a new Minister later, an amendment Bill was produced, but it was still flawed and was abandoned by the former Government.

It is clear that this legislation must be reviewed properly—and not in the piecemeal way that has occurred to date. At the same time, the policies, practices and training within my department must also be reviewed so that the Children's Commission and its associated tribunals can properly fulfil their primary role as an external review mechanism. None of these basic procedural measures were undertaken by the former Government. I can assure the House that this review of the Children's Commission legislation will proceed as a priority—reflecting my strong commitment and that of the Government to the important role of the commission in ensuring high-quality children's services in Queensland.

I am absolutely committed to a professional internal and external review and appeal mechanism which is both accountable and transparent. This is critical to ensure quality decision making on the delicate issues involved in child protection activities. In the meantime, honourable members will be aware that Cabinet has moved to establish an inquiry into these matters and other allegations of child abuse in Queensland institutions. I look forward to providing more details of this inquiry to the House as they are finalised in the coming weeks.

At this point I would like to conclude by reinforcing my intention that the independent inquiry will allow former residents to tell their stories, that it will examine broad systemic issues with an eye to the future, but most importantly, that this will occur in a way which is consistent with the very sensitive nature of the matters under investigation.

#### AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.52 a.m.): I move—

"That for this session—

Omit Standing Order 123A and insert new Standing Order.

Power to Order Withdrawal of Disorderly Member

123A.(1) The Speaker, or the Chairman of Committees, may, after warning such Member, order any Member who in his or her opinion, continues to be grossly disorderly, to withdraw immediately from the Legislative Assembly Chamber. The Speaker or the Chairman of Committees may order the Member to withdraw in accordance with the provisions of subsections (2) or (3).

(2) A Member ordered to withdraw immediately from the Legislative Assembly Chamber under this Standing Order must do so forthwith, and must, during the remainder of the day's sitting, absent himself from the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

Without prejudice to any other right power or remedy of the House or of the Speaker or the Chairman, the Speaker or Chairman may without further warning but otherwise in the manner provided in the Standing Order as to Order in the House name any Member who having been ordered to withdraw under this Standing Order fails to withdraw immediately from the Legislative Assembly Chamber or to absent himself from the Legislative Assembly Chamber during the remainder of the day's sitting.

(3) A Member ordered to withdraw immediately from the Legislative Assembly Chamber under this Standing Order must do so forthwith, and must, during the remainder of the day's sitting remain absent from the Legislative Assembly Chamber. However, the Member may enter the Chamber during the ringing of the bells for the purpose of voting in a division. Once the Speaker or Chairman of Committees has declared the numbers the Member must withdraw immediately from the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

Without prejudice to any other right power or remedy of the House or of the Speaker or the Chairman, the Speaker or

Chairman may without further warning but otherwise in the manner provided in the Standing Order as to Order in the House name any Member who having been ordered to withdraw under this Standing Order fails to withdraw immediately from the Legislative Assembly Chamber or to remain absent from the Legislative Assembly Chamber as set out in this subsection."

This notice of motion seeks to add a section to Standing Order 123A. When we met with the other parties prior to the commencement of this Parliament, the Premier outlined that we would be introducing an amendment to Standing Order 123A to give the Speaker the power to order that members withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of the day but still have the ability to vote. Opposition members then raised concerns with me, because they felt that that was taking away the power of the Speaker. Because of those concerns, I did not move this as a sessional order last Friday morning when I moved other motions. However, I did amend and change it to leave the Standing Order as it existed so that, under Standing Order 123A, the Speaker will have the power to ask a member to withdraw from the Chamber without giving that member the power to vote. That is the same power as the Speaker had before. However, it gives the Speaker a new power, namely, to ask a member to withdraw from the Chamber but to still have the power to vote. So the Standing Order that is being proposed as a sessional order is not in any way taking away from the Speaker any power whatsoever. In fact, it gives the Speaker a choice that he can exercise.

I believe that this answers the concerns raised with me by honourable members. Members should allow this Standing Order to be passed for this session so that we can trial it and see how it operates.

**Hon. D. J. HAMILL** (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.54 a.m.): I formally second the motion moved by the Leader of the House.

**Mr BEANLAND** (Indooroopilly—LP) (9.54 a.m.): The Opposition opposes this proposed amendment because we believe that the current Standing Order 123A is appropriate. One should not forget that the Speaker can still exercise his powers under Standing Order 126, which is a most appropriate Standing Order that has been

used in this place on many occasions. Standing Order 126 states very clearly that if the Speaker is having problems with control of the House, he or she simply rises in his or her place, members must be silent and take their seats, and the Speaker immediately gains control of the House.

The proposal put forward by the Government in relation to Standing Order 123A would considerably weaken the current situation. The Leader of the House has made some adjustments to allow an "and/or" situation to prevail. Nevertheless, the Opposition believes that the new Standing Order could be used against Opposition members unfairly and to the advantage of the Government. The Opposition believes that, over the years, the current Standing Order has given the Speaker appropriate powers. We believe that it has been used wisely by Speakers and, I am sure, will be used wisely by yourself, Mr Speaker. Although some Opposition members and Government members might not like it from time to time, it is an appropriate Standing Order that has stood the test of time.

This motion represents a considerable weakening of the current position in that no penalty is provided for. The penalty in the current Standing Order 123A removes the privilege of members to be able to come into the House and vote. It is terribly important that a penalty attaches to any loss of privilege in this place. Only through that loss of privilege, namely, the ability of members to vote, will members gain some decorum within this place.

The fact that the Speaker will be able to suspend a member from participating in debates may not be seen as something of great moment by some members. However, the loss of voting privileges would certainly do that. I do not believe that this addition to Standing Order 123A will give the Speaker the ability to discipline members in this Chamber. The issue of discipline and the control of members is important. And in relation to non-disciplinary matters, such as gaining control of the House, the Speaker is already able to do this under Standing Order 126. That is why Standing Order 126 was included in the first place. When there is some problem in the Chamber, Standing Order 126 gives the Speaker the ability to immediately bring control, order and decorum to the House. That is most appropriate and fitting.

There is no basis for this new proposal, and Opposition members are very concerned about it. The term "sin-bin" has been used by

the Premier on a number of occasions. I am not sure whether that will do much for the dignity of the House, especially when it is being proposed by someone who brought a huge dummy into the House and paraded it around.

At the end of the day, members are discussing dignity and decorum in this House, and that is a matter for the Speaker. It has been said that Speaker Turner allowed a free flow of debate. All members appreciated that, because they were able to participate in that free flow of debate. Some may argue that things got out of hand, or someone did something that someone did not like—particularly in the case of the dummy—or whatever. But the Speaker always had that ability, and still has that ability, under the current Standing Orders. It is important to bring decorum and dignity to the House without further amendments, such as that being proposed by the Government.

The Opposition is opposed to this motion. I notice that it is somewhat different from the amendment introduced in the House of Representatives. However, I do not believe that the changes that have been made in the House of Representatives have done anything—in fact, they have done little or nothing—for decorum in that particular place. However, the decision is up to members and, of course, to you, Mr Speaker. I am sure that you will exercise wisely the function of your office. Clearly, the current Standing Orders are appropriate and suitable for achieving control and decorum in this place.

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10 a.m.): I support the comments by the member for Indooroopilly. In respect of the sin-bin proposal advanced by the Premier, the public and the media have been treated to a bit of a con job. We have heard all the talk about a sin-bin and the lifting of parliamentary standards; but, in reality, as the member for Indooroopilly has pointed out, if the amended Standing Order is adopted by the Parliament, we will be reducing the penalty that the Chair can impose upon members who breach the Standing Orders. It is particularly relevant that this proposal was put forward by the Premier in a finely balanced Parliament. The biggest penalty that can be imposed on either a Government member or an Opposition member when the Standing Orders of the Parliament have not been complied with is the deprivation of their vote in this place on critical legislation. Theoretically, a Minister of the Crown could misbehave and breach the Standing Orders and be sin-binned for a

couple of hours, but come the time of a crucial vote in the Parliament—whether it be on legislation or a matter of confidence—that Minister would still retain the right to come in here and exercise his or her vote. All they would have been deprived of was the ability to participate in that particular debate.

With due respect to the Premier and the Government, I point out that this has been a pretty well sold con job. It allows the Chair to send someone out for a couple of hours, but that person can subsequently come in for the vote. In common with the last Parliament, this Parliament will have its moments of drama, intense passion and debate. That is the nature of Parliament itself. The Parliament operates on a very fine balance between the powers of the Chair—the powers of the Speaker—and the powers of the House. I believe that the existing Standing Order reflects properly the balance between the Speaker and the House.

Mr Speaker, if one considers the previous Parliament and your predecessor, one will realise that in some two and a half years there was only one occasion when a member of Parliament was asked to leave the Chamber. Of course, that was the honourable member for Yeronga, the current Attorney-General. That was a rather dubious distinction that the honourable member racked up last time round. That fact demonstrates that, even in a finely divided Parliament, the Standing Orders as they existed at that time worked. It was the discretion of the Chair and the discretion of the Speaker as to what extent the Chair or the Speaker wished to enforce those Standing Orders.

In summary, I support very much the comments made by the member for Indooroopilly. We have seen a typical Peter Beattie con. We have seen a Premier and a Government pretending to do something when the result will be the opposite. We on this side of the House are concerned that this amended Standing Order, if adopted by the House, may upset the balance in authority that exists between the Parliament and the Chair. It is not a strengthening of parliamentary standards; it is a weakening of parliamentary standards. Under the Standing Orders that applied under the previous Speaker, the previous Government and the previous Parliament, if a member misbehaved, he or she was sent out. As a result, that member could not vote and paid a penalty. Under this wimpy, wishy-washy proposal before the House, if a member misbehaves in this place, he or she is sent out, but it does not matter. That member can return and

support the Government's legislation or support a motion of confidence in the Government, even if that member has brought about a new definition of "lout" in relation to parliamentary behaviour.

**A Government member:** Or the Opposition.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** Or the Opposition—I take the point.

The old rules worked well. The extent to which the Standing Orders were applied was always at the discretion of the Chair. In this instance, because there is a perception in the community—and a reality that I accept—that we need to lift the standards of parliamentary debate, the Premier has asked: what is a gimmick that I can invent to make people think that I am lifting the standards of debate in this place? The gimmick is the sin-bin, because it weakens the power of the Chair. It weakens the penalty imposed upon those members who transgress. It weakens the price that members pay if they exceed the bounds of parliamentary responsibility. It does not enhance at all the standard of debate in this place. It just means that the penalty that an individual member will pay will be a slap across the wrist and the right to come back later and vote, rather than a penalty that carries with it some genuine thought and a requirement that that member, if he or she transgresses and breaks the rules, pays the price by way of not being able to vote in what may be very important divisions in this place on a range of subjects.

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (10.07 a.m.): I put one proposition very clearly to the House: if the Leader of the Opposition is right that the old rules worked so well, why is this Parliament held in such low esteem by the community? It is very simple: the rules as they currently exist are not good enough. All of us have to share some responsibility for that. What we also need to do is accept that the rules need to be changed to improve the performance of this Parliament and to restore its dignity and respect in the community. I am not prepared to sit by and allow the Leader of the Opposition to derail these attempts to improve the standards of this Parliament. I gave a commitment to the people of Queensland and to the Independent member for Nicklin that I would do everything in my power and my Government would do the same to restore the dignity of the Parliament.

Let us be very clear about the Standing Orders. This amendment does not reduce the existing Standing Orders. The Standing Orders

and the powers of the Speaker remain. There is no changing or reducing the powers of the Speaker. We are enhancing them. We are giving the Speaker an additional power to remove someone but not to take away his or her vote. We all know that only one member was ejected during the term of the last Parliament. That was the case because the Speaker was concerned about the delicate balance of numbers in this place. The Speaker sought to be fair to all members, and we have the same delicate balance of numbers. Through these changes, the Speaker is being given an extra power to enforce discipline.

Some comment was made by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Indooroopilly about the reference that I made to a sin-bin. Yes, I made a reference to a sin-bin, and I did it very clearly because the community understands what a sin-bin is all about. The community knows what it means. It means that the player is not sent off for the whole game but he or she is removed for part of it.

There is no trickery or games in any of this motion. This is about lifting the standard of the Parliament. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I will be saying to the people of Queensland that what my Government introduced into this House today was an extra measure to improve the performance of the Parliament, and I will have to say that the Leader of the Opposition opposed it. I will let the people of Queensland know clearly where he and I stand in relation to the standards of behaviour in this House.

I cannot understand the argument of the Leader of the Opposition. The powers of the Speaker remain. They are not eroded in any manner, shape or form. He has been given an additional power. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that if somewhere along the line we had eroded the existing powers that the Speaker has under the Standing Orders, then his argument would have validity. However, that is not what has happened. We have given the Speaker an additional power.

All members know that if a member is ejected from this Chamber without a vote, it affects the very balance of the House and it affects the very outcome of legislation and matters of considerable importance. The Speaker retains that power and it would be used in those cases in which a member has clearly and simply gone beyond the pale. This amendment gives the Speaker an extra shot in the armory to maintain discipline in this Parliament.

In conclusion, I have to say that I am very disappointed in the Opposition for opposing this measure, because this was a genuine and sincere attempt to improve the standard of behaviour in the House. We did not seek to ambush the Leader of the Opposition. He knows that. We sat down and collectively had a discussion. Everyone was represented.

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** No, the Leader of the Opposition knows that everyone was represented. There was no ambush. There were no tricks.

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** No, we did not. We sat down in a room. The Leader of the Opposition was represented and the Leader of the House ran the meeting. We had every representative. Everyone was invited to be present. We did not seek to ambush the Leader of the Opposition. At that meeting, it was put very clearly on the table.

In the interests of restoring the dignity of this Parliament, I ask the Opposition to reconsider. I conclude where I started: if the old rules were so good, then why are we held in such disrepute in the community?

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.12 a.m.): I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition in opposing this motion. Once again, in staging this motion we see the Premier getting involved in deals and theatrics just to save Labor's own soul in case something goes wrong with such a delicately balanced Parliament. We have heard much about the term "sin-bin". The Premier used it in his speech this morning. However, can members imagine a sin-bin where, say, Darren Lockyer from the Broncos gets sent off. When the Broncos have the opportunity to kick a goal, he is brought back on! That is what is happening here. Another example could be when a player is sent off, the opposing side gets the ball, and when the team needs its full 13 players for defence, that player comes back on! Can members imagine that at all?

That is what this motion is about: saving the Labor Government in a very delicate situation. It wants another option. Mr Beattie and the Labor Government want to have another option in case one of the Labor members is unruly and there is the chance that that member will be removed from the Chamber. They still want that member to be able to come back into the Chamber to vote.

If this motion is passed, it is going to place heavy pressure on the Speaker and

certainly compromise him. Previously, we had a rule whereby the Speaker could warn a member. If the Speaker thought that further action was necessary, he sent the member from the Chamber and that member lost his or her vote. What would happen if, in one session during the term of this Government, a Labor member is sent to the sin-bin and comes back in to vote and on another occasion an Opposition member is sent out but without the right to vote? That is going to place enormous pressure on the Speaker and compromise the position of the Speaker. I think that is totally unfair.

There should be one rule that makes it simple for the Speaker: that he warns a member and then after further warnings given to that member the Speaker makes the decision to send out the member, who then loses a vote. That is the ultimate penalty, and ultimately it is what we have to consider.

All honourable members who were here during the term of the previous Government would remember the delicate balance of that Parliament and their fear of being sent out and missing a vote when one vote could make the difference. That fear made members behave. Many times, I can remember Labor members being warned and seeing the current Leader of the House saying to the members of his party, "Quieten down. You have been warned." That worked, because the members knew that if they transgressed once more they would be sent out, miss the vote for the day, and Parliament's delicate balance of power would be lost. Today, we are talking about a lessening of discipline in this House—another way to lessen the discipline, another way to save the Labor Government if it gets into a tricky situation.

Much has been said about the public's attitude towards this House and the fact that we now have television coverage of the proceedings of the House, particularly question time. At times, question time is a little bit more robust and theatrical, for example, when the current Premier held up a big dummy so as to get himself on the 6 o'clock news. That is what the public see. However, if the Speaker has the power to remove someone from the Chamber, that is the ultimate discipline.

This motion is nothing more than a theatrical stunt to make people think that we have all this reform and we are going to have this lovely, you-beaut, euphoric Parliament. Ultimately, the power for a member to be sent out of the Chamber and lose the vote has been lost. We know that the Premier has

always been involved in stunts since the day he met Joh down at the back of the cowshed at Bethany. Recently, in relation to an issue relating to Lang Park, the Premier could not hold a media conference without holding a football in his hand, even though it was an Australian Rules football and Lang Park is a Rugby League ground. Here again, we have seen the same thing—all this lovely warm stuff, telling the people of Queensland that we are going to have this new way of making Parliament really good, this new system to make people behave. However, what is really behind it is a lessening of discipline of members. There will be less pressure on members to behave in this place. Ultimately, it is really about making sure that the Labor Government, in a delicately balanced Parliament, has another way out so that it does not lose one crucial vote.

**Mr LAMING** (Mooloolah—LP) (10.17 a.m.): The question before the House is whether or not to alter Standing Order 123A. Firstly, I must ask: what is the problem? I suppose the answer to that is that there is a real or perceived level of disorder in the Chamber or, as the media would have it, poor behaviour of politicians. Before addressing the question, I would like to comment on the role that television reporting plays in this matter. The media is here for question time and at a few other selected times, but where is it when really important debates on legislation are taking place, particularly during the Committee stage? If the media has a role to play in politics, it also has a responsibility to portray this place fairly and portray the good work that is done by members on both sides of this House, particularly during the Committee stage.

What is the object of the proposed change to Standing Order 123A? I certainly hope that it is not to create a tame or lame debate. This is not a debating society. All members want the opportunity to put their case forcefully, particularly on issues about which they have strongly held beliefs. However, we need order, we need respect for this institution and we need to display respect for each other, even if that is sometimes difficult. Perhaps most importantly, we need to regain the respect of those whom we represent.

The question before us today is whether to retain Standing Order 123A or whether to adopt the proposed change. Members who have had some experience in this House are well aware of the provisions of Standing Order 123A. For the benefit of new members whose vote will be critical, I will outline that there are

four stages to that Standing Order. Firstly, the Speaker or Chairman calls for order. Those members offending should take note. Secondly, the offending member is referred to by name and asked to desist. Thirdly, the offending member is formally warned under Standing Order 123A. Fourthly, the member who continues to be disorderly is asked to leave the Chamber for the remainder of the sitting day. Three warnings are given.

The origin of this procedure came from the House of Commons where it has worked satisfactorily for about 100 years. Page 393 of Erskine May states—

"... the Chair is entrusted with summary and expeditious powers of dealing with disorder. Standing Orders Nos 41 to 44 were passed in the 1880s ... they provide a graduated code of punishments for infringements of the rules for the conduct of debate and for breaches of order and decorum, which has been found adequate to deal with all cases which ordinarily arise."

New members might well ask why Standing Order 123A did not work as well as it could have. This morning the Premier has asked that very question. I think there are at least three answers to that question. The first is the precarious balance that existed in this House during the last Parliament and the second is the fairness of Speaker Turner during the last Parliament. Mr Speaker in his opening remarks stated—

"I hope that I emulate what he did during the time that he was in this chair by showing the same fairness to all sides of Parliament and being as impartial as he was."

The third reason is the change in occupant of the Speaker's chair during the course of a day, which causes loss of continuity in relation to warnings. I will deal with this last aspect first by referring to a ruling by Chairman Hewitt in 1975. He stated—

"Earlier tonight a Temporary Chairman gave the member a warning. I point out to him such warnings are continuous, irrespective of who the new incumbent of the chair might be."

I believe we could follow that line more closely in the future. The other two problems apply equally to this Parliament. We have a close balance of numbers and, I am sure, a Speaker who intends to be fair. Perhaps this is just the time to use our Standing Orders more effectively. The alternative, to suspend a disorderly member without missing divisions,

commonly known as the sin bin—this is not, I suggest, a particularly appropriate parliamentary term—is not a good idea. It is not as good as the measures currently available to the Speaker.

Do we really want proceedings in this place to be dictated by the media? I think not. If we have a serious problem with order in this place, then we need a serious response. The only serious response is one that will bring pressure to bear on suspended members by his or her colleagues as a result of that member being unable to vote in divisions, and nothing less.

The proposed suspension provision is almost a reward. The disorderly member would be able to continually interject, raise spurious points of order and even use offensive language, and what would be the most likely outcome? To be sent from the dinner table like a naughty boy or girl but be invited back for pudding! The offender would be able to go back to the office and do some work or speak to the media about why someone else in the Chamber provoked them to the point at which they were ejected.

We should also think about the effect on the whips. Those renegades are even off roster and someone else has to make up the numbers in the House. But when the real crunch comes—a division—they come in to be counted. Some penalty! All of this is known to Government members, so why has this proposal come forward this morning? The Premier's letter to the member for Nicklin states—

"I note and share your strongly held desire to lift the standard of behaviour in Parliament."

That is fair enough. Mr Speaker, if you were asked to be tough and fair on the matter of disorderly members, there would be a very good chance that a Government member would be suspended first, which would mean the Government would lose any subsequent divisions on that day. So how can such a possibility be avoided? It can be avoided by the introduction of the proposed amendment. The proposed amendment is almost a confession that the Government either has little real intention of lifting the standard of behaviour in this place or is not confident of controlling its own members and Ministers. What should we do today? First, Mr Speaker, every one of us should take seriously your opening remarks of last Tuesday, when you said—

"The eyes of Australia will be focused on this Parliament, and if we are to

restore public faith in the parliamentary process it is important that we strive to maintain a standard of dignity and statesmanship."

They are very fine words and I endorse them entirely. Second, we should all accept the real intention of Standing Order 123A and recognise that it has adequate warning provisions, regardless of the delicate balance of this Parliament. I quote again from Erskine May. Page 394 states—

"When any Member transgresses the rules of debate ... or makes any noise or disturbance whilst another Member is speaking, or commits any other breach of order or decorum ... it is the duty of the Speaker, if in his judgment the occasion demands it, to intervene and call the Member to order, or direct him to resume his seat. If he persists in his disorderly conduct it becomes the duty of the Speaker to take the action set forth in Standing Order No 42 ..."

Of course, that Standing Order is a House of Commons Standing Order. The course of action is obvious: maintain, use and accept the current provisions of Standing Order 123A. Finally, I refer to the Premier's comment that this is an added power for the Speaker. That is like telling a person who is buying a new car that in addition to a fully inflated spare tyre in the boot they also have a flat one.

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—ONP) (10.25 a.m.): One Nation opposes this motion on the grounds that it does not coincide with the Premier's stance on improving the decorum of this House. I agree with statements made today by members of the Opposition. The only way to improve the decorum of this House is to get tough in the use of Standing Order 123A, using it to the fullest extent in ejecting members of the House so that they cannot vote.

We all agree that this House is on a razor's edge in that our numbers are finely balanced. The only way punishment can be seen to be meted out is by the ejection of members so that they cannot vote. Members of the Opposition would accept that—and I would say that those in the Government would as well—because they want to see the public's faith in this House restored. I do not believe that the amendment to Standing Order 123A will do this because, in reality—let us talk about reality—it could be misused, as members of the Opposition have said. Though One Nation would support any changes that would see the decorum of this House

improved, we will not support this change because we do not believe it will do that.

**Mr ELLIOTT** (Cunningham—NPA) (10.26 a.m.): During the time I have been a member of this House, I have been thrown out of the Chamber only once.

**Mr Veivers:** That was an honest mistake.

**Mr ELLIOTT:** Yes, the honourable member was making a noise behind me. In fact, that situation was a fairly emotional one. I accept that that day I probably went a bit beyond the bounds. This amendment is not the way to go about lifting the standards in this place. I suggest that this provision would make things easier for those who want to grandstand. Over the years members on both sides of the House have seen such people in action. They actually had themselves thrown out because they wanted to go to the media and say how badly done by they were, that the Speaker was over the top, that the Government was being unreasonable and all of these sorts of things.

I suggest that the Government is playing into the hands of those who want to play games in this place by trying to grandstand to the media. If this proposal is adopted, those people will be able to do that and not even lose their ability to vote in divisions. To implement this provision would be a total mistake. If we did, we would be going down the wrong track. By properly exercising the provisions of Standing Order 123A, the Speaker has all the tools necessary to control this House. In the end, I think those in the Government will see that this sort of provision, if its use is not kept under very tight rein, will bring us more ridicule from the public. I believe that this is not the right way to go, and I urge the Government not to take this decision.

**Question**—That Mr Mackenroth's motion be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

**AYES, 44**—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. I. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, McGrady, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

**NOES, 44**—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### Workers Compensation

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (10.34 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"That this House—

- (1) notes the financial circumstances of the workers compensation system when the Coalition Government assumed office in February 1996;
- (2) notes the reforms to workers compensation implemented by the Coalition Government;
- (3) acknowledges the significant improvement in the financial state of the WorkCover system during the Coalition's term of government;
- (4) views with great concern the policies of the Beattie Labor Government in relation to WorkCover and the devastating impact these policies will have on Queensland business, including small business, if implemented, including increased premiums and redundancies; and
- (5) calls on the Government to meet the financial commitments to WorkCover as contained in the 1998-99 Coalition State Budget (i.e., \$35m)."

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Senior Public Service Vacancies

**Mr BORBIDGE** (10.35 a.m.): I refer the Premier to a recently published directive in the Queensland Government Gazette of 24 July 1998 which relates to the requirement to advertise Public Service vacancies in that same journal, and I ask: why has the Premier's Government specifically exempted the positions of director-general and the Public Service Commissioner from this requirement for the positions to be advertised? Secondly, how does he reconcile this with the requirements of the Public Service Act, which states that positions must be filled on merit, when the fact is that he does not intend to let people and the market know that a vacancy even exists?

**Mr BEATTIE:** As I have indicated, those positions will be filled on the basis of merit. People who had previously been appointed to the position of director-general on the basis of

merit were eligible for reappointment, which is exactly how it is being done. If they had previously been appointed to one of those positions, they will be entitled to be reappointed; they have gone through a merit selection process and they were appointed on merit. It is that simple. Those who do not fit within that category will have their positions advertised. A number of those positions are now in the process of being advertised, such as that for Public Works and Housing. There is a string of them. That is the clear position.

The second thing that I will say while I have the opportunity is that there has been some discussion in relation to five-year contracts—a matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I am happy to say that my strategy in relation to five-year contracts fits perfectly within the coalition's 1996 Public Service Act, which states in section 53(4)(a) that such a contract must state "a term of appointment of not longer than 5 years". In other words, what I have done is exactly what the former Premier's Act allows me to do, that is, to appoint directors-general for a period of five years. His Act allowed it. It is under his Act that I am acting and making an appointment.

At the 13 June election, I went to the people with a clear commitment that our directors-general would be appointed on a five-year term. As I have pointed out, under the former Premier's very Act this five-year appointment is an option that he laid down for us. This brings Queensland in line with the Federal Government and every other State Government, where this has been the norm for about 20 years. Every other coalition party in Australia, every other State Government and the Commonwealth Government support five-year terms. I am determined to get the best directors-general for this State to drive it in the way in which it is entitled to be driven. We will deliver. These are people running billion-dollar budgets. We will have the best to do the best for Queensland.

### Senior Public Service Vacancies

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I direct a further question to the Premier. I remind him of his public comments made in Sector-Wide in September 1996, when he said—

"The decision of the Borbidge Government to make CEO contracts only 'for the term of the government' is welcome.

But does it go far enough?"

I also remind him of his comment—

"As with CEOs, such appointees should leave office immediately upon a change of government—and without a big payout from long-suffering taxpayers."

Those were the Premier's own words from Sector-Wide in September 1996. I refer to media reports that the Premier intends to raise the salary level of most senior bureaucrats, in some cases to as high as \$190,000 per year. I note also that he intends to sign these people to five-year contracts despite these previously given public assurances in Sector-Wide, the Public Service magazine, and also his suggestion that upon a change of Government these people should leave without a big payout from long-suffering taxpayers—his words, not mine—and I ask: can he assure the House that he does not intend also to upgrade residual payments for early termination of contracts so that in the event of a change of Government Labor Party appointees would reap an even bigger taxpayer-funded golden handshake?

**Mr BEATTIE:** The Leader of the Opposition knows as well as I do that the article to which he referred was referring to his Government. I recall the article very well. I come back to what I said before. The former Premier's Act of Parliament—

**Mr Borbidge:** You said what you'd do.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am happy to answer the Leader of the Opposition's question, and I will do that in detail. He has raised the issue of five-year terms. I refer him to his own legislation. This is not my legislation; this is the former Premier's own legislation which he brought into this House. That legislation said in section 53(4)(a) that such a contract must state a term of appointment of no longer than five years. That is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition brought in. That is a law of Queensland that he brought in. Under his law, I am appointing people for five years. That is under his law. That is the first thing. Let us not be hypocritical about it; it is his Act of Parliament, his law.

The second thing is that I went to the people of Queensland with a clear commitment. There is no surprise about this—absolutely none. I table for the information of the House a New Directions Statement for the Public Service, which I released on 18 April 1997. In that document I stated that directors-general will be appointed on merit with contracts for five years. There is the commitment on which I went to the people. There is no surprise in any of this. That was the commitment on which I went to the people. I say to the Leader of the

Opposition that, not only was it my commitment, but I am doing this under his Act which enabled five-year appointments.

What are we saying here? That under the former Premier's Act, he was able to do it, but that I should not do it? He knows as well as I do that his party came to Government part way through a term as a result of a by-election. It is a totally different scenario to a new Government elected for a full term. It is a totally different scenario. His Government came in after seven months, and he knows it. There is a clear difference between a Government with a full term and one that comes in as a result of a by-election.

**Mr Borbidge:** You said they should expire with the Government—your words.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am happy to answer the question of the Leader of the Opposition. He knows that that was in 1996 and he knows that that was in response to his Government. I state again that five years—

**Mr Borbidge:** June 1998.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The Leader of the Opposition made reference to 1996 earlier. My position is very clear. That is what I went to the people on. That is a New Directions Statement. I tabled them all in this House. The whole community knew exactly what I stood for. It is in black and white, and I table that statement for everyone to see.

In terms of the Public Service, let us come back to the other issues that the Leader of the Opposition raised in this House. He is saying that I should not do what he said in his Act is possible; he is saying that I should not do what has happened for the past 20 years in every Government in Australia. His Federal coalition partners and his coalition partners in every other State support five-year contracts. He has to say to himself that, if he wants the best people to do the job, he has to get the best and pay them.

Time expired.

### Tax Reform Package

**Mr SULLIVAN:** I refer the Premier to the Federal coalition Government's so-called tax plan, and I ask: has he received a briefing from the Prime Minister on this package, which reportedly includes a goods and services tax on food?

**Mr BEATTIE:** No, we have not received a briefing from the Prime Minister on the tax package, and I note from media reports that it will be released next week. I express my disappointment to the House that we have not

received such a briefing. The reason for that is very simple. I am concerned that a goods and services tax will have a massive impact on the budget of ordinary Queenslanders. That is what will happen. Every time they go to a supermarket, they are going to end up with an extra 10% slug on their food bill. They do not have any options with food. Everyone has to eat food; it is a basic human requirement.

Here is a Federal Government that wants to tax people an extra 10% on food; it wants to hit people with an extra 10%. I am disappointed about it. It is a slug not only on ordinary families but on fixed income earners as well. What happens to the pensioners and self-funded retirees, who do not get any extra money but will be slugged an extra 10%?

What about the tourism industry, the second-biggest industry in this State? The tax plan will mean that every one of the charges and costs is going to go up. It will also mean that we are going to become less competitive in every major market, whether it is Japan, Europe or the United States. We are lucky at the moment because of the state of the Australian dollar. That is the only reason why our tourism industry has held up in a number of areas. Tourism operators from one end of this State to the other have told the Minister for Tourism and me that they are totally opposed to a GST because it is going to make them less competitive. If one looks at major markets such as Japan, one will see that we are not the only destination in this region. Hawaii is very competitive and so are a number of other destinations. A 10% goods and services tax will have a significant impact on the economy of this State as well as on individuals.

Another issue of some concern is that we have not been briefed—and I should just digress and say that the Treasurer and I will be seeking a meeting with the Prime Minister prior to the release of the Federal Government's tax package on 13 August. I urge the Prime Minister to not only meet with us, but to be fulsome in his commitment in terms of this document. The other real concern about this tax package is what will happen to the States. What will happen to our income? The Federal Government is taking away a number of the States' income sources. We need a guaranteed share of Federal tax revenue to provide education, health, aged care services and police services. Unless we get a guaranteed share of Federal tax revenue, we will not be able to provide those services. That is what the Treasurer and I will be raising with the Prime Minister. As well as that, we want to see changes to specific purpose payments.

The States need more flexibility in how they use the funds that come from the Commonwealth. This package is not in the national interest.

### Ethics Code of Conduct

**Dr WATSON:** I refer the Premier to the fact that last year he proposed an eight-point code of conduct designed to return ethics and honesty to Government. He said that former Ministers and senior public servants should not be allowed to take jobs in companies with which they had direct dealings while in office. In light of the Premier's ethical stand on people going from Government jobs to such companies, could he please inform the House where he stands on the question of people coming into Government jobs from such companies? In particular, I ask: is it appropriate for somebody to be appointed to a key Government job when that person has had previous association with a company which will have major dealings with the department or portfolio to which the person is being appointed?

**Mr BEATTIE:** I do not know the details or the basis behind the honourable member's question. I am quite happy to discuss with him either at the end of this session or any other time any ethical issues that he wishes to raise in relation to my Ministers, senior public servants or people who seek employment within the Government. When it comes to these issues, I have set the highest possible standards, and I will not compromise on those standards. If the Leader of the Liberal Party has issues that he wants to raise with me either in detail here—that is a general question and he knows it—let us have the specifics. If he has specific matters—

**An Opposition member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am not getting into hypothetical questions. He never answered them, neither will I. The former Premier did not and neither will I. If the member opposite has a specific issue—

**Dr Watson:** A philosophical question.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I am all into philosophy and I can see that we both need a bit more of it. If there are specific issues in relation to conflict of interest or the employment of a particular person, I would be happy to respond to them. If the details are provided to the House or if the honourable Leader of the Liberal Party wants to provide them to me privately, I am happy to deal with those issues and report here in the House. I have no difficulties with that. The eight-point plan that I released for all

Queenslanders to see is an eight-point plan that I stand right behind.

### Chevron Gas Pipeline

**Mr PURCELL:** I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can he inform the House about progress on a possible gas pipeline between Papua New Guinea and Gladstone?

**Mr ELDER:** We have made the PNG gas pipeline our No. 1 priority. We made no secret of that either during the election campaign or since I entered this Ministry. This project means 5,000 construction jobs and 2,500 ongoing operational jobs which are involved with projects associated with the gas pipeline. It means \$8.1 billion worth of investment to the State of Queensland. It provides significant regional development opportunities and also, I might add, it benefits us in terms of our greenhouse gas outcomes.

I have to say that the former Government's decision to move ahead with coal-fired options, particularly at Callide and Tarong, put this project in some jeopardy. It also puts in jeopardy the Comalco refinery that is part of the package. It threatens those jobs and it threatens those investments. What we have been doing since day one—

**Mr Borbidge:** They are not going to sign off.

**Mr ELDER:** There is no rubbish about it. I have spoken to the proponents from day one. These projects are put in jeopardy by the former Government's decisions in relation to the coal-fired options. This Government will do everything in its power to see that these projects come to fruition and that the regional development and value-adding opportunities of this pipeline are available for all communities between Gladstone and far-north Queensland. We will ensure that the 5,000 jobs involved with the construction, the 2,500 operational jobs and the \$8 billion in ongoing investment are secured for this State.

Comalco is an important component of the project because the gas fires up the refinery. On coming to Government, I found that Comalco was looking at a site in January and February 1996. Two and a half years later that issue has still not been resolved. Under the former Government those two projects were simply sitting there.

Three minutes is not sufficient time to cover all these aspects, but I hope that I will receive another question on the subject. I am disappointed with the attitude of members of the coalition in relation to this project. The

Federal member for Wide Bay, the Minister for Customs and Excise, says that he does not support the project. When he was Minister for Environment, the member for Western Downs was supportive of it because of its greenhouse gas outcomes; yet during the motion of confidence in the House last week he said that there was nothing in it for him.

**Mr Littleproud:** I am representing the people of Western Downs.

**Mr ELDER:** That is why people have a dim view of politicians. Those opposite play politics on issues that are so important. This is not a question of sneaking around like the Sneak of the Remove when it comes to these types of things. When one makes a commitment to a project, one makes a commitment to that project and does not then go into Opposition and seek to undermine the project.

Time expired.

#### **Director-General, Department of State Development**

**Mr HORAN:** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade. I refer to the Minister's appointment of a new head of the State Department of Development and to the appointee's intimate involvement in the Chevron gas pipeline project, and I ask: how can the Minister guarantee that other companies putting forward major power infrastructure projects in Queensland will not be disadvantaged by the director-general's links with Chevron? Will the Minister also ensure a level playing field for all companies proposing power projects in Queensland by guaranteeing that the State Government will provide the same level of support for all projects?

**Mr ELDER:** The simple fact of the matter is that Mr Rolfe had resigned any of those positions he had in the private sector. Mr Rolfe was commissioned as an acting director-general on merit. Mr Rolfe brings to the department the expertise that is needed to drive many of the projects, not just gas projects, that have been sitting on the books. Mr Rolfe has the expertise that we need to give us the impact in the Department of State Development to deliver on the projects. Everything in relation to the appointment of Mr Rolfe has been well and truly above board. It is no good those opposite trying to undermine the position of the Department of State Development and the various projects

involved. The Premier clearly articulated the position in relation to Ross Rolfe and others and that position is on the record.

#### **Agreement on Fuel Subsidy**

**Mr BRISKEY:** I refer the Treasurer to statements made last week concerning the financial loss to Queensland through Commonwealth-State agreements on fuel subsidies, and I ask: what action has been taken to remedy the ongoing Budget impact of this issue?

**Mr HAMILL:** The member for Cleveland has raised a very serious issue in relation to fuel subsidies. Honourable members will recall that a press release was issued by the Prime Minister and the then Premier of Queensland, the Honourable Rob Borbidge, on 13 October 1997. I am happy to table a copy of the press release. We were advised that the Federal Government and the State Government had resolved a number of issues surrounding the distribution of safety net payments on fuel to Queensland.

Honourable members will recall that the High Court decision last year meant that State business franchise fees in Queensland in relation to tobacco and liquor were held to be invalid. This ruling affected franchise fees paid elsewhere in the country in relation to fuel. We were told in a press release by the former Premier and the Prime Minister that Queensland's position would be protected and that the price of fuel in Queensland would not rise. We were told by Mr Howard that the original safety arrangements put in place meant that no State or Territory would be financially advantaged or disadvantaged by the outcome.

The then Treasurer of Queensland, Mrs Sheldon, said how much she appreciated the support of the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer on these issues. Unfortunately, nothing has been resolved. Last Thursday I raised these issues in the House. I also communicated with the Federal Treasurer and pointed out that it had cost Queensland \$69m last year because of this deal that had been so poorly negotiated by the former Queensland Government and the Federal Government. I have heard nothing from the Federal Treasurer since last Thursday. The attitude of the Federal Treasurer in not responding is absolutely deplorable. It has cost Queensland \$1m to keep these arrangements going while the Federal Treasurer gets around to answering his correspondence.

This is a serious matter. It is costing Queensland taxpayers \$5m a month—over \$1m a week. It is absolutely critical that, as the Federal Government moves to bring forth its tax package, it addresses the undertakings which it has failed to deliver to Queensland. It is vital that Queensland taxpayers and the Queensland Budget are not out of pocket because of an unfortunate and misconceived negotiation that took place in Canberra in October 1997. This is an important issue that will be on the agenda when the Premier and I meet with the Prime Minister in the very near future. At that time the question of taxation will be fairly and squarely on the table.

**Mr BEANLAND:** I rise to a point of order. I ask for a ruling. I understood that in the previous Parliament it was decided that Parliamentary Secretaries would not be able to ask questions. I believe there are good reasons for that. I understand that the member who asked the previous question is in fact a Parliamentary Secretary. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I ask for your ruling in relation to this matter. I believe it is inappropriate for that to occur.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! We do not need to debate it. I will hold discussions with the appropriate people after question time.

#### **President, Court of Appeal**

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** In directing a question to the Honourable the Attorney-General I remind him of his criticism of the former Government when it appointed the current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and his contention in a letter to the editor of the Australian of 18 February, and in an article in the Courier-Mail on 30 January, that the second most senior judge, Justice Fitzgerald, should have assumed that position based on seniority and convention. I ask: did the Attorney-General apply the same policy parameters in his recommendation of the appointment of the new President of the Court of Appeal and will he continue to do so for any future judicial appointments?

**Mr FOLEY:** There is no such convention with respect to the presidency of the Court of Appeal. The presidency of the Court of Appeal relates to a new court and there was in existence no such convention. Indeed, with respect to the position of Chief Justice, that convention died with the action of the previous Government because conventions rely upon consent of both parties. That was torn up by the previous Attorney-General. May I say this—

**Mr Springborg:** What about your position with respect to seniority?

**Mr FOLEY:** The position with respect to seniority is simply this: it is an important matter to be taken into account. At the end of the day, however, it is important that these appointments be made on merit. It is particularly important with respect to the position of women in the judiciary because it is notorious that women have been under-represented in judicial offices. It is important that, in making those appointments, we should have regard to an inclusive approach which includes the whole of the community, including women.

It is therefore a matter of some great pride and achievement for the Government and the people of Queensland that we have now achieved in Queensland an Australian first, that is, the first woman in the history of Australia to attain the position of President of the Court of Appeal. Justice McMurdo brings to that position not only a depth of experience and expertise following seven and a half years in the District Court, not only a deep love of justice and intellectual rigour and not only a commitment to Aboriginal reconciliation but also a particular expertise in the field of criminal law which, after all, constitutes the bulk of the work of the Court of Appeal.

There are some who believe that judicial positions should always go to the good old boys from the big end of town, but that is not a view which this Government adopts. A convention relies upon both sides adopting it. One cannot have one team playing tag and the other team playing tackle. That convention with respect to the Chief Justice's position died with the former Government. There has been no such convention with respect to the presidency of the Court of Appeal.

#### **Building and Construction Industry Training Fund**

**Mr ROBERTS:** I ask the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations: can he inform the people of Queensland how the Government's Building and Construction Industry Training Fund will increase jobs for Queenslanders and alleviate skill shortages in the building and construction industry?

**Mr BRADY:** This is a very important initiative of the Government which we foreshadowed in Opposition. With the coming of the Sydney Olympics, there has been exacerbated in Queensland a lack of skills development in the building and construction industry. The allocation of a levy of 0.05% to

this particular purpose will raise sufficient funds to enable 800 to 1,000 extra apprentices a year to enter the industry over and above those who would normally enter the industry. As well, a portion of the fund will be allocated to improving the skills of existing workers. So over the lifetime of this Government, we could expect up to 3,000 extra apprentices in an industry which is absolutely vital to Queensland. The building and construction industry contributes about \$10 billion to the State's gross domestic product.

As well as allocating this levy, we are extending to Queensland workers the same long service leave benefits as those afforded to New South Wales workers in the industry. This will create an incentive for workers not to leave Queensland but to continue to work here. It will increase apprentice numbers and improve the skills of people working in the industry. At the same time, this arrangement will offer more opportunities and better long service leave benefits for workers in the industry, and it will extend those long service leave benefits to a wider range of workers, particularly those foremen and subforemen in the industry who are not currently covered by long service leave benefits. It is a win-win situation, and almost everybody in the industry supports it. It will increase the numbers of apprentices, it will extend the skills of existing workers, it will improve long service leave and it will increase the numbers of people who are rightly entitled to reasonable long service leave because of their dedication to, and long service in, the industry.

#### **Dairy Industry Deregulation**

**Mr NELSON:** I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: does the Government intend to continue its support for the deregulation of the dairy industry in Queensland, and does the Government realise that this will cost the State the livelihoods of hundreds of farmers, with a multiplier effect of at least four to one throughout this State—a cost which some rural communities cannot sustain?

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** It is timely that I announce to the House that I have received the report of the Queensland Dairy Industry Legislation Review Committee. I have taken the report to Cabinet, and it is now available for public release. Of course, the honourable member would be entitled to receive a copy of that report.

I can assure the House that the key issues relating to the future of the dairy industry, notably the security of farm gate prices, are high among my priorities. The

industry will be given a chance to express its position through consultation, and I expect to take to Parliament later this year legislation to address future industry arrangements.

I was on the tablelands recently, and I met with dairy farmers at the Malanda plant. One case that really struck me was that of a dairy farmer, his wife and family who took time out to visit and speak with the Minister for Primary Industries to express their concerns about the rate of change with the NCP—

**An Opposition member:** Nonsense.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** That is the member's word. We are going through the NCP process at present. How could any member of this House look that dairy farmer, his wife and children fairly and squarely in the eye and say, "We support the NCP process to make sure that you lose your job"? This Government is not about that. This Government is about reviewing the NCP process.

I would like to inform the House—and especially the honourable member for Tablelands—that during our caucus meeting yesterday we put together a task force to review NCP in Queensland. The task force, which I am going to chair, will contain five good backbenchers. We will be reviewing NCP and reporting the results of the task force to the Parliament of Queensland. Let me reassure the honourable member for Tablelands that this Government and I, as the Minister for Primary Industries, have the concerns of the dairy farmers at heart.

#### **Federation Fund**

**Mr FENLON:** I refer the Premier to his announcement that the Prime Minister has promised Commonwealth assistance to help Queensland stage the Goodwill Games in the year 2001, and I ask: has the Premier received any further advice from the Prime Minister in relation to financial assistance for other projects in this State?

**Mr BEATTIE:** The answer to the member's question is: yes, we have. The Prime Minister wrote to me recently—and I will table this letter for the information of the House—to confirm that the Commonwealth will contribute \$50m from the Federation Fund towards the cost of the Queensland Cultural Heritage Network, a project that was supported by members on both sides of politics in the run-up to the June election. In his letter, the Prime Minister also confirmed a further \$15m to be provided from the Federation Fund as the Commonwealth's contribution towards the establishment of an Institute of Molecular

Bioscience at the University of Queensland. We applaud both of those decisions. I acknowledge the role that the Prime Minister is playing in these matters. I also acknowledge the role that the previous Government played in relation to the Queensland Cultural Heritage Network.

I am delighted to inform the House that, in his letter, the Prime Minister also said that this decision brings to \$130m Commonwealth Government support to Queensland through the Federation Fund. That represents funding for a light rail project for Brisbane. I know that the Prime Minister will keep that \$65m commitment so that the people of Brisbane can have a futuristic light rail system to move them around the inner-city area.

I am delighted to table the Prime Minister's letter. I thank him for those two new sectors of funding. I also thank him for his commitment, and the confirmation of his commitment, of \$65m to the light rail project for Brisbane. I believe that is a clear sign that my Government is prepared to work with the Federal Government for the betterment of the people of this State.

#### **Helicopter Rescue Service; Wide Bay/Burnett Region**

**Mr RAPPOLT:** I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: will the Government support a proposed helicopter rescue service for Wide Bay based in Hervey Bay and in so doing give assurance to the tourism industry in regional Queensland that public safety is the Government's prime concern?

**Mrs ROSE:** On 16 January 1998, the former Minister for Emergency Services announced that, from 1 March 1998, the Sunshine Coast Helicopter Rescue Service would provide a helicopter air medical and air rescue service from Bundaberg. The decision to extend the existing Energex Community Rescue service to Bundaberg for a three-year trial period was based on a detailed assessment of proposals from both the Wide Bay Helicopter Rescue Service Incorporated and the Sunshine Coast Helicopter Rescue Service Ltd—that is, Energex Community Rescue—to determine which organisation was best placed to provide for the needs of the Wide Bay/Burnett region. Energex Community Rescue will receive an additional annual Government payment of \$250,000 for the three-year trial period.

Energex Community Rescue has relocated its single engine JetRanger

helicopter to provide that service. It commenced operations on 1 March 1998. The helicopter is housed in the Queensland Ambulance Service hangar in Bundaberg on a rent-free basis. The Bundaberg base is backed up by Energex Community Rescue's two helicopters operating out of Maroochydore, which include a twin-engine Kawasaki BK117 helicopter and a single-engine LongRanger helicopter. Energex Community Rescue's base at Maroochydore directs all operations in Bundaberg, minimising administrative and operational costs. The extension of the Energex Community Rescue service to Bundaberg will be reviewed before the end of the three-year trial period.

The existing service agreement between the State of Queensland, through the Department of Emergency Services, and the SCHRS has been amended to reflect the extended service and was recently signed by both parties. The Bundaberg base carried out 22 tasks in the Wide Bay/Burnett region during the first month of operations. A further 72 tasks were flown in the Wide Bay/Burnett region during the April to June 1998 quarter. The SCHRS is a proven community helicopter service. It is a proven helicopter provider that has delivered an extremely high level of service to the people of south-east Queensland for the past 18 years. The location of a helicopter within the Wide Bay/Burnett region will ensure that that growing community—

Time expired.

#### **Capital Works Spending**

**Mr MULHERIN:** I refer the Minister for Public Works and Housing to the Government's pre-election commitment not to impose a freeze on capital works spending. I ask: can the Minister outline the steps that he has taken since the election to keep that commitment?

**Mr SCHWARTEN:** There has been no freeze. What was the ice age of the previous Government has been turned into a global warming procedure by this Government. I am pleased to say that it is just quite the opposite of a freeze. Before I came in here today, I signed \$4m worth of authorisations for capital works projects. To demonstrate how even-handed and fair our Government is, I add that those projects were in National Party electorates. Immediately upon taking office, I gave two instructions. The first was to find a way to accelerate spending of the capital works budget. We have developed a strategy

in that regard, which I hope to take to Cabinet in the near future.

The second instruction was to prepare a calendar of capital works that would come on line in the next couple of years. I could not believe that contractors in this State could become aware of big jobs and large capital works projects only through buying the Courier-Mail or their local newspaper each Saturday. One of the advantages of providing that information to the building industry in the State in advance is that the industry can gear up for work as it comes on line. Jobs are created in the construction phase of the industry, not in the lead time. If we can shorten the lead time, it is obvious that we will create employment, have people trained and produce a return for the State more quickly. During the last month, we have authorised about \$20m worth of work, which is responsible directly for about 270 jobs. From memory, I believe that that involves about five or six contracts. Off the top of my head, I believe we have about \$18m worth of work and about 10 projects coming up in the next month. If any honourable members would like a list of those projects, they are quite entitled to obtain that.

We are getting on with the business of creating employment in this State. Unemployment will not be a millstone around our neck as it was for the previous Government. We came to these benches with a promise to create jobs. We view the building industry as the engine room of the generation of employment in this State. It is well and truly on the task. We have hit the ground running. We intend to keep up that pace.

### Leading Schools

**Mr QUINN:** I refer the Minister for Education to last Thursday's debate on the motion of confidence in the Government during which he cited the example of two special schools, one of which he claimed was a Leading School. I ask: can the Minister please inform the House of which two schools he was referring to, when he visited them and which was the Leading School? As special schools were not involved in the pilot phase of the Leading Schools program and the Minister himself scrapped that program prior to the commencement of phase 2, why has he misled the House?

**Mr WELLS:** Special schools were included in phase 2 of the Leading Schools program. A number of schools made investments on the basis of the anticipation of the funds that were going to come through. The Leading Schools program that the

honourable member was responsible for implementing caused inequities in schools not only nearby but also all over the State. I draw the attention of the House to certain schools that would probably be dear to the heart of honourable members opposite. As to electorates west of the Great Divide—in the electorate of Callide, 3% of schools were Leading Schools. In Charters Towers, only 22% of schools were Leading Schools. In the electorate of Cook, the figure was 18%; in the electorate of Cunningham, 18%; in the electorate of Gregory, 16%; in the electorate of Mount Isa, 42%; in the electorate of Warrego, 15%; and in the electorate of Warwick, 12%. They might also be interested in the electorates of Crows Nest, where the figure was 14% and Western Downs, where the figure was 27%. In comparison, let us consider the electorates of Surfers Paradise, where the figure was 100%—

**Mr Quinn:** How many schools in Surfers Paradise?

**Mr WELLS:** There are four very large schools.

In Merrimac, the figure was 100% also. Those are the electorates of the former Premier and the former Education Minister.

**Mr QUINN:** I rise to a point of order. Not all of the schools in Merrimac were Leading Schools.

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

**Mr WELLS:** All of the Band 8 to 11 schools in Merrimac were Leading Schools, whereas the percentages that I gave of every other—

**Mr Quinn:** They were not. You better check. They were not.

**Mr WELLS:** I will check.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I will allow the answer to proceed.

**Mr WELLS:** I will check. I have the statistics here for Merrimac. I will check them and I will get back to the honourable member. The point is that in the former Education Minister's electorate and in the electorate of the former Premier, 100% of the schools were eligible. But who missed out?

Time expired.

### Indy Car Grand Prix

**Mrs LAVARCH:** I ask the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing: can he inform the House of any factors which may influence the financial outcome of the 1998 Gold Coast Indy?

**Mr GIBBS:** At this stage, the outlook for Indy this year certainly cannot be described as encouraging. Owing to a number of factors, at the very best, one could describe it as a break-even situation. Obviously, the first one is the slide in the value of the Australian dollar in comparison with the American dollar. The reality is that, as a result of the partnership in which the Indy event is involved, each year it is required to purchase something like \$4m in American money. Obviously, that is going to have a pretty devastating effect on the financial outcome, particularly when one considers that today the Aussie dollar is worth US60c. The enormous impact of that devaluation will probably be a bottom line result of something like \$1.4m.

Because of the devaluation of the Australian dollar, this year we are also faced with an additional freight cost of almost US\$300,000. In relation to the demand for supply of transport services, carriers are now hedging their bets in relation to having to return to the United States with empty aircraft. So those costs have increased substantially as well. In addition, the hire of storage yards will be for a period of 18 months owing to the delay of the event by an additional six months compared with 12 months for previous events. That is going to cost approximately \$1m as well. Basically, we are looking at a situation in which, this year, it will take record-breaking corporate sponsorship and ticket sales to make up that leeway.

There is another disturbing factor. Members will recall the controversy last year in relation to the major naming rights sponsor. I advise the House that on 10 July last year, the then Minister for Tourism said—

"I am advised by the members of the Indy board that the sponsorship funding paid to it by Sunbelt is secure."

The reality is that tomorrow the receivers go into court to conduct a public examination in relation to this issue with the aim of clawing back that \$387,000 that was paid last year to the event by Sunbelt. In addition to those bottom line losses that I have outlined already to the Parliament, it is highly probable that the \$387,000 paid by Sunbelt last year could be clawed back as well.

At present, the Indy is not looking fantastic. The only good news out of that is that at least the taxpayers do not have to wear the loss; it is IMG. Under the contractual arrangements with the Government, it has to pick up those losses.

Time expired.

### Rifle Ranges

**Mr LESTER:** I refer the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources to the Premier's comments in the Courier-Mail on 6 May where, as Leader of the Opposition, he said that he had never opposed rifle ranges being built on Crown land or in State forests. I ask the Minister: why is he now reviewing the ministerial advisory panel established by the previous Government charged with finding suitable Crown land not in national parks for the construction of rifle ranges? Is the Minister aware that over 25 clubs across the State cannot provide adequate facilities for their membership as a result of spiralling membership caused by Government-imposed gun laws? Did the Labor Party—

**Mr Hamill** interjected.

**Mr LESTER:** The Labor members were in it, too. Did the Labor Party simply play politics and just profess its concern for sporting shooter groups in the lead-up to the election?

**Mr WELFORD:** I thank the honourable member for his question. The Government is concerned about the 25-plus clubs that are looking for sites upon which to conduct their activities. We have never denied that we are concerned about the implications of the national gun regulations scheme for those clubs. As the Premier indicated prior to the election, we do not have any objection to clubs having access to public land upon which to locate facilities.

The honourable member ought to be aware that the reason why I am reviewing this issue is that the previous Government made commitments which, frankly, it knew at the time it could never keep. The announcement about giving gun clubs access to State forest land was an election stunt pulled by the previous Government in the run-up to the last State election in direct contrast to legal advice given to then Minister Hobbs and has proved, in practice, to be very, very difficult to achieve. The one area that was identified and on which a facility has been put in place already has the neighbouring community up in arms. It is located within a kilometre of a school and a residential area. That is the path down which the previous Government was heading with the whimsical election stunt initiated by then Minister Springborg in direct conflict with the previous advice and decisions of then Minister Hobbs. This Government is trying to repair the damage that the honourable member's former Government initiated.

### Drug Detection in Prisons

**Mr LUCAS:** I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: can he advise the House of the advances made in drug detection in the State's prisons in recent weeks?

**Mr BARTON:** I thank the member for Lytton for the question. In recent weeks—certainly since this Government came to office—in conjunction with the Police Service, the prisons service has been very successful in carrying out 10 separate significant drug busts in Queensland's prisons.

**Mr Grice** interjected.

**Mr BARTON:** I hear the shadow Minister chortling. However, the only way the previous administration found out about drugs in prisons was when prisoners suffering from drug overdoses were found unconscious. Over the past four to five weeks, we have seen 10 major drug busts, including a second major bust at the Rockhampton Correctional Centre. The drug busts also include four drug interceptions at Sir David Longland prison and several weeks ago—the largest in Queensland's history—a bust at Lotus Glen on the tablelands, which included locating 100 ecstasy tablets, a significant quantity of white powder that is understood to be heroin, a large quantity of marijuana, syringes and assorted drug utensils.

I certainly recognise the great work that has been done by Corrective Services officers. I have congratulated them and I believe that this Parliament should congratulate them as well. The police officers who have been involved in those drug busts should also be congratulated.

We have seen two drug busts at Rockhampton. Through luck, one of those occurred as I was driving out to that correctional facility for an inspection. There have been two at Townsville, and apart from the one at Rockhampton yesterday, there were another two on Sunday, one of which was at Woodford, which was a very significant find, and another one at Numinbah.

Quite frankly, those drug busts have occurred because of good work undertaken by prison officers, by people providing good intelligence and also through the intuition of prison officers. Along with Q Corr, this Government has put in place a task force of general managers to identify best practice out of these 10 drug busts. Its first meeting was a little over a week ago. We intend to not only identify how those drug busts have been successful but also to ensure that training

takes place throughout all correctional facilities to ensure that we not only continue these drugs busts but also that we address the very serious problem of drugs in prisons, which was never, ever effectively handled by our predecessors.

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

### MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

#### Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (11.30 a.m.): Today I wish to talk about change that is occurring right across the Public Service. I will instance this by looking specifically at the sort of change that is happening within the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and within the associated areas of policy development and implementation under the jurisdiction of that department.

All honourable members would appreciate that I am not against change, because when I was Minister for the department of which the member for Kedron now has responsibility I initiated much change. I am very proud of that change, but I am not proud of the change that is occurring under the administration of the new Minister. I think it is also fair to say that when I as Minister introduced change, very few groups within the community, apart from the sectional interests that used to dominate my area of portfolio responsibility, such as the union movement, raised any complaint. In fact, apart from the union movement and some interests that enjoyed entrenched monopoly through provisions within the then Labor Party legislation, very few people complained about the changes introduced by me and by my department.

I am very much against the change that is occurring in the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations because it is occurring in a non-consultative and undemocratic manner, and it is union dominated. It is also occurring in a way which is seeing many election promises broken. In my view, change is being introduced with unseemly haste and in total disregard for the commitment to stability that was put to the Public Service, mouthed by the then Beattie Labor Opposition. Stability is certainly not being practised today, when Labor is in Government and able to demonstrate a true commitment to its promises.

We have seen many sackings and dismissals. Certainly, the serving Director-

General of the department was not appointed, and that was expected. A commitment was broken with the immediate sacking of the Deputy Director-General—a practice which was repeated right across the Public Service, despite a commitment to not sack people below the level of director-general. That was a very firm commitment which was quickly broken by the Labor Government.

I turn to look at the various boards and advisory committees. Frank Haly was sacked as chairman of WorkCover. He was one of the most successful chairmen of any statutory authority in the history of Queensland. He was sacked with little notice and little dignity. Dr Jane Wilson, a very eminent medical representative on the WorkCover board, was also summarily dismissed, despite the much-mouthed commitment by the Labor Government to having women on major boards. She was sacked without much notice, let alone a good reason. The regional perspective was represented very effectively by Terry Bolger, one of the outstanding appointments of the previous Government in that regard. He was also sacked. By whom were these people replaced? They were replaced by departmental people, former departmental people and, of course, two union heavyweights—Bill Ludwig and John Thompson.

I am not against representation by unions. In fact, during my time as Minister I appointed many union representatives to various boards and committees, but I sought to seek out people, including people from the union movement, who were able to bring merit to their appointments. The unions came on in a real hurry in this instance. That is in total contrast to the methods I adopted when I became Minister. When I became Minister I actually left in place the boards of the previous Government while we consulted, while we looked at the legislation and while we then implemented the reforms to the legislation, including the total rewrite of the WorkCover Act.

There are many lessons to be learnt, not only in Opposition but also in Government. I suppose that in Opposition I am learning of the precedent that has been set by the new Beattie Labor Government. When we are back in Government we will undoubtedly remember the fine detail of the way it is implementing its reform process.

I have been told that the round tables will not have much of a function under the new Minister's training regime. That initiative was meant to include a regional perspective in the

provision of advice on training to the Minister and, particularly, to the bureaucracy. I am told that the role of the round tables, if it is not going to be downplayed, will be totally abolished. That is not a good thing for regional communities to contemplate. Those members in this place who have a regional perspective—it is not meant to be a bureaucratic dominated perspective—should look very closely at what happens at the TAFE advisory councils and also at the regional round tables that were in fact meant to bring a regional perspective into the area of training.

Let us look at what has happened in terms of other major restructuring in the department. There has been not only the termination of the Director-General and the Deputy Director-General but also the appointment of Kim Bannikoff, a former departmental employee, as an independent consultant to lead the TAFE task force.

We now have a Government dominated—in fact run—by task force. It will be interesting for one of us on this side of the House to add up all the task forces that have been implemented by the new Government. Read for "task force" inquiries and more wasted time and wasted opportunity for this Government to actually do something that is reasonable. One task force after another will be implemented. This Government tries to hide the fact that it is another committee, another inquiry, but we will add them up and talk about that at a later time.

I mention the abolition of the TAFE head office and the strategic centre within the department and their replacement with an ill-defined network; the abolition of the office of the boards a week after it was stated that that office would in fact remain; and the return of the department to a divided and fragmented client service structure where the silos that were demolished by the previous Government have been again erected, depriving business of a corporate approach to the provision of advice by a department that is essential to the wellbeing of business.

I could keep talking about the enormous amount of change that is occurring, and undoubtedly in the future I will. All of this change is occurring with union approval and acquiescence. When we sought to introduce only a fraction of that change under the very real guidance of a consultative modus operandi, the unions opposed us time after time—every inch of the way. I was committed to genuine consultation with the union movement, with managers in the department and with the employees directly. That change

was stridently opposed by the union movement.

Of course, the union movement has rolled over. It has uttered not a single word of protest, not a single complaint. It has not stood up for employees and for the managers that it so fiercely fought for when a non-Labor Government was in power. The union movement is an accomplice to the massive change, to the massive amount of instability that has been created within the Public Service, including my former department. I think that is a disgrace. When we are back in Government we will remember the silence and the acquiescence of the union movement in relation to this particular sad part of Queensland's history as far as the bureaucracy is concerned.

This will be a union-dominated Government. Premier Beattie told the world of the very successful meeting he had with employer representatives a few days after he was elected to Government. What he did not tell of with the same gay abandon was the meeting he had with over 40 unionists on the 13th floor on Friday, 3 July. He did not want to invite the cameras in for that meeting as he did with the employers because, unlike the meeting with employers, he wanted to keep it quiet so that the majestic symbolism of just how much under the thumb of the union movement this Government will be did not become manifest to all Queenslanders.

There can be no greater expression of union arrogance and union domination than the quote in today's Courier-Mail by the State secretary of the ACTU. In relation to the changes to legislation proposed yesterday by the Honourable the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, he said—

"The Queensland Chamber of Commerce campaigned heavily against Labor—I guess the spoils go to the victors."

There can be no more arrogant expression of power and dominance over a Government than that particular statement. That statement will be quoted by people on this side time after time, including undoubtedly during the debate which will see the now Government try to change the very good industrial relations laws of Queensland—industrial relations laws which, as I said the other day during the confidence debate, led to the creation of record employment in the regions within this State. Again, we will talk about the record of this Government in terms of regional employment during further debates.

Much change has been brought about with unseemly haste by a union-dominated Government which will do nothing to serve and achieve its objective—jobs, jobs, jobs. It will lead to a disincentive for business, particularly small business, the engineroom of employment creation, to create jobs.

Time expired.

### **Criminal Justice Commission**

**Mr NUTTALL** (Sandgate—ALP) (11.39 a.m.): No member in this Parliament has been a stronger advocate of the CJC than I have been. As a former deputy chairperson of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, I have strongly supported the CJC, both inside and outside the Parliament. However, recent actions by the CJC have led me to rethink my position of supporting it. I refer to one matter in particular, and that is the matter raised by the honourable member for Broadwater back on 13 September 1996 in the Parliament, when the honourable member made allegations that Mr Le Grand from the CJC had leaked confidential information concerning Operation Wallah. Most of us would recall those allegations fairly clearly. We are now some two years down the track and that matter, at this stage, has still not been resolved.

Two days after those allegations were made by the honourable member for Broadwater, the Chairman of the CJC issued a media release in which he stated that the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee was the only body appropriate to investigate the allegations made by the honourable member. I wish to make it very clear that what I am saying to the Parliament today is not a breach of confidentiality, because this is now a matter of public record.

On 20 September 1996, the PCJC held a meeting and resolved that the allegations made by the honourable member for Broadwater be referred to the judicial inquiry that the Government of the day was considering establishing, namely, the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. The committee decided that that was the best course of action. As part of its brief, the Connolly/Ryan inquiry was to examine the allegations made by the honourable member for Broadwater. What happened subsequent to that is now a matter of record.

On 5 October 1997, some 10 months after the commencement of that inquiry, the Queensland Supreme Court found that there was bias on the part of Commissioners

Connolly and Ryan and, accordingly, ordered that the commissioners cease to conduct any further hearings. That commission of inquiry was terminated. That left the situation still in limbo, because no determination was made in relation to the allegations made in the Parliament. Approximately 12 months down the track, the matter had still not been cleared up in any way, shape or form.

The CJC then gave some consideration to conducting an internal investigation of its own. However, at the end of the day it decided not to proceed with that course. On 18 December 1997, the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee indicated to the CJC that the committee intended to await the appointment of the inaugural Parliamentary Commissioner before taking any further action in relation to the outstanding allegations. On 27 January 1998, the CJC advised the committee that Mr Le Grand was due to finish his contract with it in February of that year and, because the allegations were still outstanding, it had decided to extend Mr Le Grand's contract for a further 12 months from 1 March until the allegations had been heard and the matter had been cleared up. Subsequent to that, in March of this year Ms Julie Dick was appointed as the inaugural Parliamentary Criminal Justice Commissioner.

The third PCJC, of which, as I said, I was a member, resolved that the allegations made by the honourable member for Broadwater be referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for investigation. On 5 May we wrote to the Parliamentary Commissioner requesting that she examine the allegations raised. The difficulty I have is that up to March—after a good year and a half—the matter had still not been investigated or cleared up. Obviously, it was part of the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner to examine the Connolly/Ryan material.

I am advised that the CJC has now indicated that it does not believe that the PCJC has the power to direct the Parliamentary Commissioner to investigate the matters raised by the honourable member for Broadwater, and nor does it believe, as a consequence of that, that the Parliamentary Commissioner has the power to conduct the investigation. The CJC submits that the appropriate body to conduct the investigations is the DPP. As we all would be aware, the Director of Public Prosecutions does not have investigative powers and is not the appropriate body to investigate the allegations raised by the honourable member for Broadwater.

As I said at the start of my speech, I have always been a strong advocate and supporter of the CJC. However, when the CJC behaves in this manner and when it deliberately sets out to stop an inquiry into one of its leading officials, it is quite clear to me that something is wrong or smelly. Why would the CJC not welcome such an inquiry? If the CJC and, indeed, Mr Le Grand believe they have nothing to hide, that they have done nothing wrong and that their actions have been honourable, they should welcome such an inquiry by the Parliamentary Commissioner. They should welcome the opportunity to present their evidence to the Parliamentary Commissioner. They should welcome the opportunity to have the actions of the CJC and of Mr Le Grand aired. They should welcome the opportunity to say, "We have clean hands in this matter. We have done nothing wrong or untoward in relation to the allegations raised."

Today I am not here to say whether the allegations raised by the honourable member for Broadwater are correct or incorrect; that is not my place. However, it is appropriate that the Parliamentary Commissioner conduct that investigation. The Criminal Justice Act was changed. Those amendments were brought forward by the then Attorney-General to ensure that the Parliamentary Commissioner would be the suitable watchdog to assist the PCJC in monitoring the operations of the CJC. However, when the CJC deliberately sets out on a course to stop such inquiries, one has to ask: why?

We face the prospect that the CJC, by way of an injunction in the Supreme Court, may seek to restrain the Parliamentary Commissioner from proceeding to conduct any investigation. That is what we are looking at. Two years ago, the CJC said, "We believe that the PCJC should conduct that investigation." We went down the path of saying, "No, we'll let Connolly/Ryan do that." That came to a halt so we had to revisit that. We have appointed a Parliamentary Commissioner through an Act of Parliament and we have said that the Parliamentary Commissioner should conduct that inquiry, but now the CJC is saying, "No, the DPP should conduct it." Two years ago, the CJC said that the DPP should not conduct the inquiry, that the PCJC should do that. We are seeing an about-turn. One has to ask: why?

Today in the Parliament I implore the CJC to withdraw its objections to the Parliamentary Commissioner conducting that investigation. Let that investigation proceed and let the matter be dealt with and cleared up once and for all.

### Criminal Justice Commission

**Mr GRICE** (Broadwater—NPA) (11.49 a.m.): I cannot help but endorse the comments made by the previous speaker. I have said numerous times in the press that the very, very serious allegations that I made about Mr Le Grand deserve to be cleared up one way or the other. That fellow still has a working life and a future ahead of him; he needs the thing cleared up. I endorse those comments.

While we are already in deep danger of the usual paralysis by analysis under Labor that we have seen so many times before, one of the many inquiries that have been proposed recently does deserve support, and I give it my support. I refer to the call for an inquiry into the total, abysmal, disastrous and incompetent mismanagement of the prison system in this State by a succession of failed Ministers throughout every minute of the former Goss Labor Government. That serial incompetence has been highlighted by the order of a payout from the public purse in excess of half a million dollars to one of the victims of the same serial incompetence: a former manager of Lotus Glen who had to try to run a prison while he was walking around tripping over cots in the corridors. We are told that there are more like claims in the system. There can be no doubt about that. They could emerge from just about any prison in the system in that shameful era.

That gives this inquiry potentially a very valuable purpose: it could save lives. It could make prisons a safer place to work than might otherwise be the case if this Government were allowed to fall into its natural state in this area of public administration—of neglect and incompetence. In the six years between December 1989 and February 1996 we saw a very cynical extension of the old political adage there are no votes in prisons. Because there are no votes in prisons, there was no priority for prisons; and because there was no priority for prisons, there was a disaster in the prisons for which there was absolutely no excuse.

The member for Crows Nest, who in my view was the best prisons Minister this State has ever had, commissioned the Kennedy report. When Labor took office in 1989, it had a blueprint. All it had to do was follow the dotted line, but it did not. The most extraordinary thing was that it could not even follow it when Mr Peter Coaldrake redrew it a few disasters down the track. He emphasised it for the Labor Party. There was, of course, some irony in this because Peter Coaldrake

was without doubt the biggest disaster ever to hit the Queensland Public Service. In concert with the Ministry, he reviewed everything to a standstill. If it looked like moving, he reviewed it again to give it the coup de grace. His review of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission in December 1993 addressed exactly the whole problem that existed under Labor for so long. I will quote from the review to give honourable members some examples. Page 84 says—

"Associated with high occupancy rates are: the need for more frequent transfers of prisoners between centres; overcrowding of watchhouses; and increased stress within correctional centres.

...

The shortage of accommodation in correctional centres needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency ..."

But did the Labor Party do anything about it? It did not do a single thing other than to close two jails. When this crisis of overcrowding was pointed out to it, the Labor Party closed two further jails. The press was full of articles about this crisis. In the Townsville Bulletin in November 1994 appeared the heading "Overcrowded jail system 'in state of crisis'", and "Prison crowding: riots fear" appeared in the Courier-Mail in 1995.

Why could the Labor Party not get the message? Nothing was done. In the six years that Labor was involved—as I will come to again later—only 220 beds were built in this State. This report shows us that the Government did not have any planning—no capital works planning. It had no ongoing outlook on prisoner numbers, and successive Labor Ministers just blundered about with it. The report showed that Labor's reason for shutting down the Woodford prison was a cover-up. The incompetent Minister of the day said that it could be closed because prisoner numbers were falling. It was, in fact, closed over the heads of the commission to save \$7m a year. Prisoner numbers were actually on the up when the Minister made that statement. That report said—

"The shortage of accommodation in correctional centres needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."

This was the shortage of accommodation which was already chronic and which led to the problems for the taxpayer this far down the track. Prisoners were sleeping on cots in corridors. Twelve months later, the system had 2,630 inmates and 2,360 beds. In other

words, the State's prisons were at 115% capacity 12 months after this Coaldrake report, and still incompetence reigned. The 1994-95 capital works budget for prisons of \$53m—the quick fix \$53m—was 43% underspent. Out of \$53m, \$22m was not spent.

We inherited a mess, a system that was almost literally bursting at the seams and a system which was simply not safe to work in all because members opposite were simply not capable of running it. Our response was to get down to work. The 1996-97 capital works budget was \$96.775m. The 1997-98 capital works budget was \$118.478m, and the 1998-99 budget, which was tabled in this House, is \$199.024m. That is over \$400m committed by the coalition in three Budgets, which is double what the Labor Party committed to in six. That is the sort of volume of money needed to remedy the mess that Labor left behind the last time it was in Government.

As I said at the outset, if holding an inquiry now will help keep this Government focused, I will fully support that. I am aware also that the people of Queensland are just about inquired out, but if there is no other way to get to the seat of this problem, an inquiry has to be held. We cannot afford a performance from Labor this time around like the one we had last time, yet there are already signs that that is precisely what it is going to do without somebody putting some salt on its tail.

The Cabinet of the previous Government had approved plans to build three 200-bed prisons, which this new Government has put on hold. It is likely and possible—I would like to be assured that I am wrong—that those three 200-bed prisons will be amalgamated into one prison somewhere in the metropolitan area holding a number smaller than the sum total. I have seen a comment made by the current Minister that the decision to build three 200-bed prisons is more expensive than building one 600-bed prison. Of course it is. Everybody knows that, but that is not the point.

The coalition understands the difficulties with unemployment, the general standard of living and lots of other problems that are faced by regional areas. Three 200-bed prisons, the cost of which is in excess of \$20m each, employing 80 to 90 people, with \$6m per prison per year in recurrent spending and the additional jobs created in the service areas associated with running prisons mean an extraordinarily big impact on a regional area, a country area, where that amount of employment can be created and maintained. That is one of the most important reasons for

putting three 200-bed prisons in different parts of a regional area rather than to amalgamate it in one prison which would probably be near some metropolitan centre. Does the Minister not understand the importance of regional Queensland and the dire problems it is facing with unemployment? On the one hand, we have a Premier who rants and raves about achieving 5% unemployment within five years, which is a lot of nonsense—let us sit on the fence and count that as it goes down—and on the other hand we have a Minister who talks about amalgamating prisons.

Time expired.

### Immigration

**Mr D'ARCY** (Woodridge—ALP) (12 p.m.): Today's announcement of a change in the direction of immigration policy by the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Kim Beazley, is a welcome change and a breath of fresh air. I am a long-term advocate of immigration into Australia and Mr Beazley's announcement brings some sanity back into the debate. It is unfortunate that for the past two decades there has been a dearth in the development of immigration policy by all political parties, including my own. It is pleasing to see Mr Beazley lead the charge for Australia's future. We saw the headline today which read "Beazley brings back immigration for the future". Today's Courier-Mail editorial subheading reads "Time for a debate about tolerance" and states—

"It is a breath of fresh air in what had become a stale corner of public policy."

Mr Beazley's remarks were taken from a speech which he made at the Global Population Seminar. It was a courageous stance taken by Mr Beazley. I believe that there has been a latent group within the Australian intelligentsia which has always realised that it is absolutely necessary that we have long-term immigration policies. I believe that this is one of those areas which, perhaps, could be taken out of the party political scene and be made a cross-party issue.

Immigration is a big issue for Australia. To have it on the backburner or, as the Courier-Mail described it, in a stale corner for two decades is a sad indictment on this country. The member for Broadwater has just been speaking about the depopulation of Australia's regions. We have had the situation of Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania competing for internal immigration and skiting that one State is growing faster than another. The real figures indicate the

compounding effect of putting people into a particular area.

Take, for example, a small country town with a population of 100 people. If that town loses 10 people that can have a great bearing on the town's survival. The town may have 25 children and if a couple of children leave the school it is possible that the school will close. Other town facilities and services may also close. This has been happening all over Queensland for the past two decades. Towns such as Yaraka and Yalleroi have disappeared from the face of the earth and are simply a dot on the map these days. They have no railway stations, no pubs and no schools.

Immigration is an essential part of the lifeblood of this country. We have been living with a very narrow immigration policy in this country. There has been a view that immigration is the sole cause of unemployment. It is believed that immigrants take jobs from Australians. Those beliefs are so far from the truth that they reek of Lewis Carroll's "curiouser and curiouser" in Alice in Wonderland.

Australia's glory days in regard to immigration occurred in the goldrush days. Because of its rapidity it brought with it a lot of social problems but it was a means of populating Australia. It gave us a base in population numbers. In a moment I will give honourable members a comparison of what happened in terms of immigration between Australia and the United State of America. Of course, people say, "Oh, the United States is a lot bigger." However, the only major difference is the United States' geographical position in relation to Europe. Certainly there is not a lot of difference in size between the two countries.

In the post-war period we had a positive policy towards immigration and this policy virtually made Australia. A lot of our problems were addressed. Because of developments such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme we found that towns popped up in rural and regional Australia. In Queensland we were able to get regional industries going. The new industries were mostly primary industries, but they were based on migration. We had Italians going to north Queensland, including the Atherton Tableland. We are very proud that Queensland is still the most regionalised State in the country.

If we continue to ignore immigration as a major plank in our political history we will risk our total future and our total security. I believe most honourable members would be surprised by the figures revealed by a comparison

between Australia and the United States. In the year 1800 there were 5,000 people in Australia. In the year 1700 there were 1 million people in the United States and in 1800 there were 6 million. By the year 1900 there were 3.7 million people in Australia and 76 million people in the United States. The immigrants to both countries came from the same base. In 1950 there were 7.7 million people in Australia and 150 million in the United States. In 1998 there are roughly 18 million people in Australia and approximately 260 million people in the United States. If honourable members have been to the United States they will be aware that living conditions in some places are not as good as those in Australia. The fact of life is that our 18 million people, living where they do geographically, enjoy a higher standard of living. It is hard to convince many Australians of that fact.

The United States has failed miserably in the area of immigration management. Despite the political agenda of the party in power at a particular time in the United States, there was always a 10% immigration policy. That policy is reflected in the figures I have just cited. A lot of that was done under the cuff. People said, "Mexicans are coming across the border." Mexicans were allowed across the border for the simple reason that the United States was looking at a long-term policy—the North American Free Trade Policy. This was an admirable policy. The Americans virtually said, "We cannot do it for the whole world but, as far as the North American continent is concerned, we are going to raise the standard of living over the next two, three, four or five decades." The Americans have achieved this in conjunction with Mexico and Canada.

We do not have such a problem, but we do assume some responsibility for New Zealand and some of our Pacific neighbours. We have not been able to streamline a sane, sensible immigration policy in this country which would supply jobs. Far from taking jobs, immigration supplies jobs. Immigrants, if they are properly melded into Australian society, compound the employment situation. They bring tourism to this country. They have to go to school. They buy houses. As a result, jobs are created.

**Mr Gibbs:** They also make excellent chefs.

**Mr D'ARCY:** That is true. We have adopted a lot of their cultures. That is part of our multicultural policy. The Leader of the Federal Opposition has shown courage in the face of much negativity in relation to immigration. Perhaps one day we may even

have some sane coastal management policies in this State where we are not destroying our wetlands. We may even have a rapid transport road to the Gold Coast which is up to European standards.

### Weapons Act

**Mr ELLIOTT** (Cunningham—NPA) (12.10 p.m.): I wish to bring to the notice of members of this House and the people of Queensland some suggestions in relation to the Weapons Act. I shall preface my remarks by mentioning the changes that Russell Cooper was able to implement in the early stages. That followed a large number of public meetings held by either himself or a large number of backbenchers. Information gathered at those meetings and the concerns of the public, particularly those in rural areas, were fed back through the system to Russell Cooper, who was then able to implement changes in relation to the 28-day cooling-off period and some aspects of C-class weapons. I believe that Russell Cooper's hard work improved what could only have been described as a totally impractical situation.

Those improvements were a great help, particularly the dropping of the 28-day cooling-off period for existing licence holders wishing to purchase a replacement firearm or an additional firearm. However, before members of the anti-gun lobby start jumping up and down again, let me outline how that 28-day cooling-off period affected both legitimate gunsmiths and people whose livelihoods depend on the use of firearms. I refer in particular to kangaroo shooters, farmers, graziers and other people on the land who need and use firearms in the course of their everyday work.

I wish to quote a Toowoomba gunsmith who is a very sensible, sound, rational person in whom I have great faith. Last time I called in to have a yarn with him about the whole gun situation, he told me what had happened to him in Toowoomba prior to Christmas. As a gunsmith, he is a licensed gun dealer. Many roo shooters with gun licences walked into his place of business and said that they wanted to purchase rifles for their kangaroo shooting operations. They thought that they could walk in there, put their money on the table and say, "That is the gun I like. I want to buy it." He would then have say, "Hang on a minute. Have you got your permit to acquire?" They would say, "Yes, I picked it up on the way down." But then he had to tell them, "You have to wait 28 days." As members can imagine, those people were absolutely

disgusted. Many of them had driven in from Charleville. Now, members might ask why those people did not know about the relevant legislation. But I challenge those members to tell me how many members of the public pick up legislation, read it, understand it and are aware of all the regulations. Very few people understand that.

**Mr Pearce:** Didn't they change that by regulation?

**Mr ELLIOTT:** I am coming to that. So the changes to the legislation improved that situation considerably.

I will give honourable members an analogy. In the past, a person who was selling cattle at a saleyard and moving cattle around had to get from a stock inspector a permit that described all that stock, and the inspector had to sight them. Those stock were then able to be moved from A to B. Quite reasonably, members on our side of politics decided that that situation was unnecessary and that the amount of red tape involved was over the top.

Let me take the example of the roo shooter or the legitimate farmer who lives in the bush and visits Toowoomba in order to conduct business. The gunsmith has been appropriately checked out under the terms of the legislation. The person who wants to purchase the firearm already has a gun licence, so he has been checked out, too. With computerisation today, there is nothing to stop that gunsmith from going to his computer and checking to ensure that that person does not have a current domestic violence order against him or that he is not a person who has been prohibited from owning a firearm. If all of that is in order, why should those two people not be able to do business?

I am not talking about someone who is going to buy a gun so that he can go down the road and shoot someone. I put it to members that, if a person was going to do that, he would probably already have 20 guns at Charleville or wherever he comes from. Many people have up to 20 or 30 guns because they operate under varying conditions and use different guns for different purposes. So it is an absolute nonsense to say that that person is going to walk into a gunsmith's business, purchase a gun and then go down the road and shoot someone. That is absolutely ludicrous. I am suggesting that the gunsmith should have a permit book on his premises.

What does this legislation seek to do? It seeks to record the serial number of a firearm when it is purchased. I personally do not agree with this because, to me, it smacks of Big

Brotherhood. However, the legislation is in place and the reality is that we will be outvoted by those people in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane who do not understand guns and are totally opposed to them. Those people have no understanding of what people really need guns for or how they use them. As I said, the legislation requires the serial number of a firearm to be recorded together with information on the type of firearm it is, so that the authorities know where that firearm is. But what is to stop a gunsmith from writing out a permit and then immediately recording that information on a computerised register? The system would then contain all the information that the authorities require and there would be no need whatsoever to involve bureaucratic red tape and all the other rubbish. For some unknown reason, people in our society today seem hell-bent on doing that more and more.

This is a very important point to consider. I believe that it is practical and necessary. We should stop creating impediments for those legitimate businesspeople who are trying to go about their business. We are making life more and more difficult for them. If members wonder why people in the bush are angry, it is because of situations such as this which really get up their noses. Records of various crimes in this State reveal that very few farmers or kangaroo shooters are involved in robbing banks. I cannot remember the last time when a farmer robbed a bank.

**Mr Robertson:** There are not enough banks to rob out there.

**Mr ELLIOTT:** We are left with none; that is right. The whole process of government seems to be encouraging banks to close more and more branches.

I turn now to the situation pertaining to C-class weapons. Despite the irrational statements from the Prime Minister, the facts regarding self-loading shotguns with restricted magazine capacity are little understood by the public. Large numbers of both lady clay pigeon shooters and disabled shooters need to use those types of guns. The greater part of the recoil of a semiautomatic or self-loading shotgun is involved in the reloading process. As a former clay pigeon shooter, I know that when one does a lot of practice or is shooting in a competition for a long period, that constant recoil from an under-and-over or a side-by-side sometimes becomes quite difficult and one gets bruises. This applies particularly to those people who have light frames or those who are disabled. The same thing applies to junior shooters. The best thing to do

when training junior shooters is to give them a more suitable gun that does not have a tremendous recoil, because then they are able to handle it better.

I turn now to a subject that is of great concern to many people. On a number of occasions the courts of Queensland have upheld a person's right to defend himself or herself under extreme circumstances. There have been a number of cases in which people have used firearms to defend themselves in extreme circumstances and they have been vindicated by the courts. I believe that we have to revisit the Weapons Act to ensure that people of good character, without a history of domestic violence, are able to own basic weapons. But I am not suggesting that we return to the situation where people have SKS rifles in their houses and things like that.

Time expired.

### Immigration

**Mr ROBERTSON** (Sunnybank—ALP) (12.19 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, firstly allow me to congratulate you on your elevation to that position and ask you to pass on my congratulations to the Speaker on his elevation. I rise today to also congratulate the Federal Labor Leader, Kim Beazley, for his contribution yesterday to encourage all Australians to engage in a mature, reasoned and factual debate about immigration and the direction that we as a nation should be taking in both the short and long terms. Mr Beazley's contribution demonstrated that there is at least one political leader in this nation who has both the ability and the courage to raise important issues without resorting to ignorant and prejudiced hyperbole, to raise issues and argue a position using facts rather than fantasy or fallacy, to admit that all the answers are not readily apparent and to argue that, through mature discussion involving all sections of our community, we can reach a consensus on the right direction for our nation.

The central point made by Mr Beazley should not be lost on any thinking Australian, that is, that we need to understand that there will be significant challenges ahead for Government, industry and the broader community arising out of an increasing proportion of Australians who will have reached retirement age. It makes little sense to argue for a population freeze in which immigration numbers should not exceed the number of Australians who leave the country if a greater percentage of our population are to become retirees. To quote the Federal Labor Leader—

"We need to think about how we guarantee a sufficient critical mass of employed people to ease what will be a mounting fiscal burden on future generations."

In other words, we need to keep Australia young.

This is not a new challenge. It is a challenge that has been understood by Labor since at least the early 1980s. That is why Labor and the trade union movement had the vision to introduce compulsory occupational superannuation for all Australian workers, despite the objection of the Liberal and National Parties and their recent attempts to wind back the universality of occupational superannuation provisions. That is why Labor was and continues to be committed to a universal health care system contributed to by all Australians during the course of their working lives, a system which, again, the current Federal Liberal/National Party Government is committed to winding back.

Given falling birth rates in Australia, given the increasing longevity of Australians and the impact that that has on our health system, and given that an increasing proportion of Australians are over the age of 60 and the impact that that has on our social security system, we must look long and hard at developing a bipartisan population policy. Part of that debate must necessarily involve a debate about immigration levels. If we all take a step back from our respective political allegiances for a moment, there can surely be no disagreement about the necessity for such a debate by any member of this House—at least I hope that is the case.

I have spoken in this place before about my disappointment at the use of immigration as a political football and the consequences of that in terms of social cohesion and Australia's hard-won reputation as a caring and compassionate nation. For the past 10 years, ever since Prime Minister Howard destroyed the broad political bipartisanship on immigration policy that had existed in Australia since at least the 1960s, Australia's reputation has suffered. This absence of bipartisanship has provided succour to those in the community who see immigration in simple racial terms, which has, in turn, led to a campaign to discredit multiculturalism both as a definition of policy and a direction of policy.

Let no-one in this House misunderstand: irresponsible outbursts on immigration do have an impact. They have an impact on those Australians who have come from other parts of the world, who may look different, sound

different or have a different cultural history and different customs from the dominant British or European culture that most of us in this place share. Emotive outbursts against immigration out of ignorance or for short-term political gain empower people in our community to vent their prejudices by verbally and even physically abusing their fellow Australians. That fact is rarely acknowledged by those who provoke the outburst. They retreat into denial. They claim that they have never witnessed such verbal or physical abuse; therefore, it does not occur. Of course they have not witnessed the consequences of their own ignorance and prejudice—the abuse is often subtle, it is often unseen, and, sadly, it is often deliberately ignored. But the fact remains that the abuse is still there and it hurts and offends those fellow Australians who may look, sound or act differently from the majority of us.

There are those who defend their right to abuse as exercising their right to free speech. Let there be no mistake: I am a defender of free speech. It is central to a healthy, robust democracy. It has been a proud tradition in Australia since European settlement commenced over 200 years ago. However, I do not believe that implicit in a right to free speech is a right to abuse, a right to offend or a right to be irresponsible. The right to free speech can be protected only if that right is not abused, is framed within the values that we as a community aspire to protect and nurture, and respects the rights of fellow citizens. As Kim Beazley said yesterday—

"Forgive me if I can't see these last two years as the Prime Minister's cheery unexpurgated good—a new climate of free speech, or whatever he wants to call it. We have always had free speech—what we didn't have was official sanction for discourtesy. It is hardly an advance that we have that sanction today."

I find it strange that a number of politicians who have used immigration levels for short-term political gain often represent electorates in regional Queensland. They lament the decline in towns caused by the closure of services such as banks or the lack of employment opportunities for young people and understandably rail against the doctrine of economic rationalism. That point was developed in a speech today by my friend the member for Woodridge. But, at the same time, those members hardly roll out the welcome mat to migrants who could well contribute to arrest the decline in the communities they have been elected to represent. Perhaps some of those members could explain to me how they expect their

communities to benefit from the skills and resources that are brought to this country by entrepreneurs under the business migration scheme when they go out of their way to make these migrants feel unwelcome. That is the impact of narrow and inaccurate statements such as "Australia is in danger of being overrun by Asians."

Beazley is right when he says that immigration cannot be looked at in isolation. It must be part of an overall analysis of population policy that must include Australia's infrastructure needs, environmental considerations and regional development. If regional development relies at least in part on repopulation, then some politicians in this place and elsewhere may wish to be a bit more circumspect in some of their more extreme statements. There is no doubt that the Federal Labor Leader is taking a risk, but it is a risk worth taking. It is a risk that must be taken. It is a risk that should be taken not only by political leaders but also by leaders in all sections of the community. If we are to embark on this debate—a debate that could take some time to exhaust itself—then there must be a responsibility on all participants, even our political opponents, to enter the debate committed to arguing on the basis of fact and committed to reason and respect. To do otherwise may advance narrow, short-term political agendas but will in the end do Australia a great disservice.

The Federal Labor Leader, Kim Beazley, should be congratulated on his bold initiative and his political courage. It is a welcome circuit-breaker from the narrow, reactionary and unfortunate debate Australia has suffered over the past two years. Kim Beazley has continued the proud tradition within the Labor Party of being a forward-thinking party that cares about Australia's future and seeks to engage all Australians in important and essential debates about our nation's direction. Most of all, he has demonstrated a quality that has been sadly lacking in Australia over the past two years: leadership.

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the member for Bundaberg, I advise the House that this is the member's maiden speech. I ask that the courtesies of the House be extended to her.

**Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM** (Bundaberg—ALP) (12:29 p.m.), who was received with Government "Hear, hears!", said: I move—

"That the following Address be presented to the Governor in reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency in opening this, the first session of the 49th Parliament of Queensland—

'May it please Your Excellency:-

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, wish to assure Your Excellency of our continued respect for the Crown and loyalty to the system of government in this State and to tender our thanks for the Speech with which you opened the first session. The various measures to which Your Excellency has referred and all other matters that may be brought before us will receive our careful consideration, and we shall strive to deal with them so that our endeavours may contribute to the advancement and prosperity of the people of this State.' "

I am proud to have been given the privilege of moving this motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech and even more so rising for the first time as the representative of the people of Bundaberg. Mr Speaker, I extend my congratulations to you on your elevation to such high office—an office to which you will surely add dignity and wisdom. I congratulate the Premier and the members of his Ministry for providing the leadership and the policies that led Labor back to Government after the Opposition's very short term in office.

Once again, the people of Queensland can have confidence in the parliamentary system to deliver democracy in the best Westminster tradition—open and honest government; the most basic right of all Queenslanders. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who made it possible for me to be here today. I know that any election campaign is arduous, but this campaign, preceded by my 10 years in local government—seven of those as Mayor of Bundaberg—placed a huge burden on my husband Elvin, our son Glenn, daughter Anne and their young families. They have borne the brunt of family disruption during this hectic time and it is to their credit that they have taken it in their stride. Without their support and encouragement I would not now be the member for Bundaberg. I thank my sisters and brother for their support, my mother for her patience and my late father for teaching me to stand up for my beliefs, even in the face of opposition. I must also thank my tireless campaign committee, the many Labor Party

members in Bundaberg and Brisbane who helped with the campaign, those friends and non-party members who gave their time, finance and effort in a wonderful vote of confidence, and the people of Bundaberg for their support and for the honour of representing them here in this Queensland Parliament.

This great State and, indeed, our nation are at a crossroad. The 13 June election result demonstrated a deep unease in our community. There are grave concerns about unemployment and job security, the continued sale of our assets, the blind pursuit of Hilmer reforms that have not brought better services or lower costs yet have resulted in thousands and thousands of people being put out of work, the sad effect that economic rationalisation has had on services, the lengthy delays and rising costs of health treatment, the concerns of the elderly who no longer feel safe in their homes and the concerns of our young people for their education and for their future. There is widespread concern that economic rationalism has become more important to Governments than the welfare of the people.

One hundred and thirty-five years ago, Abraham Lincoln was president of a deeply divided nation. When invited to speak at the dedication of a war cemetery, he spoke for only two minutes but in just 269 words he left all America with the task of bringing about a new freedom. His words did not end the conflict and division, but they did begin the process out of which a new and better nation was made. I do not intend to disappoint my colleagues on both sides of the House by speaking for only another two minutes. However, I believe that such fine examples of statesmanship are worth recalling—those few words that changed the direction of a nation. In respect of many of our current issues, it is time that we had the courage to say, "Stop! We are going the wrong way." Indeed, this is the time for us to begin that process out of which a new and better nation will be made.

Let me say that I am delighted to be part of the Beattie Labor Government whose policies have the capacity to achieve that aim—a Government that will get Queensland moving again; a Government that will make decisions and will work with determination to achieve its ambitious employment targets and restore job security, the very basis of family life, a strong community and a strong State.

I turn now to my electorate of Bundaberg. Bundaberg is a modern, progressive and very beautiful city in the heart of a rich sugarcane

and small crops belt. It is renowned for its wonderful climate, its superb quality of life and the hospitality of its residents. Bundaberg's diverse economy is based on the sugar industry with four sugar mills, a refinery, distillery, sugar experiment station and bulk sugar port in close proximity. The Millaquin complex is still the only one in the southern hemisphere where sugar is milled and refined and rum distilled at the one complex.

In recent years, sugar has been challenged by small crops as our major industry, and the enormous variety of fruits, nuts and vegetables grown in our district boosted our income last year by more than \$126m. A busy fishing industry is based in Bundaberg providing seafood locally and for export. The Bundaberg Port Authority has expanded its operations to take general cargo. It has developed a trawler base where major fish processing plants have been recently established and a new marina will soon open. It has been working hard for some 18 months to gain a coal loading port just south of the city.

Bundaberg is recognised worldwide for its Bundaberg Rum and Austoff Harvesters and is known in many countries for its Wide Bay bricks, Electra brewed drinks and Jabiru planes. Our manufacturing industries can produce from small parts to the largest sugar mills in the world, and the Bundaberg Foundry was recently project manager for the new Tableland sugar mill, built for Bundaberg Sugar near Mareeba—the first new sugar mill to be constructed in Queensland in 73 years. Our city is the southern gateway to the Barrier Reef, with the islands of Lady Musgrave and Lady Elliott close by. Tourists can enjoy surfing, diving, fishing and whale watching. Nearby Mon Repos beach is the largest and most accessible turtle rookery in Australia. Because of these attractions, together with superb sporting facilities in most codes, Bundaberg now hosts many State and national sporting events and conferences. Our annual Agro Trend has become the largest subtropical primary industry exhibition in Australia, and redeveloped clubs such as Brothers, Across the Waves and the new Burnett Club provide conference facilities equal to the best in capital cities.

We are proud of our heritage. Hinkler House, the English home of our most famous son, Bert Hinkler, was brought back to Bundaberg in pieces and rebuilt in the botanic gardens. Fairymead House, a very old home that played an integral part in the early days of Fairymead sugar mill, has also been moved to the botanic gardens where it has been

restored as a monument to our sugar industry pioneers and opened as a sugar museum. The city boasts many other beautiful old buildings and churches.

In recent years, Bundaberg has seen enormous growth and development in its industries and commerce and in its hospitals, schools, sporting clubs and housing developments. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to say that that growth escalated during the years of the Goss Labor Government. In that time, Bundaberg gained its second traffic bridge—a bridge that had previously been promised by the coalition prior to every election for almost 20 years. We gained land and funds to establish the Central Queensland University campus in Bundaberg. It is again to that Labor Government's credit that 72% of the students currently enrolled at Bundaberg are the first members of their families to ever have the opportunity to enter a university. Just four years after its opening, enrolment numbers have grown so rapidly that funds are now urgently needed for building expansion.

Those were very productive years in Bundaberg. We also gained a DPI regional centre and the commitment to build the new district police station. Our hospital gained a renal unit, a breast screening unit and a mental health unit, and massive hospital extensions were planned. The irrigation scheme was finished, albeit after decades of procrastination and changed plans that totally abandoned the essential Kallawa dam. The people of Bundaberg owe a debt of gratitude to Wayne Goss, Premier Peter Beattie and those other members on this side of the House who were members of that Labor Government.

I am proud of the achievements of the Bundaberg City Council during that time—a time when the city gained an enviable record of achievement in environmental management. Our progressive programs included the redevelopment of the CBD, which is the most successful in regional Queensland; a new library; a recycling centre; the sugar museum; an arts centre; a rollerblade park; and massive beautification programs that have given our city a totally new image and our residents a renewed sense of civic pride. I would like to place on record the loyal service of the council work force, numbering almost 400 men and women, whose pride in their work and in Bundaberg allowed so much to be achieved in such a short time. I count them all as my friends.

Having described the beautiful City of Bundaberg, I must now draw the attention of the House to its problems. The two major problems facing Bundaberg are unemployment and the need for a major water storage. The level of unemployment in Bundaberg is more than double the national average, with more than 5,000 people unemployed and 30% of our young people unable to find work. Clearly, we need the assistance of all three levels of government to overcome the enormous economic and social problems that are resulting from that unemployment. Bundaberg has always been a wonderful city in which to raise a family. But now, many families are breaking up as parents, brothers and sisters have to move away to find work. This is not good enough!

If we are ever going to provide jobs we need new industries, we need expansion of existing industries and we need water to service those industries. With the level of usable water in the Fred Haigh Dam down to 3.5% of its capacity, water allocations to all farmers have been drastically reduced. The current crisis not only threatens existing crops but also puts expansion of farms out of the question and is an insurmountable obstacle to industrial development. Studies are being undertaken on sites for a new dam—an alternative to the Kallawa that was promised in the 1970s and never built.

The sugar industry estimates that, if construction of the proposed Paradise dam were approved now, production could increase by one million tonnes per annum, adding an additional \$50m to the district economy annually and providing more jobs. The fruit and vegetable growers estimate that their crop would escalate from \$126m to in excess of \$170m annually—again creating more jobs. With water available, those value-adding industries and manufacturing industries that have been turned away in the past because no water was available will be able to establish in Bundaberg—again creating more jobs.

These initiatives, together with a commitment to the proposed coal loading port at Coonarr and the Labor Government's plans to employ more apprentices and trainees, would give Bundaberg industries the confidence to expand and place Bundaberg well on the way to economic recovery. But we must have that dam to provide affordable water for the economic stability of our entire region—its industries, its people and our future.

The people of Bundaberg share the concerns of most communities in Queensland

at the declining funds that have been made available in recent years for health, education, safety, aged care and emergency services and at the heavy load that is now being placed on carers and volunteers. I pay tribute to the fine work of groups such as our pensioner and senior citizens groups, which provide a wide range of activities for senior citizens; to those who work unpaid in respite centres and with the disabled; to church and community groups that provide programs for youth; and to those who give their time freely to help others. Such bodies deserve our support and encouragement.

My decade in local government has made me very aware of the problems facing most councils in this State. It has given me the opportunity to listen to people from all walks of life and, through my association with so many mayors and councils throughout Queensland, to share the concerns of local government:

the disastrous Integrated Planning Act, which recently came into force without the t's being crossed or the i's dotted—a total confusion that puts in doubt a council's right to impose standards in its own local government area;

National Competition Policy that is now threatening traditional council business and income and will bring an end to service to the public that has been synonymous with local government since its inception;

the new revenue raising proposals that have the capacity to financially ruin a council; and

so many other issues that I know the Minister is already addressing.

On a lighter note, some members may be aware that when I joined local government in Bundaberg in 1988 I was the only woman on the council. Three years later, six women and only three men were elected. We now have eight women and three men on council—the highest proportion of women on any council in Queensland's history and, I believe, in Australia. I would like to assure members of this House that I am not planning a similar coup here in State Parliament.

The start of a new Parliament is a good time to reassess the role of the politician. People are wanting politicians with a new set of values and a high standard of political ethics to contribute to a more informed debate on the issues confronting Queensland. They want more dignity in the House, as the Premier said last Tuesday.

Politicians must ensure that the environment is protected for the generations to come but, in doing so, we must also ensure that that protection is not used as an excuse to stop progress. Competition is healthy, but not when it is being used as an excuse to turn a publicly owned monopoly into a privately owned monopoly.

Community consultation is necessary but should not be used to cover up a Government's inability or unwillingness to make a decision. The people do not want long lists of regulations, reports, drafts, submissions, committees, subcommittees, white papers and green papers. They do not want to lose their businesses or their jobs. They do not want long hospital waiting lists or to wait three years to see a dentist. The people want politicians who will once again make decisions, provide services, provide a better quality of life, look after the people and restore our State's credibility and its economy.

While the Premier's target to reduce Queensland's unemployment rate to 5% over the next five years is ambitious, it is also achievable, and his determination to provide jobs and job security is certainly a ray of hope in comparison with the defeatist attitude of the coalition, whose recent Budget promised that unemployment would rise even further.

During this term of Parliament, God willing, we will all have the opportunity to see this great State move into the 21st century. I sincerely hope that that momentous occasion will be marked by progress, achievements and stability and that, at that moment in history, by working together, we will all have good reason to feel proud of our contribution.

I am acutely aware of the trust that has been placed in me by the people of my electorate. I pledge my efforts towards the goal of getting more water, industries and jobs for Bundaberg and a more just and fair society for Queensland—socially and economically. I thank my supporters for their confidence and for this opportunity to work towards those goals. As I take my place in this Legislative Assembly I repeat the words of Carmen Lawrence, who, on gaining office as Premier of Western Australia, said—

"I hope to bring to this position some of the attributes that underlie the contribution of all women in the community ... a willingness to listen, a commitment to hard work, a generosity of spirit, and lots of old fashioned common sense."

Sitting suspended from 12.46 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before I call the honourable member for Mansfield, I remind honourable members that this is the member's maiden speech, and I ask them to extend to him the courtesies of the House.

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I second the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply moved by my colleague the member for Bundaberg. I congratulate her on her first speech, which she has just delivered. The people who know me well would believe it is entirely appropriate for me to speak after the member for the area that produces one of my favourite products.

I thank His Excellency the Governor for his Speech. I sincerely thank the electors of Mansfield for honouring me by electing me to be their representative in State Parliament. As an Upper Mount Gravatt boy born and bred, it is indeed a moment of intense pride and a great honour to rise for the first time as the member for the electorate of Mansfield, the electorate in which I have lived for my entire life.

I begin by paying respect to the traditional owners of the land on which the Parliament and the electorate of Mansfield are situated, the Jagera people. Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House. I also extend congratulations to the Premier and the other members of the new Labor Government.

In the days following the election, when I waited to hear the updated count, it was not lost on me how important it was that I be successful—not just for me but also for the economic and political stability of Queensland. It is satisfying to know that I did not disappoint. It may surprise some people that I had a very privileged upbringing—privileged by the family and friends that I have; not by wealth in monetary terms, but wealth in the form of love and support.

Both of my parents, Ron and Terry, are the greatest role models that one could ask for. Mum and dad illustrated to me, not by words but by action, the benefits of volunteering for community work—the personal benefits and the benefits that we can give to others who may need it. Whether it was through the local P & Fs, sporting groups, St Vincent De Paul or the Catholic Women's League, they showed me that to get total fulfilment in life one cannot be just a mere spectator; one should choose to become an active community member—get involved—and not leave it up to some other mystery person.

It should not have been a shock to my parents when I joined our family's beloved Brothers Rugby League and soon after became secretary of the juniors and later the senior club, or when I joined the Australian Labor Party and became closely involved in our local branches—as a consequence I am here today. I was just following the role model that they set. I am eternally grateful to them for all of their love and support throughout my life.

I sincerely thank my brothers and sisters, Tony, Kevin, Donna and Anne; my brothers-in-law, Chris and Peter; my nieces and nephews, Nicholas, Madeleine, Michaela, Daniel, Helen and Christina for their support in the good times and the bad. I especially thank my brother Tony for introducing me to the Australian Labor Party.

The south side electorate of Mansfield occupies some 88 square kilometres. I wish to talk about neither the land nor the bricks and mortar of the electorate but about its greatest asset—the people within it. Mansfield has one of the most diverse populations in the State. With over 26% of the population born overseas and with 17% of its entire population born in non-English speaking countries, the diversity is there for all to see. One need only go to our local schools to see how great it is to live in this diverse area. The Mansfield electorate is a fine example of an area that shows the true benefits of multicultural Australia.

That diversity can best be illustrated by informing the members of this House about the functions I attended the weekend before last. At lunchtime on Saturday I attended the 80th Mount Gravatt Show, the only show of its type in the city. That afternoon I attended the opening of the Islamic Mosque in Logan City, at which over 400 Mansfield families will worship regularly. That evening I attended the annual dinner of the Taiwan Women's League of Queensland. The next day I attended the Belmont State School Fete. That afternoon I was invited to the opening of the \$1.4m music centre at the Redeemer Lutheran College. I finished off my weekend with a meeting with Rochedale residents regarding the Brisbane landfill. When I arrived home from that weekend, I realised how honoured I am to represent such a diverse community that is a part of our multicultural State and country. I will continue to tell anyone who will listen how proud I am of that ethnic diversity. I know that all members of the Labor Government fully support our multicultural society.

The Australian Labor Party is a political party that has and will outlast any other parties. It is an institution with principle. That is no more evident than in the election just held. It is a party that believes Governments have a vital role to ensure that all people are given opportunities to reach their full potential irrespective of their sex, sexual preference, race, colour, religion or disability. The Labor Party's greatest assets are its members and supporters. These women and men are the heart and soul of our party. We on this side of the House must not ever get into the position whereby we forget or stop listening to our heart and soul. We would do that at our peril.

My success in Mansfield can be attributed to a number of factors. The No. 1 reason is that I had many of these "heart and soulers" campaigning with me. Although I do not have the ability to list everyone, I wish to thank every single person who committed time, effort, money and resources to my campaign. I do, however, wish to acknowledge some special people. My campaign director, Scott Zackeresen, and my assistant director, Peter Allen, were two good sounding boards and gave the campaign the direction it needed. I offer my heartfelt thanks to my fellow members of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, under the guidance of Don Brown. The enthusiasm and youthfulness of Jenny Simpson, Stephen Gay and my other friends from the QUT Student Guild gave the campaign the grunt it needed.

I appreciate the support and effort from start to finish of the members of both the Mansfield and Cresthaven branches of the ALP. I need to make special mention of the effort of party members Maggie Newlove, Shirley and Len Fallows, Pat O'Leary, Steve Axe, David Bates, Robin and Kevin Bianchi and family, Michelle Boyle, Peter Wood, David Anthony and family, Cameron Dick, Paul Burton, Kerry Rea, Neil and Judy Bennett, Peter McAuliffe, Stewart Fyfe, Terri Birrell and Shaun Gordon. The assistance from party office was first-class. To Mike Kaiser and the team, including the campaign organisers who had faith in me, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

Linda Holiday provided me with excellent advice and support from preselection till post-election and, in fact, is still giving unselfishly. Words cannot describe my appreciation of her. I say a big thankyou to many members present today. I offer extra special thanks to the member for Mount Gravatt, Minister Judy Spence; the member for Sunnybank, Stephen Robertson; the member for Lytton, Paul Lucas; and the member for Yeronga, Minister Matt Foley. I hope the member for Yeronga

has recovered from the bus ride up Mount Gravatt Mountain.

Throughout my life I have been blessed by the friends I have had. They have come from a variety of backgrounds—the neighbourhood, Telecom, football, Leisure Studies, my business, Phantom Races and many other places. My friends and relatives are my heart and soul. Without their friendship and support throughout my life, I would not be standing here today.

I wish I could mention everyone personally, but that would be impossible. However, I need to acknowledge a couple of people. I thank the "real" John Howard and Danny Reihana for their friendship and support over a number of years, including today. I say a big thankyou to a close family friend, Ted Glass, for not only helping through the campaign but also for his long friendship with our family. I can confidently tell the House that Brothers are odds on to win the premiership this year.

I say to John Coakley that we went through a few trials and tribulations through the campaign. However, this was a positive as now we have become closer friends. I thank my long-time Labor friends in Canberra—Detlef Jumpertz, Kim Connolly and Geoff Allan—for their moral support. I say to my close friend Mark Eaves: we came from different sides of the river. However, we found we had a number of things in common—Brothers and the ALP. He showed me a great lesson in life: if one has a dream, do not die wondering, do it. He had a dream of Phantom Race Calls, and the rest is history, with a highly successful business. I had one, too, and here I am. I will miss the close working relationship we had and those endless hours of driving up and down the coast. However, I know that our friendship will remain.

The Labor Party is often criticised because of its links with the trade union movement. The trade union movement and the Labor Party have a right to feel justifiably proud of their relationship. The trade union movement has as its goal to protect and improve the working conditions of all Australians. This has been the very foundation of the Labor Party from formation.

As a member of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, I am proud to say that I am fully supportive of the trade union movement and I will continue to ensure that workers' rights are a fundamental goal of this Government. In April this year I stood as one with 3,000 other trade union members and supporters very late on a cold Sunday

evening at Brisbane port. That evening highlighted that Queenslanders have a fundamental desire to address unfair actions by employers and Governments. I will continue to fight for all Queenslanders and to protest against the wrongs that have been done them.

When one is discussing people's rights, one must not forget those of the indigenous people of our State. On 3 June 1997 I sat in the public gallery to listen to a motion moved by the now Premier. The motion was designed to provide an apology to the indigenous people for past policies under which their children were forcibly separated from their families. In his speech, the member for Brisbane Central quoted stories from the report on the stolen generation. Unbeknown to him, family members of the children of that stolen generation who were mentioned in those stories were sitting next to me in the gallery. The tears of hurt were apparent for all in the gallery to see. To the gallery's anguish, the Government of the day voted against the Labor motion. To my disappointment and to the disappointment of those whom I have been elected to represent, the former member for Mansfield, who had promoted to anyone who would listen that he had the highest of Christian morals and beliefs, voted against the motion.

Members of this House who use their religion as a political selling factor should ensure that their words are matched with actions. Put simply, if they are going to take the high moral ground, they should make sure that they are consistent and do not push it to the background when there are political or personal considerations involved. One of the first Christian principles that I learnt was to ask for forgiveness and say sorry to God, yet the former Government and this former member forgot that on 3 June.

I am very lucky to be here. My luck comes not just from being elected after such a close contest but from being able to make choices throughout my life. I was lucky that, after attending St Catherine's and Clairvaux College, I was able to choose to leave school at the age of 15. This choice could be made as there were jobs available. I was lucky that, after being retrenched at the tender age of 18, my family, the CES and Social Security were there to assist. I was lucky that I was able to choose to do a Public Service/Telecom examination to apply for entry and I was lucky that Telecom was employing and not retrenching at the time.

I was lucky that I was able to choose to leave Telecom to better myself and study for a tertiary preparation certificate at Redlands Community College, now known as Bayside—lucky because Austudy was still in place to enable me to make that choice. I was lucky that I was able to choose to do a Bachelor of Leisure Management at Griffith University—lucky because back in 1972 the Whitlam Labor Government was elected, which opened up free access to our universities. I was lucky that, at the conclusion of that course, I was able to choose to set up my own business.

It is unfortunate that, if I were 15 today, I would not be able to make those choices. Instead of having Governments which enable people to make choices, we have Governments which want to put the entire burden onto people and their families. While my parents would have supported me, there is no way they could have or should have been expected to. I am happy to say that, at least at State level, progressive government has been returned. We now have a Government that understands how important it is for people, particularly our young people, to be able to choose their future. I do not believe that it will be too long before we have the return of a progressive Federal Labor Government.

At the same time as young people are not able to make the choices that most of us were able to, we hear many statements such as that young people have more freedom today than they ever had. Let us examine this so-called freedom. Have they really got freedom? I have already expressed the lack of freedom in choice of career development today. Do people allow their 16-year-old daughter to walk from Garden City to Mansfield on their own today? Is it safer today in our schools? With the youth suicide rate so high, is it safer? Are there fewer racial taunts on our young people today? To all those questions I think the answer is: no. Is this what more freedom is? I regard these statements about young people having more freedom as just populist fantasy. In fact, our young people have got much less freedom; they do not have choice or certainty. It is the duty of all of us in this place to ensure that we address these problems. To offer them freedom, we must give our young people the opportunity to choose and to feel safe in our society. The statement that our young people are our future is a false one; they are our present.

I now wish to discuss the composition of the 49th Parliament. Contrary to media reports, this Parliament contains 23 new

members, with another two who have been returned from the 47th Parliament. With over a quarter of this Parliament's members being new, we have been given a unique opportunity to change the way things have been done in the past. The One Nation members do not have the sole right to be disillusioned with the past. If we continue to dwell on the past we will not be doing our job. Our role should be to make improvements in the future. We all need to work together to ensure that the people of our electorates regain respect for Parliament and its politicians—and yes, we are all politicians, whether we like to admit it or not.

As the Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary says, a politician is one who is interested in or engaged in politics, especially as a profession. I firmly believe that we must illustrate to the community in the House, in our committees and in our work throughout the electorate that we are committed to ensuring a better future for our constituents and their families. If we continue to make personal attacks and look backwards, we will lose the moment. To use the words from that great movie *Carpe Diem*—we all need to seize the day. I do not believe that this opportunity will present itself again.

I have set five personal objectives to achieve in my term as the member for Mansfield. The first is to ensure that we introduce some real and long-term effective strategies to fix up the traffic problems experienced on Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Road. Secondly, I will continue to work closely with the local community in its attempts to gain a young people's community centre. Thirdly, I want to help establish a south side events committee made up of people from sports and community groups, local businesses, schools and churches, and the local residents. Fourthly, I want to facilitate the holding of a number of "meet your neighbours" activities throughout the electorate to assist in the community development of our suburbs. The last objective is more of a goal regarding the Labor Government. It is to ensure that, for the length of our term, we do not allow the hijacking of our policies by the economic rationalists of this world. If they try to, we must be prepared to fight the fight against the perpetrators. We must put people before large profits.

I do not profess to be a Rhodes scholar—no offence to the Treasurer—or the most articulate person in this House. However, I do believe that I can communicate with people from all walks of life and that I understand the different trials and tribulations

that they may face. I am ready, willing and able to assist the people of my electorate to gain their full potential. I will not try to pretend that I am someone else; I do not have the traditional wife and two and a half kids, so what you see is what you get. In three years' time I will put myself before the people of Mansfield and ask them to judge me on my performance. In the meantime, I will give them my best.

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Warwick—NPA) (2.47 p.m.): I would like to thank the Governor of Queensland very much for his address and for the opportunity to be able to make a few comments in response. Before I do that, I join with my colleagues who have welcomed the new members of this Parliament and say that it really is an honourable experience; it is a great opportunity. As I say to school students when I travel around Queensland, we have something like 2.2 million voters in a State of about three million people, and each election 89 people are elected to this Parliament. It really is a great institution and they should all be very honoured to have been elected to serve in it.

It is fair to say that for each and every one of the members who come into this place, even though in some cases they may have similar ideals and similar philosophies, there are a range of different things that they want to achieve during their time in this Parliament. As I say, it is an interesting institution. I note that a couple of members who were first elected to this place along with me in 1989 have lost their seats since then and have been re-elected. So Parliament can also be a rather fickle institution. That is another thing to consider.

I think it would be somewhat remiss of me if I did not pay tribute to my wife and family for the support that they have given me over the past eight and a half years that I have been in this place.

**Mr Schwarten:** Putting up with you.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** For putting up with me, as the honourable member for Rockhampton says. My father, in particular, who I think was looking forward to having his only son come back onto the farm and help him in his retirement years, has had to put up with me being away and not being able to assist him. I think my mother was also looking forward to having me around to help out. My wife, Linda, has tolerated me and has been a great support to me over the past eight and a half years. We were married only one month before I came into this place.

**Mr Schwarten:** You had her out doorknocking.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I think it is widely known now that we did, in fact, spend our honeymoon doorknocking. We were married on Saturday, drove home on Sunday, commenced doorknocking on Monday, and I entered Parliament a month later.

The point I am trying to make is that being a member of Parliament does call for a lot of commitment not only on the part of the member of Parliament but also on their family—their spouse and immediate family. A lot of people do not realise the unbelievable pressures that are involved. When I was a Minister, for example, I was away from home for something like six out of seven nights a week. I am sure that most of the current Ministers appreciate that fact. Many members who represent rural constituencies will appreciate this as well. We have long distances to travel and we have to be away from home a lot. We may be away from home on some evenings but manage to wake up in our own beds.

**Mr Schwarten:** The day your son rang up in Toowoomba and said, "Are you coming home tonight?" People don't understand that.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Yes. There is another very interesting story. My wife came to Inglewood in my electorate to vote on election day. She left me in the car to watch the children while she went and voted. My young bloke, who was three years and eight months old, looked me in the eye and he said, "You know, Daddy, I hope you lose your seat tonight because you can be home with me." I said to him, "Who will buy you all the toys?" He said, "Oh, Uncle Steven." That is the sort of thing that we have to go through. It is something that we must recognise.

My three children do not see much of me. I wish to thank my daughter Megan, who is in Year 1, Jens, and my little daughter Laura who is 10 months of age. On this latest stint I have been away from home for two weeks. I speak to them on the telephone and I am very much looking forward to seeing them again when I get back home.

I want to make some general comments regarding my electorate. I wish to thank the electorate for its support and friendship over the past eight and a half years. I particularly thank Ian Jackson, who works for me in my electorate office, and Jane Grieve, who works for me in my part-time electorate office in Warwick. One thing we do not consider in this Parliament is that most members, even though we have philosophic differences,

represent our electorates very well. The electorate might not think so, but members do what they believe is the right thing for the electorate. Ultimately, of course, the electorate passes judgment.

In my case, I felt it was necessary to put a second electorate office in my electorate after the redistribution. I pay for the Warwick office myself. I opened that office to ensure that I provided a continuous service in the area so that after the redistribution there was not a diminution in services. I thank Ian and Jane and their respective families for their support.

I would also like to thank my branch people for their wonderful support in the time that I have been in Parliament. I know it is very difficult for them in times of economic hardship to be able to raise funds and to give of the time that is required to attend branch meetings and do the other work which is necessary to support the local member on election day or at functions throughout the year.

In my electorate of Warwick we have seen some very great improvements in service in the time when the coalition was in Government. I would like to refer particularly to roads. The Yelarbon-Texas Road is a very important connection road. It runs down to the Whyalla feedlot, which is one of Australia's largest feedlots and which employs a large number of people. It is a great value adding enterprise and it injects tens of millions of dollars each year into the local, Queensland and Australian economies.

There is a project in place to upgrade the Millmerran-Texas Road. No doubt the honourable member for Cunningham will be very happy to hear that. We will see more bitumen being placed on that road. When people come beetling down the road they will not see so many stones and not so much dust in the future.

In His Excellency's address to the Parliament there was one thing that concerned me by its very omission. I refer to the fact that the Government did not appear to give much priority to water infrastructure. It is pleasing to see the new Minister for Natural Resources in the Chamber because this is a matter with which I was vitally concerned when I was Minister. I have been concerned with this issue right throughout the time I have been in this Parliament.

**Mr Schwarten:** You ended up being caught by the coat-tails.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I think the Minister is the one who ended up being caught by the

tail. The coalition made all of the absolutely correct decisions. The Honourable the Minister has now had an opportunity to be able to observe the decision-making process that went on concerning the Comet River dam and the Dawson River dam. The decisions that we made were correct on economic and environmental grounds.

I pointed out to the honourable member for Rockhampton during a previous debate that we need to be very careful because it is so easy to embroil ourselves in controversy sometimes of our own making and sometimes not. It is easy to go off chasing after other things. One of the difficulties that any Government in this State will face is the construction of very necessary infrastructure, whether it be roads, railways, ports, mines or dams. People want to be involved in the process today, and that is fair enough. They have empowered themselves. It does not matter how comprehensive a report is—

**Mr Swarten:** You didn't do it properly.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Yes, we did. We undertook the process of consultation and environmental impact assessments. Whilst 99.9% of an issue might not be argued over, in some cases we end up quibbling over some form of words or whatever the case may be. We need to be cautious because the provision of infrastructure continues to be important.

Those opposite talk about jobs. It is on record that the former Premier, Wayne Goss, said that there were 100,000 jobs in this. Those opposite have said that they have seen the light—

**Mr Swarten:** You don't put butter on burns any more.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There is no doubt that the Dawson River dam was going to be a great job-creating project for central Queensland. It involved tens of thousands of jobs. This project was going to filter, either directly or indirectly, right through central Queensland. I was very concerned that that was not mentioned in His Excellency's Speech.

I encourage the new Government to ensure that the new dam which is proposed for the southern part of the Granite Belt near Ballandean goes ahead. Only recently we knocked the Broadwater dam on the head. That dam was proposed for the northern part of the Granite Belt and had been talked about for a long time. Over that period of time the people had put their own infrastructure in place and the amount of water which would flow into the dam had been somewhat

reduced by the level of private development. As a result, the cost per megalitre of water could not be justified. We now have the opportunity to establish a new dam on the Granite Belt. The money for a feasibility study has been granted. The dam will cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$30m and will yield about 8 million megalitres per year for town water supply and for irrigation. It is a most necessary development for the Granite Belt. I encourage the Minister to look very carefully at that development.

I would like to refer to the development that has occurred in schools in my electorate. It was great being able to assist with the provision of numerous resources for the Inglewood State School. This development cost something of the order of \$700,000. When I was at school there the teachers and the librarian had to pack up the books and put them on tables every time there was a rise in the level of the creek. We now have a raised resources centre which has been purpose-built and which is going to allow the children access to the latest technology. It will also overcome the previous concern about flooding.

We have the new home economics building at the Warwick State High School and the special education centre at Warwick East. At Glennie Heights we have the new preschool which will take into consideration some of the growth problems that were emerging there over time. At Warwick West we have the new general learning areas. I could go on and on. In Stanthorpe we have the covered play area and the new administration block. I believe that the Building Better Schools initiative was a great concept and I pay tribute to the former Government for that. The former Minister for Education had the foresight to keep it going and he was carrying it through. This concept has seen significant upgrades in many of the schools in our electorates. Areas which were not previously properly used are now properly used and have been turned into practical working environments. One thing that used to disturb me greatly when I became the member for Carnarvon, as it was then—based on Stanthorpe and Goondiwindi—was that we had constructed buildings that were purpose built for the tropics, not for an area that experienced sleet and roaring westerly winds at a temperature of about 5 degrees. So we have tended to consult the communities a lot more in the past decade. The outside veranda areas of schools are now being built in, providing a far greater learning area for students.

I turn now to emergency services. One concern of the people of Warwick is the

potential downgrading of the fire station, which is currently a 24-hour, permanently staffed fire station. There is some concern that it is going to go back to being a station that is manned by permanent firefighters only during the day, relying on off-duty firefighters and auxiliary staff after hours. I acknowledge that new safety requirements stipulate that there must be three officers and one firefighter on duty at a 24-hour station, whereas in the past it was a one-on-one situation. However, the problem is that we do not have enough officers to staff that particular station on a 24-hour basis. I have called for a public meeting to be held in town next week. I acknowledge that the Minister has put the decision on this on hold pending the outcome of that meeting. At that meeting I will be explaining all of this to the community.

It is important to note that a mantle of safety has existed over that station for a long time, because it has operated as a 24-hour station and has been staffed by permanent firefighters. We are now telling people that for, say, 11 hours of the day it will now be staffed by auxiliary staff. Although people have confidence in those auxiliary staff, they are not so sure that the turnout times will be comparable with those that one could expect from a permanent firefighting crew. The challenge now is to convince the community that they are going to be safer, because if the community does not feel that it is safe, it becomes unsafe.

**Mr Schwarten** interjected.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** People fear what can happen. In the end, perception becomes a reality, and this affects other potential business investment in the area. We have seen this happen with Danpork—and I hope it is not very far away—with the Big W distribution centre, which is the biggest north of Sydney, and other potential business investment. The challenge of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is to convince the community that this will be to its benefit. Allora now has a brand-new fire station. It is a dual-purpose fire station which serves the town's auxiliary and the local rural fire brigade. When we built that new station, it made sense to incorporate all of that under the one roof rather than to have fragmentation.

I now want to pick up on a subject that was raised earlier today. It is a subject about which I am very interested, and it was something to which we committed ourselves some time before the last State election. Unfortunately, the process that we had to go through was brought about by the dreaded

National Competition Policy. I refer to concern about dairy industry deregulation. It is very important to ensure that we maintain a proper farm gate price in Queensland. If we fail to do that, it will have the effect of squeezing out many dairy producers in this State. At the end of the day, it will not mean that consumers are going to get cheaper milk; there is no way on earth that that would happen. If it is abolished, the producer will get less, the consumer will pay more, and somewhere in the middle somebody will make a big fat profit.

One has only to look at what happened during the drought on the southern downs during the early 1990s. In many cases the feed bills of many dairy farmers exceeded their milk quota cheques. That situation was made even worse if the dairy farmers were producing manufacturing milk because their fresh milk quotas were not great. So the challenge for this new Minister is to ensure that he considers and adopts the retention of that farm gate price not only for the benefit of dairy farmers but also for the benefit of consumers in this State, because it guarantees a fresh, daily supply of a very wholesome product. That is of prime importance.

I do not believe that there can be any further rationalisation of the dairy industry in this State. Fifty years ago, everybody used to milk 30, 40 or 50 cows before they went off to school, and there was a dairy factory or butter factory every 10 or 15 kilometres. There was a very good reason for that: for transport people had only a horse and cart or a steam train. But modern transportation caused the centralisation of that particular manufacturing process. However, we cannot allow further centralisation of that process, and there is probably a lot that we can learn from history.

While I am seeking assurances from the Government, I seek an assurance from the Minister for Education that the new administration block for the Allora State School will stay at the top of the planning list and will go to the top of the funding list for next year. I understand that the administration block is at the top of the planning list for the local region. That school has very considerable requirements.

I refer also to Wallangarra. The former Minister for Local Government, under the Small Communities Assistance Program, assisted that particular community in the Stanthorpe Shire to the extent of a pledge of \$600,000 to assist them with new water infrastructure in that town. The old asbestos pipes, which were laid in the 1940s, are bursting all over the place, sometimes a

couple of times a week. We had pledged that money as part of the Small Communities Assistance Program. That community had nothing done for it for many years. There was a crying need for that water infrastructure. I am sure that the new Government will commit to that project. That was testament to that scheme which the former Minister put in place, and it assisted a great number of communities throughout my electorate, including Texas, which was successful in achieving \$475,000 in funding for a new water filtration plant. I suppose a water filtration system is something that many people take for granted. However, I ask members to imagine being in the position of a young mother in Texas. While the river runs clear, everything is fine. But if not, and she has to wash a heap of nappies, they come out of the water a worse colour than they were when they went in. That causes some degree of consternation. Or if she runs a bath, she will notice a bit of dirt going down the plughole. That system will be of great assistance in increasing the water quality in that community.

My challenge to the Honourable Minister for Natural Resources is to forge ahead with the water infrastructure program. It was a very comprehensive program. Whereas the Minister may disagree with some aspects of it, it sought to take the politics out of building water infrastructure in this State so that people could properly monitor and study water catchments to find out how much water was available for the environment and infrastructure and then to put in place a program for the construction of that infrastructure. That had not happened in this State in the past, and it would be a great pity to see it thrown away.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr D'Arcy): Order! Before I call the honourable member for Cairns, I remind members that this will be her maiden speech. Would members please extend to her the courtesies of the House?

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (3.07 p.m.): I am pleased, proud and, most of all, privileged to speak for the first time in this House as the member for Cairns. I extend my congratulations to all honourable members of this House on their election and re-election. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I extend my congratulations to Mr Speaker on his election to that high office and my unequivocal support in assisting him to carry out the responsibilities of upholding the finest principles of our social democratic traditions.

Though over a month has passed since the election, I find that I am still frequently

filled with amazement at my good fortune in having reached a position of such importance and privilege as that of the member for Cairns. It is appropriate at this time to recall the proud history of the Labor Party in the seat of Cairns. It has been held by the Labor Party since 1904, with the exception of several years during the 1940s when it was held by a Labor Independent. It was therefore, with cause, a significant celebration for the party in Cairns that I, as the Labor candidate, was elected on 13 June to continue this extraordinary mandate.

I am conscious of the high quality of representation given Cairns by my immediate predecessors. Ray Jones served from 1965 to 1983. Truly a man of the people and a gentleman, he worked tirelessly over all those years, despite the then even greater exigencies arising through the distance of Cairns from the seat of Government. I recognise again his very considerable contribution, and I thank him for his continuing support.

My immediate predecessor as member for Cairns, Keith De Lacy, has indeed set high standards for me to follow. He served from 1983 until this year. He successfully promoted the needs of Cairns across all sectors of Government and gave strong leadership to the State of Queensland as Treasurer from 1989 to 1996. Mr De Lacy's approach on all matters was considered and intelligent. He is widely respected as a man of integrity. I could not be more fortunate in having his support and guidance, particularly in this early period of the 49th Parliament.

I am the first woman to be elected as the member for Cairns. This is a matter of some pride for me, though, more than anything, it is a sign of the times and of the progress that women are making in society. It is noteworthy that at no stage during the election campaign was my gender, or the gender of the other candidates, raised as an issue. My congratulations to the other women elected to this Parliament, numbering as we now do around 18% of the complement of members. I hope Keith De Lacy's comment in his 1983, as it was then termed, "maiden speech" will prove true that women "will bring their own distinctive character to this House and perhaps raise the tone somewhat".

I wish also to recognise and thank the large number of people who assisted and supported me during the campaign and on polling day. I thank the members of the campaign committee, those who worked so hard in the office, members of branches in the

Cairns area, polling booth workers, scrutineers, and many others who made financial and other contributions large and small. Together, though not on our own, we won this election. We were underlined, one might say, by the positive policies of the Queensland Labor Party and the leadership and energy of Peter Beattie and the team which is now the Cabinet of the Labor Government. At the personal level I know how impossible my success would have been without the encouragement, support and love freely given me by my mother, my brothers and, especially, my children.

I turn now to my favourite topic: Cairns. It had a population of only 27,000 people when Ray Jones commenced his service in the Parliament, a population of 65,000 when Keith De Lacy was first elected and now the resident population is 110,000. Cairns is a rapidly growing regional city in the tropics endowed with a natural environment that, even for the locals, still takes one's breath away. Cairns is the only city closely bordered by two World Heritage areas: the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics rainforest. These provide natural advantages for the health and lifestyle of the people. Mindful of their importance also as international assets, Cairns bears a responsibility to protect and manage them wisely. There has been an exponential increase in visitors to the region since the early eighties. Visitors were attracted initially and still are substantively by those environmental features.

Subsequently Cairns has become, disproportionately to its size, internationally famous. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The over one million visitors each year, the international and sometimes sensationalised media attention and the periods of rapid and uneven development have all contributed to uneven ebbs and flows in the prosperity and wellbeing of the resident community. Nonetheless, the importance to the Cairns economy of our continuing to be well positioned in international tourism is undeniable. The immediate and substantial support that Premier Peter Beattie has already demonstrated in his first month of Government has been widely welcomed in the far north. Our tourism marketing is being reoriented towards Europe and the United States. At the same time, however, we are pleased with the Premier's clear recognition of the importance of maintaining and confirming our links with the countries of Asia. Visitors from around Queensland and from around the rest of Australia are just as valued, not only for their contribution to the tourist economy but also

because they provide for us in Cairns a connection with other parts of our nation and allow us to share and showcase our region. They contribute to what must never be lost, that indefinable but essential element that keeps Cairns proudly Australian.

Cairns is, however, much more than a tourism destination. It is also a city that provides goods and services to the region of the near Pacific, the Cape York Peninsula, the Atherton Tableland and the coast of far-north Queensland. The dependence of Cairns on the prosperity of its surrounding areas gives me an imperative to work with my neighbouring elected members towards promoting the development and stability of the broader region of far-north Queensland. In this connection, I give recognition to the importance of sugar and other agricultural, mining, fishing and marine-based industries in the far north. Cairns' involvement in international, national and regional activities has sometimes led residents of Cairns to feel overrun by externalities. For the future of Cairns, it is important that the local people are given a strong voice in decision making and direction setting, not least so far as Government activity is concerned. The time is now right to implement Labor's policy which recognises Cairns as a city in its own right. Labor's commitment that, from now, State Government departments and agencies in Cairns will be self-managed and will communicate with and report directly to Brisbane is essential and reflects the city's growing maturity as well as its significant contribution to the State of Queensland.

The Labor Government's focus on jobs and job security is welcomed widely in Cairns, though there are some, unfortunately, who prefer to criticise Labor's target rather than contribute their own efforts towards that worthy goal. Although the estimated unemployment rate in Cairns is less than in some other centres, the casualisation of the workforce is a serious problem preventing, as it does, those in need of a full and steady income from establishing homes, families and a future. One worrying trend is that, while the gross regional product has risen steadily over the last decade, wages and salaries have declined as a proportion of GRP. That lower regional wage and salary structure is probably a contributing factor to the higher-than-average percentage of residents who wish to participate in the work force. Presently there is a serious problem of underemployment—people who have the capability and the wish to be productive but who are not afforded the opportunity. I make the commitment to work with the Government

and the private sector to find innovative, modern and effective solutions to employment-related problems. Health and community issues will take a high priority in my work plan alongside the extension of employment, recreational and sporting opportunities for young people, for people with disabilities and for the elderly of the community. However, in the Cairns electorate no single project matters more than the completion of the redevelopment of the Cairns Hospital. It was first mooted in 1989. The process has been long and difficult. It is essential and right and proper that the funds necessary to fully complete the redevelopment of the Cairns Hospital be provided.

While we may wish it were not so, it is true that the city centre of Cairns is at this time in some difficulty. What is required is a redefinition of the style and functions of the city centre—of the ambience, of the sense of place as the heart of Cairns. The city centre will be revitalised as a vibrant residential, recreational, business and shopping precinct with a wide choice of cultural and entertainment options and international restaurants and eateries that will make lingering on the weekends and in the balmy evenings in the City of Cairns irresistible. Practical assistance will come from Labor's commitment of \$10m to the revitalisation program and to the integration of the city with its Esplanade and the port of Cairns. Additional commitments have been made to the expansion of the Cairns Convention Centre, the establishment of a basketball stadium and associated sporting facilities as well as support for the council's redevelopment proposal for the Esplanade.

In the education sector it is important to engender better links between high schools and tertiary education options and between high schools and workplaces. Also required is stabilisation of the important role of the Institute of Technical and Further Education and recognition given to the growing partnership being forged between the institute and the Cairns campus of the James Cook University, which will result in better and wider education choices for residents of all ages. The export of education services is one of the growing elements of the Cairns economy and promises much for the future. The Labor Government will, I am sure, be called on to assist private educational facilities and, in particular, an international university wishing to establish in the Cairns area.

Cairns is well placed in having a strategic economic development plan and in having begun its implementation. As well as the

recently formed Cairns Region Economic Development Corporation, there is a network of active business and subregional development organisations. Already, many have expressed their commitment to working in partnership with this Government through the new Department of State Development and Trade.

However, it should not be forgotten that Cairns is a small-business town. Very many businesses employ fewer than five people. A good rule of thumb for sound economic development is to ensure the retention and strengthening of existing businesses. Therefore, Cairns will look to the new department for on-the-ground, practical action in support of small business in balance with its role in developing export opportunities and enticing new businesses to the region.

In all this, what matters most is people. We are fortunate in Cairns to have a long history of multiculturalism—one that goes back a long time before the word itself came into common usage. We in the north are proud of our diverse heritage. We are proud, too, that the region of far-north Queensland is home to the largest proportion of the State's indigenous peoples. We support reconciliation and negotiated solutions, preferring to avoid legal or political redress where possible. I look forward to working closely with the many active indigenous leaders and organisations towards further reducing the historical disadvantage of their people and towards a full and healthy participation by the indigenous children of today in the future both of Cairns and the State.

One thing I must say about the people of Cairns, whatever their cultural background, is that they are a demanding lot who have a history of working hard, of pioneering, of volunteering where people are in need or when crises arise, of independence, and of a healthy scepticism of southern-based authorities. They will not allow me an easy ride as their member, although they will make the job easier by keeping me fully aware of their wishes, opinions, projects and best suggestions for the prosperity and health of the community. Should I lapse in listening, I have no doubt that they will repeat their messages or raise their tones if necessary.

One message sent by many electors who did not vote for the major parties was that they feel run over by politicians who seem to care more for economic rationalist arguments about money than for the people of their electorates. People who are doing their best to have a go, to work, to keep a home and family together

and to look to a brighter future feel that, instead, life is getting harder with change after change being thrust upon them and with no end in sight. Although many of the changes are the outcome of complex social and technological imperatives beyond the scope of this Parliament to control, the message is clear. People expect their representatives to understand, to care, to speak for them and to be seen to do all that can reasonably be done when ill health, injustice or tragedy strikes.

However, this is a distinctly different message from that which was sent by some members of this House in their first speeches. Far from the politics of reason and representation, instead we heard the politics of anger. The politics of anger is indulgent, dangerous and divisive. It is indulgent because it is easy to rage and rant, to criticise and blame, to accuse of conspiracy, and to rail against whatever is and against that which actually is not but is fantasised to be so. It is dangerous because it creates an illusion of fighting the system. It grabs media attention. It courts, although in the end it will not satisfy, those drawn to it by vulnerability or disappointment. It is divisive because, behind a mask of unity, it emphasises extremes, it separates, it pulls apart, and it pits Queenslanders against Queenslanders, Australians against Australians.

How much harder is the politics of reason and representation. How much harder it is to take the time and make the effort to understand, to analyse, to balance diverse and differing opinions, to search for wiser solutions, to initiate, to persevere and to actually make changes by deliberate decision and concerted action. Harder it may be, but the politics of reason and representation is the proper and responsible course and the one that I will follow as I grow in knowledge and experience.

As this opportunity to speak draws to a close, I pledge my loyalty to the State and to its institutions and values. I pledge to speak in this House in the right and proper manner. I pledge not to abuse or use irresponsibly the privilege of my position. I pledge to the people of Cairns strong representation regardless of political affiliation. I pledge hard work, active participation in community life, accessibility, practical action and a determination to assist the other honourable members of this House, particularly those holding ministerial positions, to be cognisant of the particular needs of Cairns. I am proud to be a member of the Labor Government, having as I do such respect for the qualities of the Premier, Peter Beattie, and for his team of Ministers.

Lastly, and yet still foremost in my mind, I express my sincere appreciation to the people of Cairns who have elected me as their representative. I will seek to honour their faith and confidence in me and to consider their wellbeing now and in the future above all else.

**Mr ELLIOTT** (Cunningham—NPA) (3.25 p.m.): In rising to take part in this debate on the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech, which I thought was a particularly interesting one, I pledge my loyalty and that of the subjects of Cunningham to Her Majesty through his Excellency the Governor. I would also like to say that the Governor, who has not held that position for very long, is doing a very good job. I believe that he has shown himself to be an excellent choice for the position. He is very much a hail-fellow-well-met type of person. For a long period we in Queensland have been very lucky because most of the Governors who have been appointed have been of the same mould and they have done an excellent job. The role of Governor is a very important one in our society, and I certainly support our Governor to the hilt.

I take this opportunity to thank those people who assisted me in the election campaign, particularly those people on my campaign committee and those party members who stayed loyal to me, handed out how-to-vote cards, and did all of those other things that people do in an election campaign. It was not an easy task, but those people's loyalty is greatly appreciated. Loyalty is a two-way street—it really is—and it was interesting to see those people throughout the State who stuck with the National Party and those people who did not. I certainly appreciated that the members of the National Party stuck with me and assisted and supported me in every way I could ask. It was greatly appreciated not only by me but also by my family.

While I am talking about my family, I would like to reiterate what the member for Warwick said in his contribution about the families of members. It is very important for members to understand what an impost their role is on their families, particularly the families of those members who represent country electorates. In many instances, the wives of those members do not hold official jobs but are involved in assisting with the family business. I know that, on many occasions, my wife would answer in excess of 20 telephone calls a day. She would have to take messages and ring my electorate secretary or try to get hold of me in order to pass on those messages to make sure that those people who rang were represented. At times, the way

in which the media and some members of the public portray the families of members of Parliament really does annoy me. I was married in 1978, and I have been a member since 1974. During all of the time that I have been married, which is 20 years, my wife could count the number of trips that she has taken around the place on the fingers of one hand.

**Mr Lucas:** She probably gets relief when you go.

**Mr ELLIOTT:** That is possibly right. All of us need a change. As the saying goes, a change is as good as a holiday. Getting me out of the house may well be a change for my wife.

**Mr Lucas:** Things are run a lot better.

**Mr ELLIOTT:** That is right. She might be able to run the farm better than me. I should put her in charge of it totally. In all seriousness, the wives of members have a very onerous job. In many instances, they are required to represent their husbands at functions. I believe that, when one thinks about it, the public get a pretty fair deal. Often they get one and a half members, if not two, for the salary of one. I do not believe that the public is really badly done by in relation to the salary package of members.

I remember well that before Lady Bjelke-Petersen was a senator she travelled right around this State. Many who have served in this place for a fair while would remember her well. She went from one end of this State to the other talking, listening and taking notes. She brought back issues to be addressed as though she were an additional member of Parliament. I have never seen anyone in her position carry out as onerous a task and play the role she did in the days when Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was Premier of this State. It was unbelievably good; there is no question about that. I thank particularly my wife, Sally. I also thank our kids. They have certainly paid a price as a result of my position in this House.

**Mr Johnson:** They have made many sacrifices.

**Mr ELLIOTT:** They have indeed, even to the point of being picked on at school and so on. All these things will happen to our children. We think they will not, but they do somewhere down the line. Those sorts of things really hurt kids. It is not easy for them. I have certainly appreciated the support of my children. None of them is madly keen on politics. My eldest daughter takes a passing interest. We have dragged our son off to a few events at different times. He gets a pained look on his

face at times. So it is not all fun for the children, that is for sure.

I take this opportunity to thank also my electorate secretary, Rachael, who does a tremendous job. She is another person who, in my opinion, puts in a hell of a lot more hours than the Government pays her for. She is often at the office earlier than she has to be and she stays later—long after a lot of people in the street have gone home. When I have functions or meetings in the area, in Pittsworth or nearby, she often stays back and we will work right up until I have to go to those events.

We will stay and work to catch up, particularly when the House is sitting. It is not so bad when the House is not sitting, but at other times it is very easy to get behind with the electorate work coming into the office. So our electorate secretaries really need to be self-motivated people. They need to be able to handle problems without being able to get hold of us. In the end, in most instances good electorate secretaries will handle problems just as well as their members would. In fact, their network within the departments will at times be better than ours. They know exactly who to ring to try to sort out a problem. I pay tribute to Rachael because I think she has been an absolutely ideal secretary for me. She is easygoing. Over the whole time she has worked for me, which is a fair while, we have not had an argument. It goes without saying that I have been very lucky.

My area is a very diverse one, as are a lot of country electorates. It is not really big in the same way as the western seats but, by the same token, it takes up a lot of time and a lot of effort because it comprises a large number of shires. It contains the Shires of Clifton, Cambooya, part of Jondaryan, part of Toowoomba City, all of Pittsworth, all of Millmerran, the largest part of the Waggamba Shire and all of the Goondiwindi Town Council. All of those local authority areas call on me in some way or other to assist them.

My electorate also has nearly 40 schools. I am working all the time to try to ensure that those facilities are kept up to scratch. We have been very lucky over the years. I pay tribute to former Labor Minister Pat Comben. Everyone knows how many rows Pat and I had when I was shadow Minister for Environment. I remember him saying on the ABC one day, "Tony Elliott picks on me." What a lot of people in the public do not understand is that, while we might give each other a hard time in the Chamber, outside we are quite capable of having a beer together or discussing a

problem. If we can do something mutually advantageous for each other's electorates, then we are always prepared to do that. After all, no matter what else we are here to do, our first job is to represent the people who elect us—to support and assist the welfare and betterment of Queensland. If we are not prepared to do that, if the ideological baggage we carry stops us doing that, then quite frankly we do not deserve to be here, because first and foremost we have to represent people.

I pay tribute to Pat Comben because he assisted me with a problem in Goondiwindi. It was very much a local problem, relating to not being able to get specialist teachers. I was assisted by a local farmer's wife who had gone to university with Pat. We both got stuck into Pat one day and suggested that this was a problem. Instead of taking umbrage at it, he listened and went away and did something about it. I have another issue that I will be bouncing off the current Minister fairly soon. I hope I will get the same sort of support from him.

As I said, there is a large number of schools in the Cunningham electorate. A lot of my electorate is made up of growth areas. The part of Toowoomba that I represent is growing like a mushroom—Middle Ridge, Darling Heights and even Drayton itself. The University of Southern Queensland is right in the centre of that part of Toowoomba I represent. All of these dormitory suburbs are developing. The schools in those areas are growing at an alarming rate. Members who represent coastal areas or growth areas would know only too well that the schools get an overload factor in them very quickly. They are always looking for new buildings.

I will mention some of the problems we have. Darling Heights, which is near the university, is looking to introduce a number of innovative programs into the lower school. It has been restricted in this area of advancement by a lack of classroom space, because every year a whole lot of new kids arrive and more classroom space is needed. We are certainly looking for assistance from the Minister in this area.

Because of Toowoomba's climate, it would be helpful if we could get more covered walkways between the buildings. I know that that has been done in some areas, and that has been tremendously helpful. The administrative block also needs updating. The current building is out of date and does not cater for the improvements in technology and equipment.

Those who live in Toowoomba would probably know of the issue relating to Middle Ridge. Spring Street runs along the edge of Middle Ridge school. That street also services the university. A lot of traffic on that street is going to USQ. It goes straight past the Middle Ridge school. There is also a parking problem. Additional land desperately needs to be bought so that buses can be brought into the school grounds and the kids can get onto buses in a safe environment rather than on the side of the road.

Those who know the climate of Toowoomba know that it is always wet, drizzling, cloudy or foggy. There are people zooming along that road faster than they should be. Mixed up in all of this are the parents who, instead of parking where they should park, putting raincoats on their kids, putting up their umbrellas and taking the kids to school, take the easy option and drop the kids off outside the entrance to the school. We need to try to get that quite dangerous situation in hand. The same problem exists at Middle Ridge school as at the other growing schools in that additional classroom space is necessary.

Goondiwindi, at the other end of the electorate, has a very pro-active group. It has actually started a program to raise its own funds. The school had begun to participate in the Leading Schools program and there is a need to finish off what was started. It needs probably \$120,000 and the group is actively raising funds. It is looking to get some assistance from the Government. I have already spoken to the Minister about this issue. I know the Minister well. I have worked on committees with him and I have found that he is prepared to listen. I hope he will assist us in that regard.

I also express my gratitude for the previous Government's funding for the Goondiwindi Convent. Through Government aid to the church schools system, the standards at that school were lifted. That is a credit to everyone involved. What the P & C achieved at that school last year was absolutely fantastic. It is now a great little school attended by a lot of children.

I wish also to speak about Emu Creek, a very famous old school attended by Steele Rudd, Greenmount and Greenmount East. Emu Creek school is experiencing problems because of rapid growth, and it needs another classroom now. A brand-new classroom should be built, rather than mucking around with the existing buildings, some of which are older buildings that possess a reasonable

degree of architectural appeal. To me the worst thing we could do would be to muck around with the existing buildings. That would make the school look like a hotchpotch. In the old days, within Q-Build—and perhaps this is the case with the Education Department at the moment—there was an inclination to take that sort of approach. That school needs an additional building to ensure that population growth and the needs of the children are catered for. I hope that a new classroom will be built, and I believe that it will be needed by next year, that is, 1999. The department does not think that a new classroom is needed until the year 2000. However, I have news for it: the growth will be more rapid than it has predicted. I believe that school will be in desperate need of that building next year. I am calling for a classroom to be built.

Wyreema, which is not too far away, faces a similar situation, with very rapid growth being experienced. It is very much a satellite/dormitory suburb of Toowoomba. At the moment, its school is attended by 71 students. However, by the year 2003 some 131 children will be attending that school. It has a real need for an EEC unit. If we could build an EEC unit at that school now, by the time the next school year starts 22 children would have the opportunity to benefit from it, and that number would continue to grow from there. The students need those facilities. I ask the Government to look at providing them urgently.

The Pittsworth State High School is one of the better State high schools in the State. Both it and Clifton have consistently outperformed other schools in Brisbane and Toowoomba, including private schools. The staff at that school are excellent. A lot of the teachers have been in the area for a long time; they have stayed and built houses in the area. They treat it as though it is their own school and they take a hands-on approach. Accordingly, its students have been achieving better OP results than many students in private schools. What it has been able to achieve is absolutely unbelievable. I ask for some support with respect to the provision of a home economics block at that school. That has been on the drawing board for some time, and I had thought we would probably get it this year. However, at this stage a bit of stalling seems to be taking place. I ask that that project be brought to fruition as soon as possible. Further stalling is unnecessary. We should be providing the best facilities we can provide for those children. We cannot afford to drag our feet with respect to our children's

education. The most important thing we can do in society is educate our children.

I wish also to speak about Yelarbon. Like many other small schools—the same sort of problem is faced at Brookstead and most of the other small schools around the edges of Toowoomba—there is a security problem at that school. We have to upgrade the security at all of those schools. Mowers, tractors, computers and so on will not be able to be kept at any of those schools unless their security is upgraded. Major security systems have been installed at the larger schools, such as Pittsworth, and that seems to have been very successful. However, at the schools that do not have a police station next door—as do the bigger places—it is not enough to install only electronic surveillance; other systems are needed to prevent these dreadful people from preying on the community. Most of the money for tractors, mowers and so on is raised by the P & Cs. Mowers, computers and so on are being taken because these schools are seen as soft targets. That really is unbelievable.

I wish also to touch on Nobby. Under the SCAP scheme, Nobby obtained its own water supply. Nobby is a historic area, once again, partly because of its connection with Steele Rudd. It also has a very famous old pub that people visit from all over Queensland. The area is also home to the Sister Kenny memorial building. The area is also known as the home of Country Collectables. Many people in Brisbane would know Ross Coco and Leila Coco, whose very successful business is located in a beautiful old building. A lot of people travel from all over Queensland to visit it. There is a tremendous resurgence of interest in the history of that area. A lot of people are coming to the area to have a look at it. I congratulate all of those people who are out there working to keep that area viable. That is what we need. We need people who are prepared to put money into country areas to keep them alive.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr D'Arcy): Order! Before I call the member for Ferny Grove, I remind members that this is the member's first speech, and I ask them to extend to him the courtesies of the House. I call the member for Ferny Grove.

**Mr WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (3.46 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, through you, I offer my congratulations to Mr Speaker on his elevation to the high office of Speaker of this House.

About four years ago, as a union official I was on the road to Roma to address a mass meeting of construction workers employed by

the Department of Main Roads. The issues were to be enterprise bargaining, job security and privatisation. I pulled up at a Main Roads job just this side of Roma to talk to a number of workers about the importance of the mass meeting. There were several truck drivers, perhaps a roller driver, a couple of excavator operators, a couple of scraper operators, some labourers and the ganger. One of the truck drivers summed up their concerns when he asked, "With the growing attacks on trade unions and the way the Labor Party has gone with this thing called economic rationalism, who is going to represent the worker?" The scene, and in some ways the question, took me back about 34 years to memories of school holidays working with my father and his fellow council workers building and repairing bridges and roads in little places such as Walbundrie, in a rural council area in south-west New South Wales. It took me back to memories of riding on the tailgate of my father's station wagon as we laid the string line for the bitumen trucks to seal the road, and to memories of riding on the grader talking to the grader driver, and times on the side of the road soaking up the talk over smoko and lunch, or in the car going to and from the job.

Workers then, as now, were concerned about things that directly affected them and their families—health care, their kids' education, wages and working conditions, the cost of living, the cost of housing and similar issues. Two major differences between then and now are the extensive erosion of job security and the lack of new jobs. Workers and their families have never been quite so exposed since then to the forces and effects of the marketplace.

Many workers and their families in the electorate of Ferny Grove are struggling under the growing pressures of a marketplace gone mad with competition and the failure of Government to make a difference for the better in their lives. They are not alone in Queensland. The voices of people in Ferny Grove tell the real story. For example, months ago, Laurie, a resident of Samford, spoke to me about the difficulties of obtaining an apprenticeship for his son, particularly in his chosen area of the construction industry. This lad comes from a good family and is keen to work and learn a trade. But as he discovered, apprenticeships have become as scarce as hen's teeth.

Scarcer still are good apprenticeships as Cheryl, mother of young Jeremiah, could tell honourable members. She rang from Keperra seeking help. Her son is in the second year of his apprenticeship but has mainly been doing

fetch and carry work. He has been given very little on-the-job training. His employer tried to sack him after a dispute over working conditions. He is now looking for an employer who is fair dinkum about training young workers.

Just how difficult it is for small business to survive and how difficult it is for them to offer places for young workers was brought home to me only last week by Greg from Mitchelton. He is a small builder in the housing sector. He could tell honourable members, as he told me, of the ruthless competition from some of the large project home builders and the drop in quality and loss of training opportunities that are taking place. Many small home builders are being driven out of the industry. For those who remain, the margins they are forced to operate on give little room for the genuine builder to take on apprentices while most of the big project home builders employ few, if any, apprentices. What is happening to the young unemployed and small business matters to people in Ferny Grove.

If times are tough for the young unemployed, just how tough are they for the middle-aged unemployed such as Tom from Cedar Creek? He is in his mid fifties and is a qualified accountant. Five years ago he was restructured out of his job with SEQEB after 25 years. He has not worked since, despite his best efforts. He cannot get a job without current accountancy practising certificates, but without a job he cannot afford the yearly costs involved in maintaining his certificates. This is while SEQEB reportedly spent \$9m changing its name to Energex. He also has to fight the prejudice of some employers against mature-aged workers and the ever threatening risk of being left behind by rapid technological change. What is happening to the middle-aged unemployed matters to people in Ferny Grove.

Workers such as Bill from Mitchelton who, unlike those I have mentioned, happen to have a job are also worried about jobs—theirs—and how long it will be before they are shown the door or the gate. He has spent most of his working life in the Public Service working for TAFE. In common with many public servants, he has seen the Public Service restructured, privatised, downsized, reorganised, streamlined, rationalised or so-called modernised to the point where many public servants literally do not know whether they are coming or going. They have committed much of their working lives to a career in a professional public sector dedicated to giving high quality service to the community, yet they have been confronted

regrettably by successive Governments which do not know how to be a good employer and do not believe that it is the job of Government to actively make a difference for the better in the lives of ordinary people. Job security and a public sector that does make a difference matter to the people in Ferny Grove.

Some weeks ago, I was contacted by Garry from Keperra. His compensation claim had been rejected by WorkCover. He, too, had been restructured out of a public sector job nine years ago. Since then he has operated a tractor as a grounds maintenance worker. He now has severe back pain. Under the current unjust law, he is denied any workers compensation because his work on plant is allegedly not a contributor to his condition in terms of the artificially narrow legal definition in the legislation. A fair workers compensation system in which all employers meet their obligations matters to people in Ferny Grove.

Many elderly and infirm people live in my electorate. Mrs Ryan from Ferny Hills has recounted to me a distressing story of the experiences of her 82-year-old friend who suffered a severe stroke early this year. She was left totally dependent on health care professionals and unable to communicate except by the movement of one hand. The difficulties that this person experienced in receiving care in a particular public hospital and from the medical staff are now being investigated by the office of the new Minister for Health. An efficient, high quality public health system and the care of the elderly matter to the people of Ferny Grove.

There are approximately 27,000 voters in the electorate. About 80% live in the suburbs and 20% live in the Samford Valley. A very special feature is its diverse level of development—from the metropolitan dormitory suburbs of Arana Hills, Ferny Hills, Ferny Grove, Keperra and Mitchelton to the semirural and natural forest areas of Samford Village, Mount Nebo, Mount Glorious, Samsonvale and Bunya. In this setting, people such as Arthur of Arana Hills are concerned about the growing impact of excessive traffic being routed through what should be safe and peaceful suburbs. Conni and her friends in Ferny Hills near the Samford State Forest share these concerns. However, they are also concerned about the pressures on the surrounding natural environment from poorly planned residential development.

When I stand in Main Street, Samford, talking to the locals, I find that they are overwhelmingly concerned to preserve the rural and natural environment of the Samford

Valley. As the prospect emerges of major changes in land ownership in the valley, such as the sale of the 700 acres occupied by the CSIRO, they want to ensure that any future development builds upon and promotes the semirural environment. Protecting our natural environment and balancing this with the needs of our existing residential areas matter to people in Ferny Grove.

Neighbourhood Watch has been a great success throughout Ferny Grove over the past 10 years or so. However, as Shelagh from Ferny Hills and Justin from Arana Hills would tell honourable members, the network needs an urgent boost. Their particular watches have recently closed down. People in our local community, especially the elderly, need an active Neighbourhood Watch. But with all the pressures on family life these days, too few new volunteers are coming forward to take on the often thankless tasks and to relieve the older stalwarts. A rejuvenated and well-resourced Neighbourhood Watch network and effective community policing programs matter to people in Ferny Grove.

Anne, whose daughter attends Grovely State School, spoke to me before the June election. She was worried that her child would be disadvantaged because of the way funding was being allocated under the then Leading Schools program. She could see that a good education for her daughter would give her the best chance for a job. An equitable, effective and well-resourced public education system matters to people in Ferny Grove.

Lots of people in the Ferny Grove electorate such as Shelagh, Justin, Conni, Arthur, Garry and the others I have mentioned could tell honourable members their stories. They are blue and white collar workers, women in the workforce, paid and unpaid, and workers employed and unemployed or retired. They are only some of the voices, and these are only some of the stories. These are only some of the things that need addressing in my local community—things such as the continued support needed for the first-class dialysis unit at the Keperra Hospital; access to public transport, especially in the new housing estates such as Glen Fern or Arlington; traffic management along the Amazon River that is Samford Road; the survival of tourist attractions such as the Woolshed at Ferny Hills and the Tramway Museum at Ferny Grove; support for the struggling Police Citizens Youth Club at Arana Hills and the Piccabeen Community Centre at Mitchelton; and the development of junior sport that can play such a key role in bringing kids and our young families together in a positive environment.

These are the things that matter to me and these are the things that also matter to the Labor Party and this Labor Government.

Traditionally, they are the very stuff from which Labor's social and economic programs have been built: jobs, training, job security, education, workers compensation, health and crime prevention. Labor of the 1990s is also concerned with the position of women in society, the welfare of children and youth, mental health, the environment and promoting the absolutely vital policies of reconciliation and multiculturalism. In all these areas, Labor will work damned hard to improve the position of everyone who lives in Ferny Grove. I am pleased to say that this Labor Government has broken the spell cast by economic rationalism.

I am privileged to have been elected to represent the people of Ferny Grove. I am grateful for their support and for their expression of confidence in me. As I see it, I hold a very special public office, one which carries with it great responsibility. As I see it, my job is to be the voice of the local community in this Parliament. By working with them and the local community, we can make a difference and help address concerns that I have raised today.

People are looking for a Government and local members who will address their real and pressing concerns. That is just what Labor will do. Indeed, Labor in Government is already acting on a number of these concerns that I have mentioned. As my local community's representative in this place, I too will address these concerns. To do so, I need to be accessible, to consult with local people, to be inclusive, to seek out different lines of opinion, and to be accountable. I look forward to continuing to canvass people's views at public meetings, through meetings of community groups and through contact with the network of 180 or so community bodies in the electorate. And dare I say it, I look forward to wearing out some more boot leather doorknocking.

Parliament is, of course, extremely important. It is the institution of democratic Government in this State. The decisions made here can have a big impact on people's daily lives. However, it is often the economic and investment decisions that are made by others in the boardrooms of major corporations, many of them multinational and based overseas, that fundamentally affect the working and social lives of workers, their families and local communities. As important

as Parliament is, what is more important is what is happening elsewhere. It is what is happening to the lives of people—in the suburbs, in the homes, in the workplaces, in the hospitals and other institutions and in the streets—that really matters to me. Whilst very pleased to be here, I hope never to feel more comfortable here than out in the street.

I want to give thanks to the many people who have worked so hard for so long to achieve my election last June. I want to thank the following: the Ferny Grove Electorate Executive Committee of the Labor Party, my campaign committee, the many party members in my electorate and the office bearers of the Ferny Grove/Keperra branch, the Arana Hills branch, the Bunya/McDowall branch and the Samford branch of the Labor Party. I especially want to thank Glen Milliner, the former member for Ferny Grove, and his family, to whom I pay a special tribute. I want to thank the many supporters and personal friends that I have outside the Labor Party. I want to thank my union, the CFMEU, and many other unions of which I will always be proud to be and remain a member, and the workers in various workplaces in the electorate. I also thank my church friends in Mitchelton and elsewhere. I thank my parents-in-law, Fred and Loma Thompson from Townsville. I want to thank my wonderful wife Jan and my very special children, Hilary, Miles and Lewis, who will have to rapidly learn what it is like to live with a politician husband and father.

Finally I want to thank my mother and father and my extended family. I was born 15 or so years after the end of the Great Depression and seven years after the end of the Second World War. Without my family really knowing it, I indirectly absorbed their experience of those two catastrophic events and an awareness of how devastating were the effects on them and on the lives of ordinary working people. Who knows why? The fact is that I was greatly affected by this. All my life I have had a passion for working with ordinary people as they struggle to make ends meet and to get a fair share of the common wealth of this country.

Being elected to this Parliament gives me a greater chance of being able to help them than I have had so far in my working life as a public servant, solicitor, barrister and, most recently, union official. I aim to make a good fist of it. To the truck driver on the road to Roma, and those workers of my childhood, I am happy to say, "It would be a privilege to represent the workers and their families in Ferny Grove."

**Mr SLACK** (Burnett—NPA) (4.06 p.m.): Firstly, I take this opportunity to pledge my loyalty to the Crown and my commitment to the people of Queensland and to the people of my electorate of Burnett. I listened with interest to the maiden speech of the member for Ferny Grove. Many of the problems outlined by the honourable member in relation to his constituents are problems experienced by people in all electorates, and particularly in the electorate of Burnett. It will be a major challenge to this Government to address many of the problems that have been enunciated here in the Parliament today in the address in reply to the Governor's Speech.

In mentioning the Governor, I would like to take this opportunity to compliment him on the contribution he has made, in the very short time that he has been in office, to trade, investment and to the welfare of the people of Queensland. He has approached his duties in an impartial and enthusiastic way. He has taken the opportunity to travel to promote Queensland, to promote trade and to promote investment in Queensland. At the same time, he has welcomed and hosted delegations from overseas.

The electorate of Burnett has close to 30,000 voters and is one of the fastest growing electorates in this State. It is one of the lowest socio-economic electorates in the State. As the member for Bundaberg correctly instanced in relation to her city—and Burnett surrounds Bundaberg—we have very high unemployment. There is much frustration and insecurity in relation to jobs. This is a challenge for any Government. It was a challenge for the coalition Government and it will be a challenge for the Labor Government. It is incorrect to imply that the coalition Government was any less caring or any less sympathetic towards the problems that have been enunciated in this Chamber today.

The reality is that we are living in changing times and many of the problems mentioned are synonymous with the times and are very difficult to address. Much has been said about globalisation. Much has been said about multinational companies. Much has been said about the problems of the individual and the insecurity of the individual. Heart-rending examples have been given. These problems are not easy to address in this age. Mention has been made of the power of the multinational companies. Mention has also been made of the unfairness of the National Competition Policy. The reality is that these things are part of the changing times. We cannot duck them. We have to face these

things and we have to evolve policies that can deal with these matters.

Along with everyone else, I recognise the commitment that this Government has made towards an unemployment rate of 5%. If this aim were achieved it would overcome many of the insecurity problems in the community. Having said that, this Government's commitment to unemployment is no stronger than was the commitment by the coalition Government to unemployment. In the Budget the Treasury announcement indicated a slight rise in unemployment. Those figures were based on the reality of the Asian experience and the reality of what is taking place in the workplace. It pointed out the necessity for growth and investment. That was Treasury's assessment. That was not an ideological outlook; it was just a factual outlook.

Sure, we would all like to see 5% unemployment. We would like to see 2% unemployment, or no unemployment, if it could be achieved. But it is a matter of achieving it. Many members will be looking at the Appropriation Bill that will be introduced in September. It will be interesting to see just how this Government is going to address these problems. As I said last week during the debate on the motion of confidence in the Government, two and a quarter years ago growth under the former Labor Government was 2.2%, and the figure was 4.5% when the coalition Government left office. One of the key ingredients to solving unemployment is to have growth, as well as investment and exports. At the end of the day, all levels of government must be involved with that. However, it really gets back to individuals and private industry.

Private industry is the major employer in this State, in Australia and in most parts of the world. Private industry must have confidence to invest before it will employ people. That is when the records of various Governments and figures like 2.2% compared to 4.5% are taken into consideration. And in relation to measures that are taken to address these issues, events such as the Asian crisis are out of the control of this Government and the former Government, and the decisions of the Commonwealth are largely out of the control of this Government and the former Government.

In my electorate, as in other electorates, the insecurity and frustration of people was brought home at the last election. Most people out there are not interested in party politics; they are really interested in their own welfare and security. As was demonstrated at

the last election, they are sick and tired of party sniping between the major parties. Although that was the case—with a little bit of irony—with Burnett and Bundaberg, some people had a bob each way, to put it politely; if the coalition was in Government, they would have me in Burnett, and if Labor was in Government they would have the member for Bundaberg, Mrs Cunningham, to canvass and champion some of the issues that are important to both electorates. The issues that concern Bundaberg also concern Burnett. In her maiden speech this morning, the member for Bundaberg mentioned a couple of those issues.

One of the issues raised by the honourable member was water. The keys to jobs in my electorate are obviously cheap power and the availability of water. As the member for Bundaberg said, our area has a decided lack of water. When in Government, the coalition made a commitment to do several things to increase the supply of water in the area. One initiative was to add to the water level by putting inflated bags on weirs, provided that the environmental studies were favourable. We were doing that as quickly as possible on the Bucca Weir, which is near Bundaberg, on the nearly completed Walla Weir and on the Jones Weir further up the Burnett. I hope that this Government upholds the commitment that we made and endeavours to expedite that as quickly as possible, because that will provide over 20,000 megalitres of additional water for the area.

Another issue that I want to mention is the fast-tracking of a major water storage on the Burnett River. During the election campaign, when he was the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Beattie visited Bundaberg and said that the dam evaluation appeared to be dragging on because one consultative process began as the previous one finished. He said that, if possible, the processes should run simultaneously. For the information of the now Premier, I point out that they were running simultaneously. One of the initiatives of our Government was to fast-track the provision of additional water storage on the Burnett River. I remember the discussions that I had with Natural Resources, which fast-tracked it to the extent that we gave a commitment that, provided that the numbers stacked up—and they look as if they are doing that—and provided the environmental studies were favourable, that dam on the Burnett River could be up and running in five years. Because of the way in which the system operated previously, a figure of 10 years was mooted. However, we were able to get that

figure down to possibly five years. I look forward with interest and anticipation to the Government meeting the Premier's commitment that was given to the press in Bundaberg on that day. I know that I have the full support of the member for Bundaberg in that endeavour.

Because of the prospect of jobs that would come from it, the prospect of more prosperity for the area and the prospect of addressing the high unemployment problem in my electorate, another big issue for the people of my electorate is the proposed Surat Dawson development and its implications for Bundaberg. The proposal of the approved proponent is to take coal to Bundaberg and to export it through a new port development at Coonarr. That proponent is spending \$10m on the assessment process to assess the economics of that development. It has been said to me all along that it is its most favoured position, without having done the in-depth economic studies and, at that stage, the environmental studies. I am fully supportive of the Surat Dawson development and the Bundaberg option—if it stacks up both environmentally and economically.

During the debate on the motion of confidence in the Government, when I was speaking about the coal development component, which is vital for the Surat Dawson development because of the estimated 4.1 billion tonnes of coal reserves in that area, one Government member interjected and expressed concern about jobs.

**Mr Pearce:** It was probably me.

**Mr SLACK:** It could have been the member for Fitzroy. For the member's information, I point out that the reality is—and this covers the environmental issues as well—that that is judged to be some of the most environmentally friendly, if not the most environmentally friendly, coal in the world. So it is not a competitive coal to coking coal. It is a steaming coal—a thermal coal—which the world is increasingly looking for because of its environmental qualities. It has a low sulphur content, it is a very hard coal, it has low carbon dioxide emissions, it is usually a low ash producing coal, and it comes within the emission requirements. That is why SUDAW and the Raytheon Group are so confident that, when they are marketing in 2001, there will be a ready market for that coal. So it is not regarded as a competitor to the other coals in the sense that it would take jobs. The market will determine that. If other coals cannot find export markets, unfortunately jobs will be shed, or producers will become more efficient

to try to meet the price that the export market is paying. If this does not meet the requirements, unfortunately it will not get up. But if the preferred proponent is prepared to spend \$10m on investigation, it must be very confident that the proposal will get up.

The group also believes that the environmental questions that relate to Coonarr can be overcome. At the end of the day, that has to be done according to proper studies, which I was assured would be done. The group did not want to do things any other way. We are supportive of that and want to see it resolved as quickly as possible. The former Government was instrumental in achieving today's outcomes in relation to the development of the Surat/Dawson Valley. If the rail line goes through to the Bundaberg area, and if the coal is exported through Bundaberg, this will create opportunities for other produce. I notice that the member for Bundaberg is shaking her head. I wonder what she disagrees with, because that will bring job opportunities to the Bundaberg/Burnett area.

This development is very finely tuned. Members would appreciate that, when I talk about low coal prices and the viability of coal in the future, it is very finely tuned. So any interference in the marketplace in relation to the development of electricity output could place that exercise in jeopardy. I warn the Government and, particularly, the Minister for State Development that, when he wishes to load the dice in favour of Chevron—and bear in mind that Chevron has always known that it is a competitive market and that it needs to compete with other electricity producers—this could be putting other development in this State in jeopardy.

Honourable members should bear in mind that the electricity market was opened up by the former Government to provide cheaper power and, in so doing, provide for more industry and more jobs in this State. If Chevron is to be successful it should be able to compete with power generators in the southern end of the State. It is recognised that they will lose some of their viability through the loss of power during transmission. If power from southern Queensland were cheaper than from Chevron, industry up and down the coast would decide whether it wanted to use that power. It is to industry's advantage and to the advantage of jobs in Townsville if power can be delivered cheaper from Wandoan, Tarong—

**Mr Littleproud:** Kogan.

**Mr SLACK:**—and Kogan than it can be delivered from Papua New Guinea. It gets

back to a matter of economics. Private enterprise will decide where to establish industry based on the competitive cost of power. That is what it is all about.

In conclusion, I recognise that we are all here because of the support of our friends, our families and our organisations.

**A Government member:** And the Labor Party.

**Mr SLACK:** In the case of the honourable member, it would have to be the Labor Party. I take the point. The people of Burnett made that judgment quite sensibly.

I offer my commitment to the people of Burnett. All members who have spoken to this motion have mentioned their staff. We all have loyal staff, otherwise we would not be here. I pay tribute to my secretary. As the honourable member mentioned, it is true that Labor Party preferences returned me to this establishment. I pay tribute to my electorate council chairman, Ernie Jobson, and his wife, who worked tirelessly for my return, and the people who manned the booths and did the scrutineering. Were it not for them and the campaign committee, I would not be here today. I wish members and the Government well in their endeavours to meet the problems that have been enunciated in the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! I call the member for Logan. As this is the member's first speech, I ask members please to extend to him the courtesies of the House.

**Mr MICKEL** (Logan—ALP) (4.22 p.m.): It is an honour and a privilege to speak on behalf of the people of Logan. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask you to pass on my congratulations to the Speaker on achieving that high office. I wish him every success in his challenging role. In his absence, I congratulate my neighbour, the member for Woodridge, the Deputy Speaker, on his role of Chairman of Committees.

I am delighted with the Premier role for the member for Brisbane Central. I am pleased to see my friend the member for Moggill in his role as the Leader of the Liberal Party. Actually, I am satisfied with the new roles for everyone. His Excellency the Governor will be pleased. With the election of a Labor Government, he will continue to have his Rolls, which One Nation threatened to sell. I hope that, as our last Queen's representative, he is allowed to exit with dignity—and not in the back of a taxi.

I thank all Labor Party members and supporters in Logan who worked so tirelessly

and unselfishly on my campaign—people such as Max, Jenny and Brendan; Cheryl, my electorate secretary; Jackie, who was Wayne Goss' electorate secretary for 15 years; Di, Steve and Melissa; and great friends over many years, such as Hazel and Peter, Tricia and Paul, Barry, Desley and Pat. Above all, I thank my wife, Catherine, my children, Lauren, Patrick and Gabrielle, and my mother. I thank my long-suffering father-in-law and mother-in-law, who are in the public gallery today. Without their support, the ups and downs over the years would have been much harder.

I come to this place to join colleagues I have known for decades: the Minister for Primary Industries, Henry Palaszczuk; the Treasurer, David Hamill; the Minister for Tourism, Bob Gibbs; and Don Livingstone, the former member for Ipswich West, who I am very confident will be re-elected to this place. They were all members of the Oxley Federal division which shaped my Labor politics. I must say that this seems a gentler place than some of the robust gatherings we had at the Redbank Plains meeting hall on those balmy Sunday mornings of long ago. Those old connections are very strong in this place. The Deputy Premier, Jim Elder, my friend David Beddall, the member for Rankin, and my predecessor, Wayne Goss, and his family lived there, so I was tutored by people who have set me very high standards.

I particularly praise Wayne and Roisin Goss for their contribution to Queensland's political life. A sad fact of the timing of the proroguing of the previous Parliament was that time was not devoted to honouring the retiring members. A tradition should be established in this Parliament of recognising people for their parliamentary service while they are alive instead of only at condolence motions. Wayne's contribution to the State's political life is immense. He set exacting standards for himself and those who served with him. He drove himself and the Government hard in a series of reforms designed to restore public faith in our political system after years of systemic corruption. Under Goss, the State was a lot prouder than it had been in the pre-Fitzgerald days and had a touch of quality, decency and honesty about it. Above all, Goss knew when it was time to go and went at his own choosing, with his dignity intact and the State's best interests at heart. In Logan he is respected because he introduced community services: better educational facilities, the new university campus, expanded health facilities and the beginnings of a passenger transport system. These were real achievements and people appreciated him for them. I praise also

Roisin Goss for the dignified role she brought to the task of Premier's wife. She was always completely supportive and is deservedly held in deep affection by many Queenslanders.

In Logan, State Government can make a difference. It is 20 years since Russ Hinze drew a boundary taking Labor voters out of the National Party dominated shires of Albert and Beaudesert, thereby creating the City of Logan. There was no community of interest, only National Party self-interest. There was no community infrastructure, just urban sprawl. There was no public transport except a train that stopped at Beenleigh and the odd bus—and one confused bus that displayed "Taronga Park Zoo" as its destination. In 20 years, Federal and State Labor Governments have worked with the Logan City Council to bring better services to Logan City. Much has been achieved but more needs to be done.

At the outset, I want to praise the hidden people, those many people who work without recognition and adequate funding to improve the Logan community. I assure them I will be working with them to help build a better community. I commit myself to fight for improved passenger transport infrastructure and reliable passenger transport.

Reliable transport running west to east to the hospital and TAFE college would be an enormous economic advantage for many struggling families. It would lessen the need for a second car in many cases. At Logan Hospital, the numbers of patients who fail to arrive for appointments each month is about 600. Some of that is caused by the mobility of the population, but largely it is created by families unable to arrive because of a lack of public transport.

Access to expanded local health facilities is a right that Logan people demand. Stage 4 of Logan Hospital is progressing despite massive underspending on it last year. I will be fighting for new health services for Crestmead. I urge the Health Minister to monitor the health service delivery in Logan West. Indeed, I urge all Ministers to view Logan West as a huge growth centre in the southern corridor and have their departments place offices there. With the southern bypass and the Logan Motorway, Logan West has easy access to the State's east and west.

Population growth creates a need for more police with more resources. Browns Plains police perform a top job in difficult circumstances and service a huge population. Expanding the police station so that more police can be accommodated is a top priority. The station has one of the worst civilian

staffing to police staffing ratios in Queensland. Improving this ratio would free up operational police for Police Beat work.

The best social security we can give anyone is a job. This will be enhanced with more educational opportunities. The last census showed that Logan had the State's second lowest number of people with a qualification. By "qualification", I mean either a trade or tertiary degree. Pauline Hanson said on the Sunday program that children could leave school at 15. The inevitable result of that would be to condemn our youth to permanent unemployment, because mechanisation has replaced the jobs previously done by the young unskilled.

The prospects for obtaining and retaining long-term employment are improved with better education. Students are studying at school longer, but further progress is needed. Today, I commend the Minister for Public Works and Housing for being so attentive to the needs of the schools in the Logan electorate. I also want to thank the Minister for Education for already giving Logan schools a far better deal than they ever received over the past two and a half years.

Logan West needs greater access to training for the emerging jobs in the services and information sector. Otherwise people will be left behind permanently. The Government's establishment of an Information and Technology Department shows that it understands where future jobs will be created. I want Logan's unemployed to be part of that change. Logan TAFE must extend its information technology and training services into Logan West suburbs so that young families and youth can access them.

Calls for Government expenditure ultimately depend upon a redistribution of the wealth created in the State. Our State's economy is still heavily dependent upon primary production and mineral wealth. This year, income from both of those sectors will decline although, because of the dollar, trade volumes may improve. We need to trade but, above all, we need the goodwill of our trading partners. Short-term political considerations should not place these at risk. The coalition's preference tactic to put One Nation ahead of Labor may have been in its own political interests but it certainly was not in Queensland's interests. The deal resulted in a group that would have won only one or two seats being elevated to party status. The impact in Asia should be a warning to us all.

Some will maintain that Pauline Hanson is unknown in Asia. However, I have here some

newspaper clippings from Asian newspapers where she is written about in a way that suggests that she is familiar to the readership of those countries. The highly respected Far Eastern Economic Review conducted a poll that showed that 69.8% of executives polled in 10 Asian nations were less keen to invest and do business in Australia as a direct result of Hanson's impact. The most alarmed were business people in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia, where more than 75% now thought less of Australia.

This is a high figure, but it is a figure exceeded by the proportion of Queenslanders who did not vote for One Nation. Especially worrying for Queensland was Hong Kong, where Queensland has a trade office. Business people there were the most negative in their reactions. The Taiwan Central News Agency reported the cancellation of a tourist visit by 30 millionaire members of an investment tour group and property owners with interests on the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast.

The tourism and education sectors are worth billions a year but both rely heavily on Asian finance. If we allow perceptions of intolerance and racism to go unchallenged, it will be at the very real cost of investment and job opportunities. The fear felt by Australians of Asian descent in Logan indicates that that perception has become a reality.

I welcome the Premier's early trip to Asia and I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that a trip to China is needed. However, it is needed all the more because of the coalition's preference deal, which undermined our image in Asia. The Government should be commended for its swift action to improve our tourist and trade image and the expansion of apprenticeships. Only by improving Queensland's wealth base can the Government's priority commitments to jobs and social justice be implemented. Queensland cannot afford or cannot risk the damaging, short-sighted policies advocated by One Nation. It is a party full of paranoia but no solutions. It is a party full of petty politicians with conspiracy theories. They are leaderless. They have plenty of problems, but not much promise. They are dangerous for people in Logan.

Today, Mrs Hanson's One Nation wants to divide people on the basis of race. When I was young, we dealt with the last remnants of the stigma of being born a Catholic. In Logan, some people are stigmatised because they are poor. People in public rental housing are stigmatised, as are blue collar and unskilled

workers, sole parents, people with disabilities, the unemployed and others on social security—in other words, the marginalised.

Pauline Hanson says that she wants everyone treated equally. As a US Supreme Court judge said, probably after reading Aristotle, "There is nothing so unequal than the equal treatment of unequals." In Logan, we are trying to build a strong community uniting all of the groups. They are vulnerable to stigmatisation and inequality. That is why Pauline Hanson and One Nation have to be challenged.

One hundred years ago in the 1890s, this State was gripped by economic depression and its society was wracked by bitter divisions. Despite those seemingly insurmountable problems, just a few short years later we created a nation. The challenges today may seem daunting, the competing interests difficult to reconcile and our sense of social unity and sense of fair go may seem frayed. The solutions then, as now, were not immediately obvious. However, turning in on ourselves as a fortress Australia, putting up trade barriers and finding scapegoats are admissions of failure, not visions for the future. Our State and our nation deserve better than that. We owe it to the people who put us here to canvass forthrightly the great issues of the day. In this way, Parliament can be a source of strength—a place in which the great suite of ideas, ambitions and tensions that abound in the wider community can be debated. That is the true role of the Parliament.

Over 100 years ago, Queensland produced the first Labor Government in the world. Given the social and economic progress made by Queensland Labor Governments this century, it is entirely fitting that Labor has again been called upon to lead, this time leading Queensland into the 21st century.

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (4.39 p.m.): I am happy to be back here in the House after so many years of continuous service in the Parliament. I thank all of those people who stood shoulder to shoulder with me to ensure that I would win well on the most recent occasion.

I pay a special tribute to my long-serving secretary, Gail Ryder; her assistants, Susan Kingsley and Sharon; and to my wife, Mary, who spends more and more time in the electorate office so that we can keep up with the increasing demands on a member of Parliament to service the electorate.

I also pay a very special tribute to Mrs Gwen Simpson, the joint campaign director,

who has looked after the Rockhampton section for many years, and to Mr Noel McFarlane, who was my very first campaign director some 24 years ago. Ours is a partnership that has gone from strength to strength. It is people like these who have helped me be here today, continuously doing the job that I should do. I also pay a special tribute to those many helpers who got behind me during the run to this last election and to the so many of them who flocked to the polling booths to make sure that there were people there handing out how-to-vote cards and batting for Vince Lester.

Perhaps one of the very nicest things that could ever happen to me as a father was for my two daughters, Mary-ann and Veronica, to arrive in Yeppoon two days before the election in a hired van. Here they were with my six grandchildren—Justin, Tommy, Katie, Simon, Matthew and Sebastian—on election day, working with me. It is great to have a family that backs me up so very much.

I also pay a sincere tribute to former Premier Rob Borbidge. He was so easy to deal with. Issues that were never touched before were addressed. An example is Kinka Beach. People only ever talked about it and the problem got worse until the water started to get near some of our homes. Mr Borbidge came to the electorate of Keppel, walked along the beach and said, "It's got to be fixed", and fixed it has been. I thank him very much.

I mention other one-off, difficult issues, such as Curraman Creek Road. People started to use that road as a short cut from Emu Park towards the northern part of Rockhampton. An enormous amount of dust was coming up from that council road. We were able to work out a very legitimate deal that sees that road now being bituminised.

The Premier came to my electorate on another occasion for the opening of the Rosslyn Bay boat harbour—another very excellent event in the history of the electorate. That truly was a great day. Later in the afternoon we attended at the flower and tea gardens on Tanby Road and later went back to attend the opening of the courthouse extensions. That also was a magnificent event.

I will not tell members what happened when we went to the local publican that afternoon. As one who does not frequent bars very often and being most unused to it, I dropped my glass of lemonade, but people seemed to understand and we cleaned it up. Perhaps I might talk to the member for

Bulimba about how I can conduct myself better in a bar.

**Mr Borbidge:** You need some training.

**Mr LESTER:** The Leader of the Opposition said that I need some training. I might limit my expertise, however, in those areas because so far things have worked fairly well.

Over time I have built up a great relationship with the schools in my area. So much work has been done there. I pay a particular tribute to the teachers and support staff who work at our schools. Just to see the grounds, the way they are kept by our janitors and groundspeople, to see the way our teachers really put everything they have got into giving children a better education and the way our teachers fight, as they should, for the latest teaching methods, computers and so on, and to see what some of those schools have done to add computer technology to schools such as Frenchville is really great.

There are some great schools in the electorate of Keppel. Work has been done recently at Lakes Creek. More work needs to be done. There are difficulties there because the numbers are not quite as high as they used to be. The janitor's job is under threat. That school is a picture; the janitor there needs to be retained.

The Cawarral State School is a great school. We have been able to get a tuckshop and other facilities in place there. I pay tribute to the Keppel Sands State School P & C. Many of the parents go in and sit with the teacher and assist with the teaching of their children. A special shade area has been built and people are doing a great job in that hot, sunny area. Just about a whole new school has been built at Coowonga, along with a teacher's house. Narimbera is a great school as well.

An administration block needs to be built at Emu Park. We have waited a while for it. We have had some quite good help over the years, but it is time we got just a little bit more done at this great centre of learning at Emu Park.

While talking about Emu Park, I should pay a tribute to that wonderful councillor, Faye Owens. She really is a dynamo. Each year she and I team up to raise money for the spastics. Over the years she and I have raised more money between us than the rest of the spastics organisations together in central Queensland. Last year I had to wheel Councillor Faye Owens in a wheelie bin all the way from Kinka Beach to Emu Park.

**Mr Sullivan:** What a load of rubbish!

**Mr LESTER:** The member saying "what a load of rubbish" is obviously joking, so I will not be too hard on him. A lot of money was placed into that bin. That helped the spastics in no uncertain terms. They were very appreciative of what we did. I am not sure quite what Councillor Owens has lined up for me this time. It is still a couple of weeks away, but it will be something similar.

I also pay tribute to the efforts of the people of the Taranganbah school and the Yeppoon State High School. Efforts are being made to assist the disabled there. A special learning centre for disabled people is required. We do not have such a centre on the Capricorn Coast at present. Some people are unfortunately very severely disabled and do need their own centre. We are working on that. The Yeppoon State School does have a centre for younger people who are disabled. A very good job is being done there.

We had quite a lot of difficulty, not only with the Goss Government but also with my own Government for a little while, in getting a new toilet block for Farnborough. But in true coalition fashion, the Government came good. Recently a fete was held at the Farnborough school and it was good to see it all working well. The Byfield school in that wonderful area is doing well. An excellent education is being provided at the North Rockhampton State High School. It used to be the great music school of central Queensland and, indeed, Queensland. It slipped a little bit, but it is coming on really well.

Before I go on, I pay tribute to the college chaplains at these schools who are providing very good service. These chaplains have an expertise that some other people do not seem to have—even those who are taught how to handle students who might exhibit a little dissent. Some of the reason for such dissent is that these particular students just do not have the opportunities to learn at home. We can say that training should occur in the home—and so it certainly should—but in some instances that does not happen and we cannot blame our teachers.

The chaplains do a heck of a lot of good work. Even during the run-up to the election I took the time to come down for a special dinner for all the chaplains of Queensland held here at Parliament House. Chaplaincy is an area to which I would like to see the present Government give some money. The Government only has to give a little bit of money and it will get it back three times over; some very good results will be achieved.

**Mr Schwarten:** I always give them a donation.

**Mr LESTER:** The honourable member has been very good. As I understand it, the member was either at or tried to attend that dinner—something that was noted. The member's efforts have been recognised. From time to time, the member for Rockhampton and I do some bipartisan work in the public interest.

**Mr Schwarten:** We'll do it again.

**Mr LESTER:** We will do that again. We have achieved a lot. Just occasionally, politics can be put aside in the public interest. The same can also be said about the member for Fitzroy, Mr Pearce. Such small efforts from time to time are worth while. After all, all members are here to help people to lead a better life.

Thanks to the previous Education Minister, the Frenchville State School has been totally revamped. With the assistance of its excellent principal, Alan Knox, we have been able to achieve a lot. The electricity supply was a problem at that school, but that was fixed up recently. I also point out that the Mount Archer P & C has done an enormous amount of work, as have the P & Cs at Parkhurst and the Caves.

I appreciate the efforts of the previous Government in relation to the TAFE centre at Yeppoon, which still needs a bit of upgrading. Its students are now able to take advantage of a video conferencing facility. Some courses at the Yeppoon TAFE do not always attract the necessary numbers. That problem has been overcome, because students can now utilise video conferencing facilities via which they can be linked to a teacher in some other part of the State giving a lesson in the relevant subject. That initiative has been very welcome, even if it was a long time coming.

The Catholic schools in the area are doing a good job. For example, St Anthony's school in Rockhampton, Sacred Heart, Emmaus and so on are doing a lot of good work. Governments and members of Parliament sometimes make the mistake of saying how great they have been to Catholic schools and, for that matter, other private schools. However, without the efforts of those schools the taxpayers' bill would be much higher. The Baptist school on Norman Road is also doing a very good job, as is the Assembly of God school.

One of the highlights for Emu Park, besides its obtaining a full-time Ambulance Service, was the construction of a prototype

brand spanking new police station. The Emu Park area is growing and it has needed an additional police officer for a long time. The previous police officer used to work, by himself, out of what can best be described as a little cubbyhouse; it had a veranda and a room. I invited Russell Cooper to have a look at it. He could not believe his eyes. It was built in the Dark Ages. When the first prototype movable police station was built at Emu Park, the people could not believe it, either. They woke up one morning to find a new police station.

The Minister gave me the opportunity to open that police station at a grand opening ceremony to which everybody in the town was invited. Everyone turned up, the Lions catered, and it was a terrific function attended by hundreds of people. The Police Commissioner said to me afterwards, "I have never seen anything like it. We never get this many people at the opening of a police station." I said to him, "You haven't always been dealing with Vince Lester." Everybody was invited and fed at no additional cost to the police department. The people really loved it.

Under the previous Government, Yeppoon was able to get additional police officers. It now has 14 uniformed officers and three detectives. With the arrival of the brand spanking new police boat for which we fought, we needed an additional water police officer. The previous Government's handling of crime in Yeppoon was poor. At one point, Yeppoon was down to six uniformed police officers, which was not very good and meant that police officers were extremely stressed. The wives of the officers told me that they were very upset about the situation. That problem has now been fixed up. However, we still need more resources. We need that station to be a 24-hour station in its own right.

There are still a few problems. For example, there are insufficient numbers of police available to facilitate an offender's being detained in the watch-house. Offenders must be taken into Rockhampton by two police officers, which is an extraordinary waste of time and a poor utilisation of resources. We need the other two officers that were promised and which we would have had by now under a coalition Government. We need that station to be a 24-hour police station.

In the last Budget moves were made to provide a major police complex in North Rockhampton. I refer to the new regional command police station and all that goes with that. That project must proceed. North Rockhampton has 75% of the population.

That project is budgeted for and it must proceed at all costs, or the Minister will be hearing about it from me.

I am very pleased also that the ambulance and fire stations for North Rockhampton are being built. Those are very good moves in the right direction. The dental clinic in North Rockhampton is a bit wonky around the knees and we need a new one as soon as possible. It does not matter whether it is built in Mr Schwarten's electorate or in mine, as long as it is in North Rockhampton; that is all we are worried about.

Not only have we obtained a new police boat; the emergency services in various areas, through a subsidy arrangement, have been able to get a number of new boats. I wish to pay tribute to the volunteers from the Coastguard who patrol the beaches and oceans. During times of disaster, they often venture into very rough seas and risk their lives, particularly in the older boats. They have always been there to help.

The DPI has also received a good new boat to protect the local fisheries. Some people will always do the wrong thing, and we are having huge problems with respect to the fisheries in the area. Some areas are being fished out and there are not as many fish as there used to be. Hopefully, with a bit of commonsense that issue can be addressed.

The new courthouse in Rockhampton is another initiative that went ahead and is functioning particularly well.

**Mr Borbidge:** A magnificent facility.

**Mr LESTER:** There is no doubt that it is an absolutely magnificent facility.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to the Central Queensland University, which is the largest regional university in Australia. It has some 13,000 students, many of whom are attracted to its campuses from all over the world. The Smart City project will bring the seat of learning in arts, education and other areas slap-bang into the middle of the town. The mall, which has its difficulties, will be loaded with students, similar to the way the Grafton mall is loaded with students from the Trinity College in Dublin. The riverbanks will also be used, and new life will be brought to the City of Rockhampton. The Rockhampton City Council seems to need some prompting in relation to this matter. It needs to work hard with the university. We do not need traffic flowing through that area, as it is proposing at the moment; otherwise the university may lose interest. I cannot say enough—

Time expired.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Reeves): Order! Before I call the member for Mount Ommaney, I remind honourable members that this is the member's first speech and that they should extend to her the courtesy of the House.

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.59 p.m.): I am very honoured and proud to stand before honourable members today as the first elected female member for the electorate of Mount Ommaney. Firstly, may I congratulate the new Speaker on his attainment of the Speaker's office. I sincerely look forward to working with him and also benefiting from his guidance through the course of this Parliament.

My heartfelt thanks go to a large number of dedicated people who worked tirelessly for and with me and the Australian Labor Party to achieve the result in Mount Ommaney. I also thank God who, through Archbishop Rush and the Sisters at Canossa, provided my spiritual sustenance. Most of all, I pay tribute to the people in my electorate, particularly the ethnic communities who showed their strong support during trying times. Despite the cynicism about politicians, which I was constantly reminded of throughout the campaign, I believe that I can represent all constituents in the electorate, and I look forward to the next three years as we enter the 21st century.

What will the 21st century bring? Everyone has a vision or a dream, a vision of how they would ideally like things to be. My vision for Mount Ommaney, which this Labor Government will deliver, is based upon policies which directly reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. Labor and I want people to have the freedom and the opportunities to have their say in what happens to them through honest, accountable and stable Government.

My ideal State of Queensland would be one in which employment is high, where everyone who can work can get work—a place where small business thrives with opportunities to expand within Australia and overseas, where farming communities are able to prosper despite fluctuating demands for their products from overseas markets, where the Sunshine State is seen as just that: a place which people from overseas and other States choose first for migration, investment or holiday destination. My Mount Ommaney is a place where people from every possible background can live together in peace regardless of their colour, religion or social status, where they have the freedom to be who they are without fear of discrimination.

We have freedom of speech which can cause racial disharmony, but it is our responsibility to use this same freedom to speak out against racism. Queensland in the 21st century should be a place where one feels compassion for others and we do not get angry when our workmate gets crook and we have to do a bit extra to continue providing a service—a place where we can get real service which is not simply profit driven. It is a place where politicians actually consult with their constituents, listen to their concerns and, more importantly, care about their wellbeing and strive to meet their needs. This should be a place where people can actually understand what politicians are talking about and know that the politicians are doing what they were elected to do—actually represent them.

The electorate I represent—Mount Ommaney—in the western suburbs of Brisbane is unique in that it is divided by a major highway, and this line separates two vastly different socioeconomic environments and communities. One side represents a majority of working class individuals and the other, middle to high income earners. Mount Ommaney, however, is a tolerant, caring, multicultural area. Over 28% of residents, or over 10,000, were born overseas; 15% speak a language other than English compared with the State mean of 7.2%; 23% of residents have academic qualifications compared with the State mean of 12%; and the employment rate is around 94%.

While most people are valued members of our community regardless of their ethnicity, religious or personal beliefs, I want to ensure that all members of our society have the opportunity to fully participate in the decision making processes that affect their daily lives. My aim is to bring all of these communities in the electorate together to celebrate their cultures, achievements and history. I do not value one individual higher than any other but treat all with great respect and dignity, and I value them as individual human beings. To do this, I will communicate and consult with as many residents as possible and seek their views on issues that are of importance to them.

I must bring a number of significant issues to the attention of honourable members in this address and I seek their assistance in their resolution. I intend to establish consultative committees with representatives from each suburb in the electorate to advise me on the issues and needs of all constituents. I will lobby for the construction of a youth

community drop-in centre where young people can participate in community projects and recreation in their own space. I will ensure more job creation projects and apprenticeships are offered locally in Mount Ommaney and demonstrate that support, through the Centenary Chamber of Commerce, for small business to allow more employment within the electorate. There are a large number of small businesses in the area which need Government support to allow them to harness opportunities for success and to create jobs.

Generally, areas with high employment rates and effective community groups have lower crime rates. The various neighbourhood watch groups have done a remarkable job with few resources to improve the safety and security of Mount Ommaney, and I congratulate those involved with neighbourhood watch on their efforts. However, there can be no substitute for an effective Police Service. The availability of police officers to respond to requests for assistance needs to be addressed as does increased administrative support in stations to free up uniformed officers for operational duties.

The new police station which was built in the Mount Ommaney area was promised as a 24-hour station. However, the station does not open its doors 24 hours a day, and this needs to be remedied. A brand-new building means nothing to people who are burgled after hours if no-one is available to hear their complaint. A police presence in all parts of the electorate, including Oxley and Corinda, is essential to deter crime. Also of concern is the number of officers required to staff the new station. Too few will mean that response times to crime occurring in these suburbs will potentially increase and, with the current Oxley station being depleted of operational staff, criminals may not be apprehended.

Offenders must be appropriately housed. This Government must ensure that no more prisons are built at Wacol near people's homes and it should retain prison reserves in their natural state or put them to use for the community. The Concerned Residents Against More Prisons group—CRAMP—formed in March 1997 to stop high-security prisons being built on land bordering properties of Riverhills residents achieved a significant victory over bureaucracy gone mad, and I commend its achievements to honourable members. Prisons should be kept away from the backyards of urban dwellers and enough distance should be put between the two to allay the fears of a community who would be

close targets for prisoners who break out of these jails.

Prisons should be places of rehabilitation, not merely a place in which to keep offenders away from the community and then release them back into the community unchanged to commit the same crimes. If no incentive is provided to prisoners to change their ways such as early release, the discontent that erupts in our prison system would induce more rioting and more break-outs. Not enough resources are put into the rehabilitation process. Will the CRAMP group need to reform and fight another battle if a future coalition Government wants to jail increasing numbers of prisoners?

Crime prevention and focusing on repairing the social structure of our community are a better use of funds. Labor's policy to put into place social structures to reduce crime makes sense. We need to ensure that increased resources are targeted towards crime prevention in our community. Through my involvement in the community advisory committee, I have gained a valuable insight into the problems facing our custodial officers. It may well be that the Government can provide that well supervised community service for minor offenders to minimise the number of offenders in custodial care.

This Government will honour the existing commitment to a new high school in the Centenary suburbs, and I am pleased to report that the construction is progressing satisfactorily. The new Centenary State High School will open in January 1999, and I look forward to that occasion. I will ensure that the maintenance needs of the other local schools are investigated, with the meeting of relevant safety standards a priority.

The people I have met from Parents and Friends Associations throughout the electorate have worked hard to adequately resource their schools. They have provided the latest information technology, equipment and facilities to enhance learning opportunities for students. Dedicated local teachers are providing the best educational opportunities to all children, with programs tailored to meet their varying intellectual needs and abilities. As any teacher knows, not everyone will be a rocket scientist, and children must be given a broad education necessary to sustain them in an economically driven world during their noble careers as nurses, plumbers, carpenters, etc. This includes the provision of a sense of right and wrong and at times this will mean parents and friends need to support children wishing to

speak out against injustice, divisiveness and inequity.

When parents of these children reach retirement, a caring society would ensure that they are looked after. Free ambulance services for the older members of the community, including Seniors Card holders, pensioners and their dependants, is a bold initiative of this Government with which ambulance officers in my community are proud to be associated. They and residents, however, believe that provision of a community health centre in the electorate which would deliver affordable services, particularly for the low income earners, including dental services, counselling and a drug clinic, is desperately required and I support their concerns.

Access to railway stations is difficult for the disabled and for mothers pushing prams. There are no ramps or lifts for these people to use to access their public transport system at Oxley or Sherwood Railway Stations. The Sinnamon Park Residents Association seeks an improvement to the coordination of bus and rail services across the electorate and I applaud their determination and tenacity to resolve this issue. The Centenary Highway is steadily increasing in traffic and noise is now a major problem for those residents living along the highway. It is one of the greatest sources of stress to some people in the electorate, but others appear to be unaffected by it. Maximum protection must be provided to those who need it and they should be the people considered when noise level minimisation occurs along the highway. Speeding is also an issue and this needs to be policed at every opportunity.

Parkland is a rarity in the Centenary part of the electorate. Most of our green space has been developed and we must preserve every inch of what we have left. Our remaining wildlife is being driven out and there are very few places where residents can walk their dogs or take in a breath of fresh air. In Mount Ommaney we are fortunate to have the dedicated support of various groups, including the Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee, the Jindalee Bushland Care Group, the Westlake Riverhills Bushland Care Group and the Oxley Creek Environment Group. These groups maintain and enhance our parks and riverfront walkways. They meet regularly to discuss programs to educate the community in bushland rehabilitation and organise working bees to plant trees, clear weeds and shrubs and consult with local and State Government bodies.

Areas of environmental concern to residents in the electorate include flooding of Oxley Creek and the need for rehabilitation and regeneration of the area, an improved funding base for these groups to successfully maintain our creeks and waterways, the physical development of walkways and picnic areas to enable the public to enjoy our bushland, and noise from the highway and industrial area. Focus On Youth is a group of hardworking residents who selflessly donate their time and resources to provide care and friendship to physically and mentally disadvantaged young people. With all these committed groups assisting Government and private organisations it is obvious to all that Mount Ommaney is a caring electorate.

The emphasis placed upon support mechanisms within extended families is always brought home to me when I visit ethnic Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian and other similar communities. The industrious nature which these communities display is matched by their sense of responsibility and care towards their families, particularly their aging relatives, their State and their new chosen country. We are indeed fortunate to be able to sample their cultures while knowing that these people deliberately chose Queensland as their new homeland, as did our forefathers, the original immigrants.

Will we have lived up to the original immigrants' aspirations? At the end of this century, Mount Ommaney will be a responsible, environmentally aware, multicultural society with a modern high school, modern police station, adequate ambulance and other emergency services, sufficient parkland and open space for children to play in and, I believe, a solid economic base supporting both the local community and the region. Mount Ommaney will not be burdened by more adjoining prisons, it will not have a massive unemployment or drug problem; nor will it be a featureless dormitory area for city workers. It will be a community with heart, spirit and drive, and I am determined to do everything possible to assist all in my community to achieve their goals.

Communication with the community, compassion and consultation are what make good government, not encouraging divisiveness, intolerance and discrimination. Today, it is obvious that some Queenslanders have defaulted on their obligation to tolerate minority groups, to assist the weak and to listen to the legitimate concerns of the electorate. As Martin Luther King said, "Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and

hatred." I am appalled by the behaviour of the intolerant sections of our society. As I said before, communication, consultation and compassion are the keys to good government. It does not hurt to be kind to others, but it does hurt when people behave as ignorant barbarians with little regard for others. It is clear to me and others present in the Chamber that the people of Mount Ommaney—indeed, the people of Queensland—want a better deal from their politicians, and I believe that they deserve a better deal, which I am determined to deliver.

**Mrs GAMIN** (Burleigh—NPA) (5.15 p.m.): In joining the Address in Reply debate today I confirm, as always, my loyalty and allegiance and that of my constituency, to Her Majesty the Queen, and to her representative, His Excellency the Governor. I have already congratulated Mr Speaker on his elevation to high office. It is my habit to conduct myself with decorum in the Chamber, so I would not expect to have difficulties with the Speaker's rulings. I would expect always to conform with the Speaker's rulings.

It is only a week since I spoke in this Chamber on the motion of confidence, and I spoke then very seriously about many matters of practical interest and concern in my electorate of Burleigh. I will not repeat them now. In a less serious vein, however, this evening I would like to tell the House something about the background of the electorate of Burleigh, in particular, and about the history of the Gold Coast in general.

Electoral boundaries were changed in 1992 and the former South Coast electorate, which I had the honour to represent, albeit briefly, in this Parliament between 1988 and 1989, disappeared entirely. The new electorate of Burleigh was formed, and it is basically an urban electorate of about 32 square kilometres in size. It comprises the suburbs of Palm Beach, West Burleigh, Burleigh Heads, Burleigh Waters, part of Miami, Andrews and most of Stephens. Its residents cover a wide cross-section of occupations and income levels and encompass all age groups. It is a very family-oriented electorate. It has always prided itself on providing beach holidays for family people. Family holiday-makers return to the seaside towns of Miami, Burleigh and Palm Beach year after year and from generation to generation. We are developing a growing and impressive industrial and manufacturing base.

I do not want honourable members to think that we are parochial in the Burleigh electorate; it is just that we consider the central

and south Gold Coast to be the best part of south-east Queensland. The electorate contains the magnificent Burleigh Headland which runs down to the sea, the national park and the Tallebudgera Greenspace Network, and many hectares of undeveloped land now permanently set aside for purely environmental purposes. Environmental matters are well handled in the Burleigh electorate, and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to that great naturalist Dr David Fleay who came to Burleigh more than 45 years ago and set in train the preservation of so much of our natural heritage.

When my husband and I settled in Burleigh with our young family 30 years ago, David Fleay was our friend and neighbour. Some years before his death, and in order to preserve his fauna reserve from predatory developers, he sold it to the former National Party Government for a song. Although there have been some management problems, the fauna reserve is controlled by the Department of Environment and will remain as part of our national environmental heritage.

Throughout the Gold Coast and its hinterland there is now a wealth of published history as we are starting to pay attention to our beginnings, to document them, and to put together our history for those who will follow us. Captain Cook had noted Mount Warning on his voyage up the Queensland coast, but the earliest of the other coastal explorers missed completely the Tweed, Currumbin and Tallebudgera entrances and the great major entrance to the Broadwater. The very early settlers to the Gold Coast came other than by sea.

Red cedar—those magnificent trees that are now sadly very rare in the hinterland forests—and convicts were the main factors that brought about settlement of the Gold Coast hinterland. Of course, the Gold Coast was never a convict settlement, but from the south up through the Tweed came the timber-getters—roughest of rough, rum drinkers to a man. Some of them would do well in this House. Many of them were ticket-of-leave men, emancipists or runaway convicts. From the north, from the harsh penal settlement of Moreton Bay, came military patrols hunting other runaway convicts. The infamous Captain Logan established a post at Point Danger for this very purpose. Later on, farmers came to work the land, particularly for dairying, beef and market gardens. Around the early 1840s timber camps were set up, firstly along the Tweed and then in the Nerang Valley. Cedar was their first find and then pine. Logs were

floated down the rivers and creeks or carted down by bullock dray. As farming developed, the little hinterland townships started to establish and take hold.

These days, census figures and results are used for all sorts of analyses. Some of the records of more than a century ago are also interesting. In 1879 at Nerang, there were 39 inhabited houses containing 138 males and 49 females. At Mudgeeraba, there were five houses containing 20 males and 13 females. At Tallebudgera, no houses were listed, although there were 21 male and 15 female residents. At Currumbin Creek there were two males. The little coastal towns were also starting up. In 1875, 30 people lived between Southport and Broadbeach, eight between Mermaid Beach and Burleigh Heads, and 14 between Palm Beach and Coolangatta, making a total of 52 permanent residents along the actual seaside section of the future Gold Coast.

For anybody in the Chamber who has been adding up the figures, I point out that the total comes to 310 so far, and there were approximately another 100 or 150 north of Nerang up to Oxenford and Coomera. This gives a grand total of about 500 people who lived in the greater Gold Coast area during the 1870s. Even if my figures are a bit out, that was not many people, but over the next 100 years the population simply exploded. When the Albert and Gold Coast councils were amalgamated in 1995, the new Gold Coast City from Beenleigh to the New South Wales border contained 320,000 residents. The prediction for the year 2010 is one million people for the Gold Coast corridor.

During the very early days of coastal settlement, anyone who lived close to the sea ventured onto the beach only to fish or gather oysters. However, the firm beach sands were also considered ideal for horseracing, and Burleigh was considered to be a great place for racing between the two headlands. Tallebudgera village was well in place before anything got started at Burleigh. The Tallebudgera farmers had shops and a church in their township, and were unique in having their own beach racecourse at Burleigh: a two-kilometre stretch, about a mile and a half—just the right distance for racing.

The arrival of Cobb & Co opened up the whole area. In 1875, there were services six days a week from Brisbane to Nerang and Tweed Heads. That was a pretty rough and bouncy ride. The horses were skull-dragged over the creeks and the passengers were ferried across in boats. In 1882, the service

extended into Southport, and that town started to go ahead. Blocks of land quickly increased in price from 20 pounds in 1878 to 50 pounds in 1883. Schools opened up in Southport—and churches. The Star of the Sea Convent opened nearly 100 years ago. There were boarding houses, and advertisements appeared for holiday excursions. The railway arrived, and surfing became fashionable.

In 1885, the Southport and Nerang Divisional Boards, which were the forerunners of the local councils, passed by-laws that attempted to enforce swimming costume standards on men and women—neck to knee, of course. Body surfing was described by a Brisbane newspaper as a "daredevil pursuit". Sixty or seventy years later, those early councillors must have wriggled in their graves when Paula Stafford's bikinis appeared on the beaches.

By the 1920s, hotels and guesthouses were scattered right along the tourist strip, including the famous Cavill's Hotel and zoo in Surfers Paradise. The old hump-backed Jubilee Bridge was built in 1925 and not replaced until 1966. Motorists started to brave the long day's journey from Brisbane. It took all day, with a picnic lunch on the way, of course. The original railway line came down to Ernest Junction, which is now a big industrial estate at the back of Southport. Then it branched to the Southport line, right into the town, or else it went south through Nerang, Mudgeeraba, West Burleigh, Elanora, Tugun, Bilinga and Coolangatta.

There was a pub beside the railway line at West Burleigh. It burned down in the sixties. It became a fashionable competition for young blades to dash down from the train, see how many quick beers they could sink, and hop back on the train before it started to move off again, hopefully not getting left behind. We lost the railway in the 1960s because the Government of the day, in its wisdom, decided that road transport between Brisbane and Coolangatta was the answer to transport problems. We now have a new electrified rail link to Robina, which opened on 1 June, and over the next few years we will get our railway line back down to Coolangatta.

In the 1920s, blocks of land were selling in Burleigh Heads for 15 pounds. Burleigh Heads started off as a camping village—a township under canvas. Eventually the tents were cleared from the foreshore and the Norfolk pine trees were planted. Those Norfolk pines are a most distinctive feature of our foreshore and home to many thousands of noisy lorikeets. By the 1930s, we had

established beach resorts along the coast, with businesses to service the needs of local residents as well as visitors. Some of these businesses were started off by old pioneering and farming families whose descendants are still scattered throughout the Gold Coast. Indeed, some of those very early businesses are still operating in the 1990s.

Lifesaving clubs were formed, and the earliest clubs came about from the efforts of visitors. For instance, Burleigh beach was serviced or cared for by some visitors from the suburb of Mowbray Park in East Brisbane, and to this day the club on the beachfront is called the Burleigh Heads/Mowbray Park Surf Lifesaving Club. The Neptune Lady Life Savers Club was formed in 1928 to give summer recreation to the lady members of the Brisbane Gymnasium Club. New fashions started to appear in bathing suits. We were getting away from neck-to-knee costumes. At Coolangatta, men were not allowed to wear topless bathers or to walk in the streets in their bathers unless modestly covered by a beach robe or dressing gown. It was perfectly ridiculous to see grown men getting around in Griffith Street wearing dressing gowns but in bare feet. However, Southport was much more tolerant of modern fashions, and men could roll down the tops of their bathers. This incensed the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop Duhig, who really castigated them from the pulpit—half-naked savages, he called them. Eventually, because of Coolangatta's tough rules on beach wear, Coolangatta found that it began to lose seaside business to the more emancipated beaches of the northern Gold Coast. The local councillors gave in, Coolangatta decided it had better treat the matter in a commercial rather than a moral light, and business picked up again.

Money was tight during the Depression, and mass entertainments became the fashion—free amusements and free beach concerts. In the 1930s, blocks of land at Mermaid Beach—the R. G. Oates estate—were selling for five pounds. "What an outrageous price", people said. "Who on earth would want to buy a block of land right down there?" The coast started to boom in the 1950s. The boarding houses at Coolangatta came into their own, and Coolangatta became the great place for honeymooners. Some members of this House have told me that their parents honeymooned there. Coolangatta was also the home of that dance called the hokey-pokey and the song that went "If it's hot in Brisbane it's Coolangatta".

Land speculators moved into Surfers Paradise. The old Lennons Hotel went up at

Broadbeach, looking really silly, sticking up out of the sand all by itself—a great white elephant in every sense of the word. It has gone now, of course—replaced by the Oasis Shopping Centre. The old Chevron Hotel has gone, too, as has most of the original Surfers Paradise. There were great pyjama parties—

**Mr Barton:** I used to go to the Pink Elephant Bar.

**Mrs GAMIN:** Is the Minister too old for pyjama parties? There were the great pyjama parties at Bernie Elsey's Beachcomber. How modest they were when we look back. The police would be called, there would be sensational stories all over the front pages of the Gold Coast Bulletin, and all the time the party goers wore their swimsuits underneath their pyjamas. The parents of some honourable members were also pretty keen on those pyjama parties.

It has taken a long time for us to learn some lessons on the Gold Coast, particularly in terms of building straight onto the beachfront. Earlier settlers and local councillors simply did not have the faintest idea that building straight onto the sand dunes would cause so much damage. Beach erosion is an enormous problem right along the eastern seaboard of Australia. On the Gold Coast, both the State Government and the local council have poured literally millions of dollars into beach restoration and beach protection, sand pumping, boulder walls and beach protection fencing to hold the remaining dunal systems together.

We no longer send bulldozers onto the beaches to mine for mineral sands, and I hope we never will again. All our beaches were mined from the 1940s onwards, starting with World War II, right down into northern New South Wales past Kingscliff. Mining was still taking place only 30 or so years ago in front of the Kurrawa Surf Lifesaving Club at Broadbeach. It is only about 10 years since the old tin shed and mining operations near Elephant Rock closed down. Every time the dozers moved in, the protesters came out and lay down in front of them. There are still prominent citizens in Gold Coast City who first made their public profiles by blocking bulldozers. Although the restoration of those areas was done as well as possible in the circumstances of the times, we certainly do not want to see it all happen again. I will lie down in front of the bulldozers myself if necessary and so will hundreds and thousands of others, because we cannot afford to have heavy machinery excavation of our beaches ever again.

People want to come and live on the Gold Coast: they like us, they like our climate and they like our lifestyle. The Gold Coast has its knockers, of course. That is because we have grown so quickly. There has been massive growth over 150 years, so perhaps we are a little bit brash—at least that is what our detractors say. Of course, we quiet steady locals do not agree. All sorts of people live on the Gold Coast now—settled permanent residents, quiet families, retired people from the unkind climates of the southern States and working families with children.

Most of us who live on the Gold Coast do not choose to live in the fast lane; we leave that for the tourists. Our economy, though, needs the glitter strip with its sun, surf and sand image. Many others come for peaceful family holidays to the little seaside towns of Miami, Palm Beach and Burleigh Heads, which in many ways are still like villages or small country towns. In fact, the Gold Coast is made up of a whole series of little country towns linked together.

The Gold Coast economy is based on tourism. Our service industries rely on tourism. Our building industry is geared to providing accommodation for visitors as well as locals. It is pleasing to see that we are now broadening our economic base and extending into manufacturing and high-technology industries that will bring permanent benefits. Simply because of our wonderful climate—and quite apart from the current generally depressed national economic conditions—in common with Cairns and Airlie Beach, we have the downside of the visiting unemployed. Street kids and homeless youth are an increasing problem. Welfare services and the marvellous voluntary agencies are working to the limit.

We are a city now, and we have all the problems suffered by other major cities. However, we also have the advantages of the infrastructure of a major city. It is all there for us. We no longer have to rely on the State capital for our goods and services and our professional or commercial facilities. To us, the Gold Coast is our home; to others it is a playground with its cafes, bars, restaurants, international hotels, motels, high-rise apartments, casino, cabarets and clubs. We have superb sporting facilities, including an enormous number of golf courses. We have museums and art galleries, beautiful long beaches, churches of all denominations, excellent schools—both public and private, first-class tertiary establishments, some of the best shopping in Australia and major tourist attractions. It has all happened in just over 150 years. Newsworthy events happen on the

Gold Coast. Successful investments have attracted more investments. Those days will come again, although we hope without some of the extravaganzas of previous boom times.

I am proud to represent the electorate of Burleigh on the southern Gold Coast. My constituents have done me the honour of electing me for a third term to represent their interests. We work hard in Burleigh. We take care of our families. We worry about our kids and whether they will get jobs. We watch the specials in the supermarkets. We try to take care of others less fortunate than ourselves. We make our visitors welcome. Historians tell us that, before the white man came, our local Aboriginal tribe was made up of very gentle people. They were so far from warlike that they actually made visitors from other tribes welcome. So back in those far off times before the white man came, the tribes who inhabited Tallebudgera Creek and Burleigh headland lived there and enjoyed the climate, the water and the seafood, and kindly allowed outsiders to visit and enjoy local facilities. That is just what we do today. Burleigh is an interesting and diverse electorate. Those of us who live there and enjoy it make others welcome too. I hope that all members of this House who come to the Gold Coast will take the time to visit the electorate of Burleigh; it will be a delightful experience for them.

Finally, it is appropriate that I record my sincere thanks to all those people who have helped and supported me not only through this last election campaign but also over many, many years of public life. My husband and family come first, of course. I could never have achieved any success at all without their loving support. I am so lucky to have such a hardworking and forceful committee. I have many hundreds of wonderful friends who have worked and supported me over all these years. I pledge my loyalty to my constituency as a whole, to all residents of the Burleigh electorate. During the coming term, I will continue to listen to their problems and difficulties and, as always, do my best to find solutions for them. My Burleigh constituents' wants and needs, hopes and aspirations are always foremost in my list of priorities.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr D'Arcy): Order! Before I call the honourable member for Townsville, I point out that this is the member's first speech in this House. I ask members to extend to him the courtesies of the House.

**Mr REYNOLDS** (Townsville—ALP) (5.36 p.m.): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I am able to make my maiden speech as

the member for the State seat of Townsville in this 49th Parliament. I would first give my very sincere congratulations to the Speaker and Deputy Speaker on their elevation to their positions. I wish them the very best in their future deliberations.

The seat of Townsville is a diverse, exciting and challenging seat. I will represent the constituents of this seat on behalf of the Australian Labor Party with a great deal of pride. I am very much looking forward to my role as the State member for that area as, over the last 25 years, I have had a long and successful association with the City of Townsville and the region that it serves. I have very special memories of the time that I spent as an elected member in the Townsville City Council from 1973 to 1989.

The Labor Party has had a proud tradition of representation in the city at a local, State and Federal Government level. Indeed it seems a long time since I was elected in 1973 as the sole Labor Party councillor on the Townsville City Council and the first Labor councillor for 24 years. Of course, I then went on to become deputy mayor in 1976 in the first Labor council in the history of the City of Townsville. That first Labor council was led by former Opposition Leader, Mayor Perc Tucker, who was a popular and successful Labor Mayor until his untimely death in August 1980. Later that year, I was elected as Mayor of the City of Townsville, was re-elected on three occasions and retired from that position in March 1989. It is with pride that I can state that the Labor City Council in Townsville is in its record 23rd year and strongly and capably led by my mayoral successor Councillor Tony Mooney.

I would particularly like to thank the very large number of party and family members who have contributed to my successful election as the member for Townsville. Pam, my wife and partner for 25 years, my daughter Nikki and my son Todd deserve a very special thanks for their assistance and tolerance over the 18-month election campaign. As members would appreciate, there is always a very fine line between the many political and party obligations that one has and the need for quality time with one's family. I know that I have been very fortunate to have three family members who have not only been greatly supportive but who also have a very strong and active interest in politics. I would also like to place on record my thanks to my 90-year-old mother, Dorothy Reynolds, who has had an active interest in politics throughout her lifetime. She has been a great supporter of all my political endeavours and inculcated in me

many of the values and principles that I bring to my political life.

My election to Parliament has been very much a team effort and I would like to thank the hundreds of Labor Party members and supporters who have assisted me in my campaign. My heartfelt thanks go to my campaign executive consisting of Tom Greenwood, my campaign director; Peter Le Grand, my campaign secretary; and the campaign treasurer, Kevin Bycroft. I want to especially mention two members of the Labor Party who have had a tremendous influence over my political career and who have given me wonderful support since I joined the Labor Party in 1970. I refer to two life members of the Australian Labor Party, Arthur Trower of the Currajong branch and Norm Wilson of the Hermit Park branch. Both of these Labor stalwarts were members of my campaign committee and have worked tirelessly for the Labor movement for the last four decades. I would also specially thank Eddie Thornton, Angela Hill, Barry Ramsay, Denise Thompson, Warren Shepherd, Jacki Kerr, Jessie Maher and Neil Sellers who gave unstintingly of their time as members of the campaign committee.

As I have already mentioned, the Townsville electorate is diverse, including much of the older and historical suburbs of Townsville in the southern area of the city, the northern suburbs that wind their way around Castle Hill and a number of suburbs in the western area of the city. It also includes the central business district, Townsville's administrative and governmental heart, Townsville's port, the Strand and kilometres of coastline. The diversity of the electorate is further enriched by the inclusion of Magnetic Island and Palm Island. This very rich blend of community brings with it particular concerns and issues, and I will be expanding on some of them today.

The Beattie Labor Government has hit the ground running and Queenslanders have been extremely impressed with the performance and the speed of the decision making of Premier Peter Beattie and his Ministry. The key theme of the Beattie Government of job creation and job stability is extremely relevant to the Townsville electorate and the commitments that the Government has made for the city and the region.

In stark contrast to the capital works freeze imposed by the former Treasurer after the election of the coalition in February 1996, the Beattie Labor Government is getting on with the job. The \$25m Strand project will proceed because of the \$15m commitment

that the Government has made to Townsville and this project. Over the past two years, the Strand coastline has been devastated by cyclonic and heavy rainfall influences and is in urgent need of repair. This partnership project between the State Government and the Townsville City Council will see the restoration of the beach and the esplanade and key coastal development work undertaken towards the long-term protection of the seafront. The project also provides for a world-class landscaped sea vista, which will be used extensively by residents and tourists. Importantly, it will be a major job creator for Townsville.

During the 18 months of my candidature, I campaigned strongly against the excesses of National Competition Policy, the so-called level playing field and the social impact that such policies had on people. As the then President of the National Tertiary Education Union at James Cook University, I condemned the Howard Government's attacks on tertiary education, the former State Government's attacks on technical and further education and in particular the erosion of our TAFE system. I once again applaud the initiative of the Premier in introducing a public benefit test in the application of the competition policy. At the end of the day, we need to ask ourselves particularly why Governments introduce competition policy into public sector planning decisions if there is no tangible public benefit and a range of quite obvious disadvantages. The bottom line must surely be the social impact on people and, in particular, job creation as well as quality service delivery rather than job losses and rather questionable service delivery outcomes. I am unashamedly a supporter of a strong public sector and will vigorously advocate on behalf of the nearly 40% of the Townsville/Thuringowa work force who are employed in the public sector.

Over the past decade, we have seen an erosion of rail operations in Townsville. I have worked closely with the rail unions and employees and I am determined that Townsville's contribution to rail operations in Queensland will be given the status it deserves. Both the Premier and the Deputy Premier have been closely involved in the compilation of a policy that recognises the key role that Townsville will play as part of the Queensland Rail network. Our \$20m commitment to relocate heavy engineering workshops to Stuart will see the development of a heavy duty engineering centre of excellence. This will give Townsville the capacity to compete for statewide Queensland Rail maintenance and capital works projects

that will enhance job security for rail employees in Townsville.

For a number of years now, inner-city Townsville has been suffering from stagnation and decline in a way similar to that experienced by other Queensland cities such as Cairns and Rockhampton, other cities throughout Australia and, indeed, throughout the world. Over the past decade, we have witnessed the extension of suburban shopping centres and further strip development with extra commercial zonings being granted. All of those factors have had an enormous impact on the viability of the inner city. Of course, the Townsville City Council is the major planning agency but the State Government also has a role to play in partnership with the council, the business community and the community at large. A number of productive discussions have been held with the mayor and members of the business community to advance a planning and redevelopment model that will address the inner-city decline. The Government has tenure over a range of inner-city sites, including the vacant North Yard railway workshops and Townsville Port Authority land adjacent to Ross Creek.

Presently, we are discussing with the Townsville City Council the concept of a land bank, which would include public sector properties with an ability to promote and market investment and development opportunities that could help to bring life back to the CBD. I am very much aware that inner-city redevelopment needs to be carried out sensitively to ensure that we enhance inner-city retail operations rather than take away from them.

There are examples in other cities where Government intervention has occurred that I believe have been to the detriment of other city retailers. Much of inner-city Townsville has a proud historical heritage that has been protected through the introduction of development control plans initiated by the Townsville City Council in the 1980s. I am determined to see the ongoing protection of these historical precincts and to protect the amenity and community interest of residents who live in residential areas adjoining the CBD.

As I have mentioned already, Palm Island is situated within the Townsville electorate. I take this opportunity to commend the work of the Palm Island Aboriginal Community Council, which is ably led by Councillor Peena Geia. My first association with the island goes back to 1974. There are many pressing economic and social issues that are facing Palm Island. I am delighted with the work that

I was able to do as a candidate and the partnerships that have been forged between me and key stakeholder groups on the island. There is strong agreement that the time for research and the time for more reports is over and that it is time for action. The people of Palm Island, the Aboriginal Community Council, the ATSIC councillors and Government bodies know the issues, they know the problems and concerns, and they are keen to see a coordinated approach to enhance Palm Island's economic and social development. I believe that the key to a successful coordinated approach is self-determination and empowerment. As a State member, I see my role as one of working closely with the community and Government departments to further facilitate this process.

I have been tremendously encouraged by the work that is being undertaken currently on Palm Island by the Townsville district of the Queensland Health Department. This community development approach is aimed at enhancing both the social and economic life of Palm Islanders. It encapsulates the need for a holistic approach that recognises that an individual's wellbeing is impacted on by both social and economic factors. In a like way, I have been tremendously encouraged by the quality of community leadership on Palm Island. I look forward to working with the people of Palm Island on the enhancement of social and economic outcomes that will improve the health and lifestyle of its people. Some of the key issues to be examined include the need for more community housing, the greater involvement of Palm Islanders in economic development, job creation and the introduction of a protocol between local, State and Federal Governments.

The Townsville electorate and, indeed, the region as a whole has one of the highest proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in an urban area in Australia. Over the past three decades, James Cook University and the former Townsville College of Advanced Education recognised the priority that should rightfully be given to the educational needs of indigenous Australians. We have seen hundreds of indigenous graduates who are playing a purposeful professional and leadership role in Government, business and community endeavours. These educational outcomes have been strongly supported by both Labor and coalition Governments at a State and Federal level. The proposed medical school at James Cook University will have a particular emphasis on indigenous health.

From my own professional and political background, I am aware that any examination of the nation's social indicators would show that indigenous Australians are tremendously disadvantaged as members of the Australian community. Indigenous Australians have the highest level of unemployment, the lowest level of education, the worst mortality and morbidity rates, the highest proportion of imprisonment and the highest level of housing need. Indeed, it does not matter which social indicator one examines, historically indigenous Australians have not been treated equally and today they are the most disadvantaged group in Australia. These facts negate the simplistic and untruthful approach to indigenous issues that is presently being perpetrated by the One Nation Party. If all Australians are to be treated equally, we need to recognise the disadvantages that are inherent in the indigenous community and work towards solutions where all Australians, irrespective of the colour of their skin, can expect equal social and economic outcomes.

I am strongly committed to the process of reconciliation and as a member of the Queensland Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee I appeal to all Queenslanders to work towards unity and reconciliation. The State Government has a purposeful role to play in the reconciliation process. I applaud the leadership of the Premier, which is inclusive in nature and cognisant of the history and needs of indigenous Australians. The inclusion of Neville Bonner, a distinguished indigenous Australian, in the formal opening of Parliament by the Governor is indicative of that leadership.

I want to recognise today the urgent need for the Garbutt urban renewal program to get back on track. The project was an excellent initiative of the Goss Labor Government and stalled badly when the coalition came to power in February 1996.

The former Treasurer's capital works freeze had a devastating impact on the suburb of Garbutt. The stalling of this program saw about 80 families moved from the suburb, enrolments at the primary school, preschool and local day care centre drastically reduced, and a 20% to 30% reduction in the turnover and profits of local businesses. We also suffered the loss of the local doctor and the closing down of the local service station. The former coalition Government should well hang its head in shame when it comes to Garbutt. The present Labor Government has committed itself to finishing the Garbutt urban renewal program over the next three years.

I have had a long association with Magnetic Island during my time in local government and I look forward to working with the Magnetic Island community as their State member. This beautiful suburb of Townsville and tourism destination is 20 minutes from the inner city and is linked with a modern and efficient ferry service. There are many challenges facing the island, and I have worked during my campaign with key stakeholders on the resolution of a number of these issues.

The failed development at Nelly Bay is an ugly blot on the Magnetic Island landscape, and the development of a safe harbour and associated public and private infrastructure remains a very high priority. A supplementary environmental impact statement will soon be open to community consultation and the Government has committed \$6m to the development of public infrastructure so that the development of the safe harbour and associated infrastructure can proceed. The development will be subject to strict environmental scrutiny through the EIS process.

Another major issue on Magnetic Island has been the equitable access to public health facilities and, in particular, the role of the nursing sister at the Magnetic Island Clinic. In the last 18 months, Magnetic Island residents and visitors have been disadvantaged with the role of the nursing sister being greatly diminished. We saw a 40-year practice of the nursing sister being able to supply limited treatment and drugs to patients seriously curtailed. We saw a ridiculous situation in which the nursing sister was not legally able to administer oxygen to an asthmatic, give an angina tablet to an elderly heart patient or urgently administer an antihistamine to a patient with wasp stings without consulting with a doctor. This absurd situation will change with the introduction of a protocol which will define the role of the nursing sister more clearly. In particular, the protocol will define sensible powers which the nursing sister should have in an isolated community such as Magnetic Island.

I take this opportunity to commend the Magnetic Island Community and Commerce Association for the excellent work that it is undertaking on behalf of the Magnetic Island community, and I look forward to a productive relationship with it. I have discussed with the Association the Government's strong support for ecotourism and the marketability of Magnetic Island as a tourism destination. I see the need for an integrated tourism and community management plan for the island

with local, State and Federal Governments and the community working towards such a plan.

There is a recognition that more resources are required in establishing tourism, recreation and community infrastructure for both island residents and tourists. I will be advocating that Magnetic Island be recognised by the Federal Government as a unique tourism destination in the World Heritage Area and that it be eligible for special assistance in this regard.

I am strongly committed to seeing the Chevron gas project become a reality and to the development of a base load power station in the Townsville/Thuringowa region. Over the last five years, the Townsville community has been united in its quest for industrial development and growth which should occur in a planned, ecologically and socially sustainable manner.

The nexus that exists between Townsville and the Carpentaria-Mount Isa minerals province has seen huge economic spin-off benefits to the city and region. During my six years as Chairman of the Townsville Port Authority, from 1990 to 1996, we saw a doubling of trade throughput and \$300m worth of development committed to the port. Western Mining Corporation is presently finalising its plans for exporting one million tonnes of fertiliser through the Port of Townsville.

I believe that the Townsville/Thuringowa region is destined for a sustained period of industrial development and growth, with key economic and social benefits accruing to our city and our region. The challenge will be to ensure that this development occurs within a socially and ecologically sustainable framework. The Labor Government's strong commitment to Townsville has been well promoted, and I am confident that the city can play an extremely purposeful role in job creation and job stability through planned industrial development.

I look forward to the role that I will be playing in this 49th Parliament as the member for Townsville. I will advocate strongly on behalf of my constituents and for the sustained economic and social development of the Townsville community.

Debate, on motion of Mr Reynolds, adjourned.

#### **WORKERS COMPENSATION**

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (5.54 p.m.):  
I move—

"That this House—

- (1) notes the financial circumstances of the workers compensation system when the Coalition Government assumed office in February 1996;
- (2) notes the reforms to workers compensation implemented by the Coalition Government;
- (3) acknowledges the significant improvement in the financial state of the WorkCover system during the Coalition's term of government;
- (4) views with great concern the policies of the Beattie Labor Government in relation to WorkCover and the devastating impact these policies will have on Queensland business, including small business, if implemented, including increased premiums and redundancies; and
- (5) calls on the Government to meet the financial commitments to WorkCover as contained in the 1998-99 Coalition State Budget (ie., \$35m)."

There are very few areas of Government regulation and imposition which more directly affect the ability of business to get on with the job than workers compensation. It is for this reason that the Opposition is today moving this motion, to have the Parliament clearly signal to the Beattie Labor Government that a viable Queensland workers compensation system needs to be maintained. It is for this reason that in March 1996 the then new coalition Government made the reform of the workers compensation system of Queensland an urgent priority. It had to be this way, given the sad and sorry financial mess in which the fund was found to be.

The coalition in Opposition, supported by both big and small business, continually warned the then Goss Labor Government of the deleterious effects of its policies on the state of the fund. These warnings were continually ignored by the Goss Labor Government—so much so that in June 1995 the Workers Compensation Board of Queensland, under Labor's administration, reported a deficit of \$114.3m. Within 12 months this reported unfunded liability spiralled to \$319.8m, due largely to a sharp increase in the number of common law claims and Labor's mismanagement.

Given the financial crisis of the Workers Compensation Fund, the coalition Government initiated a comprehensive inquiry by Mr Jim Kennedy in March 1996. The inquiry established beyond all doubt that the Workers

Compensation Fund was in serious financial trouble. In fact, one of Australia's best known actuaries told the inquiry that the fund was "out of control", mainly as a result of the deteriorating common law experience over quite a period.

Some of the Kennedy recommendations were: the introduction of a 15% impairment threshold for accessing damages at common law; the abolition of recess and journey claims; the imposition of a 42-day irrevocable election to either accept a statutory lump sum or proceed to common law; changes in the definition of "worker" and changes in the definition of "injury". Based on these recommendations, the coalition Government implemented significant workers compensation reforms in order to restore the fund to balance. The coalition Government implemented as many of the reforms as it could, and on 27 November 1996 I introduced the WorkCover Queensland Bill, which replaced much of Labor's discredited workers compensation legislation.

In relation to the definition of "worker", the coalition Government introduced changes to remove the confusion which had existed for many years regarding the status of contractors. This had caused employers and their contractors or workers to be unsure of their rights and responsibilities and made premium compliance very difficult. The definition of "injury" was redefined to require employment to be "the major significant factor" causing the injury instead of "a significant contributing factor", in order to ensure that the worker's entitlements to compensation is directly related to that component of the injury caused by work. This, of course, reduced the opportunity for fraud.

Because employers have little or no control over the occurrence of recess and journey, the definition of journey claims was tightened with the introduction of a boundary to boundary concept, consideration of the journey route taken and consideration of the worker's actions, for example, drink-driving. In addition to these major changes, the Bill made provision for the introduction of an experience based rating system designed to reward employers with good workplace health and safety records, rehabilitation reforms, more equitable review and appeal processes and, of course, a fairer system of weekly benefits.

WorkCover Queensland was established in February 1997 and, as a statutory body with a commercially experienced board of directors, went about doing its job as best it could. One of my finest appointments was that of Mr

Frank Haly as chairman of that board, supported by an exceptional set of directors. In the year to 30 June 1997, WorkCover's deficit improved from \$319.8m to \$125.9m thanks to prudent investment, sound financial management, an improved underwriting result, and the coalition Government's financial contributions, which totalled in that year alone \$67.5m, to the Workers Compensation Fund. Just before leaving Government, I advised the House that a \$41m positive solvency was projected for 1998. I believe that this is still a situation which will be achieved and, hopefully, the new Minister will report to the House in the near future to this effect.

The board and the actuaries advised the then coalition Government of the reasons for the excellent results that I have just cited. Again, this is worth restating. The advice was that WorkCover's improved financial result was the cumulative result of a big investment income, the State Government's annual capital contributions to WorkCover's capital fund, the Government's refund of tax equivalent payments, and an improved underwriting result. For example, the 1996-97 financial year's exceptional 15.95% investment return from the Queensland Investment Corporation, worth \$215.43m, was a welcome and valuable contribution to the fund's recovery. The coalition Government also agreed to refund tax equivalent payments until WorkCover reached solvency, and this resulted in a \$32.5m benefit for the 1996-97 financial year.

In addition, the coalition injected the first of three \$35m annual contributions to WorkCover's capital and then followed up again with a similar contribution in 1997-98. We ask the new Beattie Labor Government to match that contribution again this year, as contained within the coalition's 1998-99 State Budget.

I believe, with respect to the Minister, that Mr Braddy's recent claims in the Courier-Mail of Saturday, 18 July that Labor's 1996 reforms to the Queensland workers compensation scheme are responsible for the improvement in the scheme's financial standard are intellectually dishonest and an attempt to rewrite Queensland's financial history. Not only is the Labor Party intent on rewriting political and financial history; according to its pre-election policies, it wishes also to rewrite the legislation. According to its policy, Labor would—

redefine the definition of "worker" and effectively recreate the confusion that the coalition Government has eliminated;

reintroduce totally unrestricted access to common law, even though it was their Government—and I stress "their Government"—that established the 20% injury threshold when last in Government; reintroduce unrestricted recess and journey claims;

disadvantage workers—and this is something that honourable members opposite should listen to—by limiting weekly workers compensation benefits to actual earnings at pre-injury levels;

remove incentives for employers to optimise safety and rehabilitation programs by tying premiums to the cost of claims within industries; and

appoint to its medical assessment tribunals its unqualified union mates—something which, of course, it has already done with respect to the board itself.

These policies will mean a return to the bad old days, with an ever-increasing unfunded liability and ever-increasing employer premiums. This would lead to increased costs for business, a loss of business confidence and, therefore, a declining ability to continue to employ existing employees, let alone encouraging business to take on more and new employees.

It is for this reason that the Opposition is moving this motion. We are doing so in order to send a message to the Beattie Labor Government that its workers compensation policies will lead to unemployment rather than more jobs and, eventually, to a decline in benefits for injured workers as workers come to be covered by a collapsing workers compensation system administered by the Beattie Labor Government.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the very fine efforts of Commissioner Jim Kennedy in conducting his inquiry and making recommendations. I acknowledge Frank Haly and the board, who achieved exceptional results. The members who were sacked did not deserve the fate that they had to endure. I also acknowledge the hardworking staff of WorkCover. During my time as Minister, I became convinced that those staff, from the very top to the bottom, were in favour of the reforms that the Government was implementing. It is those people to whom I particularly wish to pay tribute.

I say to the Government: accept the recommendation of Jim Kennedy not to do anything to the workers compensation system of this State until three years from the completion of his review have elapsed. Most

importantly, I ask the Government to make sure that the financial commitments that the coalition Government made when in office are maintained by the current Government.

Time expired.

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.05 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Clayfield and also to support the member in this debate. There is no doubting that when we took over Government in February 1996 the Workers Compensation Fund was well on the way to becoming a financial disaster. We already knew that as at 30 June in the previous year, under the previous Labor Government, it had a reported deficit of about \$114m. By the time we took charge and were able to do something, that deficit had spiralled to about \$320m. It was out of control financially, because of a number of decisions made under the previous administration—a number of decisions that I think could be safely referred to as political.

In order to understand what was going on, it is instructive to look at what Jim Kennedy had to say in the report that he produced in early 1996. He indicated that the Workers Compensation Board should try to operate as a business, because it was really an insurance business. He believed that it ought to be an efficient insurance and compensation business. On page 8 of that report he stated—

"There is no doubt that political influence has had an impact on aspects of workers' compensation over many years. This has particularly affected the capacity of the Board to vary premiums and benefits appropriately.

It is difficult to keep politics completely out of a system which generates issues of great importance to individuals, unions, industry and many organisations. However, if the system is to be restored to financial viability and survive in this more accountable and competitive marketplace, political considerations will have to take a back-seat in the future."

That is pretty important—and I will come back to it—because of the issues that have surfaced recently.

He went on to say—

"Evidence presented to the Inquiry indicates that inappropriate decisions, made on at least three occasions in the early 1990s"—

in other words, under the Labor administration—

"with regard to premium levels and benefits setting, in themselves, account for much of today's current level of under funding."

He continued—

"It is not a streamlined, efficient, commercial organisation with a responsible board and significant insurance skills."

Mr Kennedy recommended—

"a commercially experienced Board with full authority to set premiums, provide and modify benefits as the working environment changes, manage claims and outsource rehabilitation and medical services, sue and be sued, but with investment services mandated to be provided by the Queensland Investment Corporation."

That was what we set out to do. Those were the criteria that Jim Kennedy laid down for bringing the Workers Compensation Board back under financial control. This Government has completely gone against the tenets set down in the Kennedy report. We have seen this Government starting to politicise the appointment and the board process again.

I have known Frank Haly for about 20 years. He was an outstanding businessman. He came from north Queensland and was managing partner of C. E. Smith and Co. The members from north Queensland would recognise that name. He built up that firm. He was an outstanding businessman and not just in the accounting area. He helped to establish Business Queensland; he was the chairman of Metway Bank; and he was an extremely commercially oriented person. What has the Minister done?

The Minister has replaced Mr Haly with Ian Brusasco. What did the Minister say about Ian Brusasco? I think the following quote is instructive given what Jim Kennedy had said earlier about the politicisation of the Workers Compensation Board system and what it was doing. What did the Minister say? He said—

"... Ian Brusasco is an appropriate person to come on as chair with his background in business and his association with Labor and Labor philosophy."

He was clearly a political appointment rather than a commercial appointment. What we see time and time again under a Labor Government is that, when we get into something like workers compensation, which is basically an insurance and compensation scheme which ought to be managed for policy holders in a commercial fashion, the Minister

seeks through his appointments to politicise the whole process. What we found previously, and what we will find again, is that because these are political appointments, whether they be from the union or whether they be the Minister's Labor mates, a very simple approach will be taken to decision making on the board—people will go back to entrenched Labor positions.

Time expired.

**Hon. P. J. BRADY** (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.10 p.m): I rise in the House in response to the motion moved by the honourable member for Clayfield in relation to the Queensland workers compensation system. Mr Santoro has asked that the House note the financial position of the Queensland Workers Compensation Fund at present as well as at the time when the coalition came to power. He asked that we note the significant improvement in the state of the WorkCover system. I would like to inform the House of a number of relevant facts that must be considered in relation to Mr Santoro's motion. I will firstly move an amendment to the motion. I move—

"All words after 'February 1996'—

omit, insert—

- (2) that the Queensland workers' compensation system should be fair and accessible to injured workers and their families, including the maintenance of access to common law;
- (3) that premiums should remain affordable for employers;
- (4) that any reforms should not put increased cost pressures on the workers' compensation system; and
- (5) that there be a continued capital injection of \$35m in 1998-99 to WorkCover Queensland to assist in its financial recovery.'

The Goss Labor Government had recognised that the workers compensation system in Queensland was experiencing financial difficulties and, as a result, introduced a number of reforms, particularly in relation to common law access, which were specifically aimed at addressing the problems. These reforms commenced on 1 January 1996. Coming to power in February 1996, the coalition Government did not wait to evaluate the impact of those reforms. Instead, it embarked on a legislative review process culminating in the introduction of the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996 that

contained significant limitations on workers' access to the workers compensation system. I note with interest the financial position of WorkCover Queensland as reported in the first annual report of 1996-97 as well as statements made by the former Minister, Mr Santo Santoro.

I would like to take a moment to review WorkCover's financial position during that time and to carefully consider what the real drivers have been in bringing about a change. On examining the figures, it is readily evident that much of the change has been brought about by a combination of unusually high investment returns in addition to a total of \$70m Government capital injection as well as a significant stabilisation in the number of common law claims, the last process having been brought about by the Labor reforms coming into effect on 1 January 1996. In 1996-97 the fund was boosted by a 16% return, amounting to \$213m. The long-term investment rate of return from QIC is, however, 8.2%. The early estimate for this year is approximately 11%.

This Government is committed to ensuring that workers have access to a fair and reasonable system of workers compensation. A particular concern is the fact that the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996 has reduced that access through changes to the definition of "injury" and "worker". This Government has indicated its desire to maintain coverage for injured workers when work is a significant contributing factor and for recess and journey claims.

However, many of the claims advanced tonight by the honourable member for Clayfield are his own invention and only time will tell what this Labor Government introduces in terms of legislation. But no-one in Queensland should take the definition of the reforms intended by this Labor Government from speeches made by the honourable member for Clayfield, who continues to exaggerate and indeed make claims that are not accurate in relation to what our reforms will be.

Notwithstanding the Government's desire to make changes to the regulatory framework, it is also concerned that additional cost pressures are not placed on the workers compensation system in the State. I am therefore seeking the cooperation of the WorkCover Queensland board and my department in undertaking an analysis of the current regulatory framework and possible future policy options. In this regard I have requested that they include an evaluation of

the impact on the Workers Compensation Fund, on stakeholders and on the maintenance of competitive premiums.

This Government is also of the view that workers compensation should be maintained as a public system to ensure public accountability and equity for injured workers and their dependents, and that commercial considerations should not be the only factor in the funding and conditions of the scheme. I emphasise again that the Government's intention is to provide a set of reforms that achieve fairness and accessibility without placing increased cost pressures on the workers compensation system.

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (6.15 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to second the Minister's amendment to the motion and to speak to it. I cannot do that without commenting on what two of the previous speakers have said. The previous Minister took a no-fault workers compensation scheme, which was probably the best workers compensation scheme in Australia and perhaps the best in the world, and destroyed it. He did that by changing the definitions of "injury" and "worker" and, in so doing, he disfranchised people who were previously covered. This workers' friend, as he likes to call himself, took 90% of the people in the building industry out of the scheme by excluding those workers who are not PAYE taxpayers. He disfranchised more than half of the scheme's members.

The former Minister talks about what Kennedy said and how he complied with the Kennedy report, but one of the major planks of that report was the compliance by the employers with the scheme. The scheme was not being complied with at all. The Minister did not want to do anything about that; he did not try to get the employers to comply. After all, as the member for Moggill said, the scheme is essentially an insurance scheme: you pay your money and you get your insurance but, if you do not pay your money, you should not get the insurance. For years the insurance scheme—the workers compensation scheme—had been picking up the liability for 100% of workers in this State because it was compulsory for employers to be in it. However, some employers were not paying their way and the previous Government did nothing about collecting those premiums—not one dot! It let the scheme go down the chute. All it did was attack the people at the end of the scheme who, through no fault of their own, were injured on a site. They had no coverage of wages and no access to common law at all.

The previous Government was not even looking after employers. When employers in the building industry found out what the former Government had done, they nearly died. Opposition members have forgotten why the no-fault provision came in and why the insurance was there; it was to protect builders and the employers as much as it was to assist employees. The Opposition's actions had the effect of tipping employers out into the street and taking their houses off them when injured employees sued employers under common law when they were at fault. It would not matter what the former Government said about the employee; if it said that he is not covered because he is not a PAYE taxpayer, that does not stop him from suing the employer. If the employer is at fault, he cops the bill. The previous Government left employers without any insurance.

The employers nearly died. The Master Builders Association, the MTIA and those sorts of employer organisations certainly got hold of the unions very quickly. They sat down with them and came up with a scheme which they called CAP, which gave coverage for all of those PPS workers. They recognised that just because they were being paid PPS it did not mean that they were not employees.

The former Minister knows as well as I do that, under the tax Act, PPS provisions are not being properly policed and that a lot of employees are getting paid PPS, which is illegal. The former Minister and his Government continued to assist employers to get out of their obligations to employees. They adopted the lowest common denominator. The former Government allowed employers to get out of their safety obligations, resulting in more people being injured at work. Those employers who have cut their safety obligations and who do not pay workers compensation premiums will win the jobs because they can drive the prices down. The former Minister is trying to perpetuate a society where the people who can least afford it—workers who are injured—are kept at the bottom of the heap and receive no assistance at all when it comes to—

**An Opposition member** interjected.

**Mr PURCELL:** I do know that it is true. The phone in my office nearly rang off the hook when this legislation first went through. First of all I had employers ringing up because they did not know where to go or what to do. Over the past two years I have had employees continually ringing up.

Time expired.

**Mr HEGARTY** (Redlands—NPA) (6.20 p.m.): The fact that the Workers Compensation Fund is in a far healthier position now than it was when the coalition assumed office in February 1996 is due to the reforms that the coalition Government put in place. The Workers Compensation Fund was not the best scheme in the world, as the member for Bulimba would have us believe. It was the coalition's fiscal responsibility that turned the Labor Party's legacy of a \$400m black hole in WorkCover into a surplus. Labor's claims to brilliance—so often puffed up as gospel by the prophets at the Courier-Mail—always deserve close scrutiny, and none more so than those based on financial records.

In this event, as is usually the case, Labor's claim to have been responsible for a miracle cure is yet again shown to be somewhat on the long side of heroic. In any event, Labor's plans to wreck the sensible and fiscally responsible reforms the coalition put in place for WorkCover are shown to be foolish and ultimately at the great expense of ordinary Queenslanders.

Honourable members will no doubt recall that WorkCover's actuary, Coopers & Lybrand, clearly stated that the January 1996 changes introduced by the former Labor Government would be insufficient to turn the tide and fix the fund—as my colleague the member for Clayfield advised the House in a ministerial statement in April this year. It was the view of Coopers & Lybrand that Labor's 1996 changes would not achieve full funding within 10 years, even if the common law claims experienced stabilised at January 1996 levels. The coalition's response to the issue of an effective and fair workers compensation policy was clear, effective and fair.

Employers could predict premium costs into the future with reasonable grounds for supposing the fact that the fund was back under control and would limit the potential, short of any political interference with commercial decisions such as the Government is now proposing, for blow-outs in either premiums or payouts. Employers with a good history of compliance and safety would no longer be held hostage by bad employers. Employers with a history of continuing poor management performance would have to pay the additional premium their carelessness warranted. Employees have the benefit of a fund that would not suddenly go broke on them and from which, for legitimate compensation claims, they could expect reasonable payments.

All reasonable Queenslanders will view with great concern the policies of the Beattie Labor Government in relation to WorkCover and the devastating impact that these policies will have on Queensland business, including small business, which is the main generator of employment. If the Labor Government's policies are implemented they will include increased premiums and redundancies. This must impact on future employment prospects as employers grapple with increased overheads. It flies in the face of the newly elected Beattie Labor Government's commitment to reduce unemployment to 5%. It is not too late for the new Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to see the error of his ways where the financial security of WorkCover is concerned. He should leave in place the actuarially sound measures implemented following the 1996 examination of the fund. The present WorkCover arrangements provide a balance between the rights and interests of workers and employers and any tampering with the mechanism will potentially threaten Queensland's low-tax State status.

The amendments moved by the Honourable the Minister tonight are really only platitudes and will in no way address the situation of the fund. I therefore endorse the assertion by the member for Clayfield that the coalition put the best measures in place to provide a financially sound WorkCover for Queensland workers and employers.

**Mr ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (6.24 p.m.): In his first speech, the new member for Ferny Grove raised a legitimate question about the rights and levels of protection that should be provided to workers. In other words, the question he raised was: in a world of economic rationalism, who is going to represent the interests of workers? That is a very fair and reasonable question for workers to ask in relation to workers compensation. On the experience of the past two years, workers certainly will not be thanking the coalition for what it did to the system.

In its motion, the Opposition lays claim to recent improvements in the financial circumstances of WorkCover. The financial difficulties experienced by the Workers Compensation Fund have been well canvassed in this place. This matter was recognised by the Labor Government in 1995 and, accordingly, early in 1996 appropriate amendments were put through this House to address the matter. At the change of Government later that year the coalition introduced more changes, making access by

workers to compensation payments much more restrictive.

On the advice given to the previous Labor Government, the changes made in 1995 would have addressed the financial difficulties of the fund. There was no need to tighten the screws further and reduce workers' entitlements and access to fair compensation. Given time, the changes made by Labor would have led to the fund correcting itself without further imposition on workers.

It is important that commercial considerations are not the only driving factor which underpins the financial aspects of the workers compensation scheme. The scheme needs to be appropriately funded and this can be achieved by maintaining premiums at an affordable rate and also by ensuring full compliance with the payment of premiums and levies. This is something that the coalition, when in office, avoided like the plague despite it being a major recommendation of the Kennedy report.

Information provided to me suggests that non-compliance in the building and construction industry at the time of the Kennedy report, of which the coalition Government was aware, was in the order of \$50m to \$100m. Surely something should have been put in place by the coalition Government to capture that \$50m to \$100m instead of further restricting the rights of workers to fair and reasonable compensation.

It is important to provide a system which achieves fairness and accessibility for workers without placing increased cost pressures on the scheme. Much of the fairness of the scheme was removed by the coalition's amendments in 1996. For example, the new definition of "injury" has cut many workers out of an entitlement to claim compensation. Changing the requirement from a situation where employment was to be a significant factor to the coalition's definition where it has to be the major significant factor has removed many workers' entitlements to claim for many genuine injuries. I recall raising this matter in the debate on the Bill and I said that that would be the case. Anecdotal evidence and information provided to me by some of my constituents who have been caught by this definition support that view.

The coalition also introduced further restrictions to cover access to claims during journeys to and from work and during recess breaks. Additionally, the new definition of "worker" removed many workers working under PPS arrangements from coverage and required them to take out their own cover.

Significantly for employers—and this has been canvassed by the member for Bulimba—the coalition's changes expose employers to common law damages claims for negligence. Under Labor's legislation, employers were insured against common law claims for all workers.

To illustrate the scope of the difficulties arising out of the exclusion of PPS workers, it is necessary to note that the biggest percentage of those workers are in the building and construction industry. Building sites are one of the more dangerous locations for workers, and to implement a policy which effectively removes so many people from coverage—some estimates are as high as 45,000—and also to potentially expose a large number of employers to common law claims without protection is unsound policy.

The Labor Government will be reviewing the changes made by the previous Government. The approach will be to make changes which take account of the impact of change on all key stakeholders, including the issue of maintaining affordable premiums for employers. It is important to note that the average premiums paid in Queensland are the third lowest in Australia. We must also ensure that as many workers as possible are covered under the scheme. I look forward to Labor bringing these changes into the House.

Time expired.

**Mr SLACK** (Burnett—NPA) (6.30 p.m.): It is now history that, when the coalition attained office, the workers compensation scheme in Queensland was, in round figures, \$400m in the red. As a result of that, the coalition Government had to do something about it, so it appointed Kennedy to head a group to consider it and to come up with independent recommendations. Those recommendations were very finely tuned. It was pointed out very forcibly to the then Government that to work those recommendations had to be adopted in toto. And let us make no mistake about it: they were working. The Labor Government now wants to go back on those recommendations and do some finetuning of its own to suit its own constituency. That is fair enough to a point. However, the reality is that this will have very major consequences for industry, business and, in the longer term, jobs. On the one hand the Government wants to see more jobs created in the community, but on the other hand it wants to create situations in which industry is not prepared to employ people if things become too hard. As soon as we start tampering with workers compensation, it can become too hard, and

we run the risk of blowing out the cost of premiums. Workers compensation premiums should remain affordable to employers.

It would be great to achieve what the Government is proposing in this amendment to the motion. Government members can talk about it, but in reality it may have the opposite effect of what the Government wants to achieve. At the end of the day the premiums cannot remain affordable to employers. I agree that it is nice to have recourse to common law. However, Kennedy proposed in toto a set of rules that were addressing the workers compensation problems of this State.

The central element of the coalition's policy in Government was employment growth. No-one could truly deny that. That was demonstrated by the fact that, during our two and a half years in office, Queensland consistently outperformed the other States and the Australian national growth rate in jobs. A central part of employment security is a sensible and fiscally responsible provision of workers compensation so that people injured at work are properly looked after. There is no doubt that that is what the coalition set out to do, and its reforms to the WorkCover fund were designed to further this aim. It was essential that the fund return to viability as swiftly as possible. This fine objective was achieved, and it is this fine objective which the member for Kedron seeks now to overturn.

The WorkCover fund, which as my colleague the member for Clayfield advised the House in April was headed for a surplus at the end of the 1998 fiscal year, is now under substantial threat of a return to unfinancial status. This will be bad for employment. It will be bad for workplace safety. It is directly counter to the real interests of the workers that the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations is supposed to be protecting. It is bad for the growth of private sector regional employment, which Queensland so badly needs to encourage. It is bad for the process of steadily improving the standard of living and life choices that Queenslanders everywhere rightly expect and justly demand. It is disturbing that these retreats to the past, orchestrated by the member for Kedron in this instance, are at the behest of sectional interests. It is the pursuit and seduction of sectional interest at which Labor is most adept. But it is not good policy, particularly in the financial area.

Any objective assessment of the position of the WorkCover fund today would have to conclude that it is immeasurably better off—it is heading back to surplus under a strongly

commercial focus—than the dreadful situation it was in when the coalition assumed office in 1996. This can be attributed fairly and squarely to the efforts of Mr Jim Kennedy and to the difficult but necessary decisions made by the coalition following the Kennedy inquiry to return the scheme to full funding. Statutory claims numbers are continuing to trend down. New claim numbers are 4.9% lower. The average cost and duration of statutory claims have also continued to decrease. Common law claim numbers are down 23.3% this year.

It is crucial that employers as well as employees are protected under the State workers compensation scheme. The coalition's reforms achieved this double result. By sound financial management and commercial decision making, WorkCover is well on the way to providing Queenslanders with a scheme that really has a long-term, viable future. It is essential that the Government meets the coalition's budgeted outlays on WorkCover contained in the 1998-99 State Budget—that is, a financial commitment of \$35m. It is also vital that the Government reassesses its political position on workers compensation. Members should listen to what employers have to say about the Government's proposed amendments to workers compensation.

Time expired.

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—IND) (6.34 p.m.): I would like to address the motion before the House regarding the workers compensation system in this State. One of my primary concerns about workers compensation is that the Government take a balanced approach to any possible review. There are two main players in the system: the workers and the employers. Each one is as important as the other. Workers need to be treated fairly, that is, they should have access to benefits and damages should they be injured at work. I believe that this includes maintaining access to the common law. The motion, as amended by the Government, provides a commitment that workers' rights will be protected. Employers, on the other hand, also need to be provided with suitable insurance that protects them against claims from injured workers. As with all insurance policies, there are costs involved and it is important that premiums remain affordable. The last thing we want to see is businesses crippled by excessive premium levels, whereby businesses close and jobs are lost.

It is my understanding that Queensland currently has the second-lowest workers compensation premiums in the country, with

Victoria having the lowest. But the people in Victoria have nothing to crow about, as they have abolished access to the common law. Queensland is in the enviable position of retaining access to common law while keeping premiums competitive for employers. It is important for the Queensland economy that employers are not burdened with unnecessarily excessive premiums that will impact adversely on their ability to compete.

Over the years there have been a number of changes to the Queensland workers compensation system introduced by both sides of this Chamber while respectively in Government. These changes have been quite substantial and they have impacted on both employers and employees. Prior to the election, the current Government announced that it would be reviewing workers compensation yet again. My concern is that, in doing so, it maintain a balanced approach while ensuring that any reforms will not put undue cost pressures on the system. What I want to see is the continued operation of a viable system that protects the employers, their families and employees. If the system falls down, the social consequences for all concerned will be enormous.

It is for these reasons that I am talking to this motion this evening. I believe that it puts an onus on the Government to ensure that any changes will not adversely affect the financial viability of the fund. I am concerned that all workers are covered, and will seek further information from the Government as it progresses any changes to the system. I would like an assurance that it will undertake a full analysis of the impact of any proposed changes on all concerned. The workers compensation system has an extremely important role to play, and its continued viability must be ensured. I support the amendment.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.37 p.m.): How well we remember that great debacle of six years of Labor Government, when it wrecked one of the best workers compensation schemes that this country had ever seen. In 1995, when we went to the election, the \$112m unfunded liability was hidden. No-one was told about it during the 1995 election, but we discovered it afterwards. Within six months, that unfunded liability blew out to \$320m. What a disgrace that was! It took six years of Labor Government to take it from one of the best schemes in Australia to one of the worst. In two years we returned it to being one of the best in Australia.

The member for Nicklin spoke about how Queensland's workers compensation premiums are the second-lowest in Australia, how we still have access to common law, and how we have been able to bring the scheme from an unfunded liability of \$320m to a point at which it is now in the black—\$41m. However, the scheme must have \$500m in reserve funds to ensure that it is once again financially safe, secure and stable, and so that we can guarantee payments to workers.

The member for Bulimba spoke about the workers. What was the Labor Government going to pay the workers with? Fresh air? Where was it going to get all the money from? It had an unfunded liability of \$320m, and it was going backwards. That was an absolute disgrace!

**Mr Purcell** interjected.

**Mr HORAN:** It was one of the most irresponsible acts of that Government. Did you know that it was going that badly and you did not stand up on behalf of the people who needed the money?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member will address his remarks through the Chair.

**Mr HORAN:** Let us consider the rise in premiums during the term of the previous Labor Government. Paragraph (4) of the amendment states—

"... that any reforms should not put increased cost pressures on the workers compensation system."

In 1992-93, Queensland businesses experienced a 13% rise in rates. A further 4% increase occurred the next year. In 1994-95, there was a 26.5% increase, which included a 10% surcharge. All those rises occurred while the scheme was going downhill. Why was it going downhill? That was occurring because of the claims and the utter lack of control on that system. In all, the workers compensation premiums increased by 48% during the term of the Goss Government. In two years, we were able to get that system back to a safe, secure one.

The policies of the Labor Government will produce only one result: workers compensation costs will rise. Labor wants policies that refer to the definitions of "worker" and "injury" and which refer to unrestricted access to common law. Under the Goss Government, even Labor realised that it had to institute some restraints in that regard. Now, people have the option to take the statutory benefit or to go to common law. Most importantly, we need a system that is properly funded and that is sound and stable.

Currently, common law claims account for only 3% of all claims under workers compensation; however, they account for 60% of the money that is paid out. That percentage is rising dramatically. How on earth can that scheme be expanded without a massive cost increase when already the scheme is under significant pressure? If introduced, the Labor policies will bring about the total opposite to the effect of the amendment that has been moved. The amendment is a total charade. It will result only in increased costs.

This Labor Government talks about jobs. I do not know whether any members opposite have been small businesspeople. Each year, one of the major costs for small business is workers compensation. At the end of the day, employers must have the money to pay their good, loyal, talented staff fairly so that they can have job security. Labor's policies will make it more difficult for small business to provide job security. Honourable members should remember the 48% increase in costs. In three years we will probably have another 48% blow-out. One can only consider the record of the coalition Government, which introduced sound accounting practices and sound financial management to guarantee workers access to a scheme that is now regarded as the best in Australia. Members opposite want to take the best in Australia and turn it into the worst in Australia, which it was under the Goss Government.

Gone will be some of the good coalition initiatives, such as experience-based rating systems, the right of workers to retain common law rights while also having access to statutory rights, the regional offices and the reforms for injured workers to ensure their rehabilitation. Already we have seen the—

Time expired.

**Mr WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (6.42 p.m.): I rise in support of the amendment moved by the Minister. It gives me great pleasure to know that the first speech that I am making after my maiden speech is in support of a reviewed and revised WorkCover system that enables workers to receive their just entitlements. Let us not forget that it was a Labor Government that first introduced the Queensland workers compensation system. At that time, as it is today, people were being injured at work, often through no fault of their own. Workers compensation provides valuable protection for workers, giving them financial assistance when they most need it.

In its motion, the Opposition wanted this Chamber to note the reforms that the coalition

introduced while in Government, implying that it had done great things. We have heard from the Minister that the financial improvements currently experienced by the board cannot be attributed to the coalition's reform of the scheme. In fact, they can be attributed to the coalition's attack upon workers who would otherwise have been entitled to reward and financial assistance under that scheme. Members of the Borbidge Government took drastic steps, not to improve the commercial viability of the scheme but to reduce the access, thereby producing a result for which they feel they can be commended. I suggest that they have a distorted outlook on the objectives of that scheme. Every worker would like to go to work knowing that he can do so and return to his family with every finger on his hands, every arm attached to his body and his back in good condition. Every family expects the breadwinner to return and support the family in that way. The primary objective of a WorkCover scheme is to provide financial assistance to those workers who are injured at work through no fault of their own and, indeed, even when it is their fault because of the special and unique nature of the employment situation.

It is certainly the case that the scheme has to be commercially viable, but one has to start with the primary objective. Then one must consider how many employers meet their WorkCover obligations. As I indicated to the House earlier today, many employers—particularly within the building and construction industry with which I am most familiar—are very happy not to meet their obligations for WorkCover insurance; yet, as soon as there is a newspaper report about an alleged workers compensation fraud by a worker, there is a great hue and cry about the corruption of the WorkCover system and the way in which workers are allegedly accessing it wrongly. As in any insurance system, there are workers who make claims falsely. Insurers, particularly contractors, also make claims to cover losses that perhaps they have not experienced. That is in the nature of things. We should work against that. It is destructive to an effective workers compensation system that any worker makes a false and fraudulent claim. That is something that the trade union movement has been proud to work actively against and will continue to work actively against.

Workers are entitled to financial assistance to compensate for injury at work. The review that is to be conducted must consider how we tighten up compliance so that those employers who are cheating on every other employer in industry are required

to make their fair payment to support the system. As I said earlier, the primary concern of the WorkCover system has to be to provide financial assistance to workers. Underlying that objective, the most important aspect is the consideration of workplace health and safety to eliminate the reasons workers claim against this system.

Time expired.

**Mr BEANLAND** (Indooroopilly—LP) (6.48 p.m.): There is no such thing as a free lunch. It is always years before cost blow-outs are recognised. That is what will again happen in relation to workers compensation. That was the result of the previous changes that the Labor Party made to the scheme. Again the Minister is proposing something similar. Of course, last time Labor was in Government it produced a \$320m blow-out that we had to pick up when we came to office. That resulted in \$105m, that is, \$35m per year from consolidated revenue being pumped in to ensure that small business was not faced with crippling increases in workers compensation premiums.

The Premier talks about jobs. Those are hollow statements when he is not looking after the small businesses of this State to ensure that they can afford to employ people. The words of the amendment moved by the Minister are designed to allow the Labor Party to make changes that will be difficult to quantify. Then we will have an argument about the changes.

Of course, it will be impossible to quantify the effects long term. No doubt, the effects will end up like they were previously. In time to come the blow-outs will again have to be picked up either by small business or by the Government of the day. Already the Government has removed from the board people with medical experience and business experience including, I might add, Dr Jane Wilson. Those people have been replaced with a couple of union heavyweights. That might go down well with the union movement but it is not going to achieve any worthwhile results for small business.

At the end of the day, it will not be the Labor Government—because it will end up losing office like it did the last time—but a coalition Government that will again have to come along and pick up the whole exercise that will have been hidden by Labor. The previous rescue was at great cost to the taxpayers of this State and to the Government. All up, we had to find \$105m—\$35m a year in cold, hard cash—which could have been better spent on

a whole range of other services in this State had this fund been administered properly in the first place. What gross incompetence! One could well ask what the end result would have been. Would it have reached \$1,000m before Labor recognised the blow-out in the fund?

I believe that there is real concern by the business community about this matter. We have heard Mr Clive Bubb and others of the QCCI speak out in relation to it. They have said that the failing of previous boards was that in some circumstances board members acted in the interests of their constituencies rather than in the interests of the Workers Compensation Fund. Again, concern is being expressed about the composition of the new board of WorkCover. I might add, so much for the Government's so-called concern about having more women on boards! Instead, we have a couple of union heavyweights being appointed to the board. That might be good for the union movement, but I question how good it is going to be for the workers and certainly for the small businesses of this State.

In view of the time, I implore members to give very serious consideration to this motion that was moved by the Opposition, because it should be carried.

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

**AYES, 50**—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Black, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Edmond, Elder, Feldman, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Kingston, Knuth, Lavarch, Lucas, McGrady, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Paff, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Rappolt, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

**NOES, 35**—Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Davidson, Elliott, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pair: Turner, D'Arcy

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (6.59 a.m.): I move:

"That the House do now adjourn."

## Resident Unit Managers

**Mrs GAMIN** (Burleigh—NPA) (6.59 p.m.): I bring to the attention of the Parliament some anomalies suffered by resident unit managers in the costs involved in the running of their trust accounts. There are approximately 950 resident unit managers in this State who hold a restricted real estate licence that enables them to let units within the buildings that they manage. As a result, and like other real estate agents who hold moneys on behalf of property owners, resident unit managers are obliged to operate trust accounts. Usually, large sums of money are held in these accounts on behalf of unit owners.

The owners of these trust accounts do not receive any profit from them in that they cannot receive interest; such interest is received by the Government. I understand that this interest can be set towards compensation in the event of agents defaulting on their obligations. However, despite the fact that owners of these trust accounts receive no profits, they are also charged Government debits tax and bank account fees as well as held responsible for audit costs for the twice-yearly audits that they are obliged to undertake.

Resident unit managers in my electorate have now formed themselves into a subcommittee called Burleigh Tourism as part of the new Burleigh Heads Chamber of Commerce. They have asked me to bring these anomalies to the attention of the Parliament. I will also be making representations to the Treasurer on their behalf.

The group accepts that trust accounts are necessary, as moneys are collected on behalf of others. They accept that they cannot generate profit from these moneys. However, they believe that the cost of maintaining trust accounts is a discriminatory expense to the accommodation industry, as very few other businesses have these expenses forced upon them. The accommodation industry is a huge industry in Queensland. It is now about to go into some tough times as the Asian financial crisis bites. Many members of this Parliament should have a look at their electorates. They should count up how much the accommodation industry contributes to the economies of their areas. I particularly mention Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, the Whitsundays, Townsville and Cairns.

The Queensland Government should be looking at practical assistance for the

accommodation industry. The Queensland Government should understand that the accommodation industry is being discriminated against by means of excessive charges on trust accounts which it is obliged to keep by law and by which it cannot profit in any way. I shall be writing to the Treasurer setting out these problems and asking that Government debits tax be removed from accommodation industry trust accounts.

Furthermore, if these accounts are to be audited twice a year, why should the accommodation industry be up for this cost? Why should these audits not be a standard procedure from the Auditor-General's Department? Certainly there will be a cost to Government if the debits tax is removed and the Auditor-General conducts the audits. Why should this cost not be offset against the immense amount of bank interest which accrues to Government from these trust accounts?

Even in a relatively small building complex, the trust account fluctuates between \$10,000 and \$30,000 a month. Rarely would it fall below \$10,000. As I have already said, there are approximately 950 resident unit managers in Queensland. The combined balance of their trust accounts would never be below \$9.5m and, at the end of each month, could be expected to be no less than \$28.5m. The interest on that sum of money must be immense. Government receives the benefit of that interest and still takes more in the form of tax on transactions.

The imposition of bank fees and charges is a separate issue and I will not address it here. However, I come back to the real points at issue. These are, firstly, that Government debits tax should be offset against this interest and, secondly, that compulsory audit costs should also be offset against this interest.

The subcommittee called Burleigh Tourism is made up of active resident unit managers within the newly formed Burleigh Heads Chamber of Commerce. I welcome the new chamber, which will promote business and tourism in our area. We are fortunate in that we have a wonderful holiday atmosphere and our visitors return from generation to generation to enjoy family holidays at Burleigh. We have a growing industrial and manufacturing base and I commend the new chamber for its initiatives over a wide range of matters of interest and benefit to all its members and to the district in general.

### Mr E. R. Ramsamy

**Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (7.04 p.m.): I rise in the House tonight to speak about a man who gave much of his life for the benefit of others. I am referring to Ram Chandra, the Taipan Man. Sadly and very unexpectedly, Mr Edward Royce Ramsamy passed away last Friday, 31 July. Ram was born in Grafton, New South Wales. He was a former showman and made his living by handling snakes. Although his snake handling show was classed as entertainment, Ram looked on it more as a way he could educate people about the dangers of snakes, how to react when confronted by a snake, how to identify types of snakes and what to do if bitten. Ram travelled up and down the east coast displaying his snakes and, while in Mackay at the Mackay Show, met his wife to be, Noleah, who came from Boigu Island in the Torres Strait. Ram and Noleah then settled in Mackay and raised a family of 11 children.

Ram is most famous, of course, for his research about the deadly taipan, including his pioneering work in developing an antivenene for taipan bites in 1955. It is estimated that the antivenene has since saved more than 90 lives—not least of all his own back in 1956 when he was bitten by a taipan. Over the years, Ram lectured hundreds of people in the medical profession and countless children and adults who visited his displays at schools and in shopping complexes. Throughout his life Ram continued to strive to educate people about snakes.

In recent years, Ram mostly displayed his snakes in shopping complexes throughout the State and donated any funds raised to cancer research. In my time as chairman of the Mackay branch of the Queensland Cancer Fund, I had a lot of association with Ram. After he would return from one of his trips, he would come along with the proceeds and make a donation to the Cancer Fund. His regular donations were always greatly appreciated and gratefully accepted. I am sure that the feeling of gratitude for the significant contributions that Ram has made for the betterment of all Australians would be endorsed by all members of this House.

As well as being recognised and admired by the Mackay community, Ram's lifesaving work has also been officially recognised. He received a British Empire Medal and a Queen's Birthday honour, won Mackay's first Senior Citizens Award in 1981, is listed in the Australian Hall of Fame as one of Queensland's unsung heroes, received the

Burke Shire Council's Order of the Outback with only four other Australians, received the Paul Harris International Rotary Award in 1992 and was bestowed with an Order of Australia in 1995.

What really mattered to Ram, though, was that his work in developing the taipan antivenene saved many lives that would otherwise have been lost. It was the people who mattered most to Ram. In an interview earlier this year Ram said—

"That means as much to me as any award. When you face the people who've been saved—mothers who have brought children to me who have been saved by taipan antivenene—in their faces is thanks for everything, for all the risks I've taken."

Two books have been written about Ram and his work: *Search for the Taipan* and *Traveller Brown*. In Mackay a street, Ram Chandra Place, was named in his honour in 1991.

Ram was semi-crippled by the effects of numerous snakebites throughout his life and, even though this slowed him down, it never stopped him educating and advising people about snakes. Until his death Ram still received calls from people about snakes and he would always give verbal help but obviously, due to changes in our laws, he was limited in what he could do. He was also very involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community affairs in the Mackay area and was always willing to contribute his time and effort.

Ram is survived by his wife, Noleah, 10 of his 11 children, 36 grandchildren and 64 great and great-great grandchildren. Our thoughts and prayers go to Noleah and each and every one of the family. Although they must be feeling great sadness at this time, they must also be very proud of the life of Edward Royce Ramsamy.

Words can never express the deep regard people in the Mackay community have for Ram Chandra, but the Mackay Daily Mercury in its editorial went some way toward expressing how we feel by saying—

"Ram's selflessness and kindness to his fellow human beings endeared him to all. His knowledge of a feared and intriguing reptile was boundless. There is only one thing left to say. Thank you."

I am sure that I speak for all members of this Parliament when I say that he will be sadly missed.

### **Mr E. R. Ramsamy; Law and Order**

**Mr COOPER** (Crows Nest—NPA) (7.09 p.m.): I endorse the remarks of the member for Mackay in relation to Ram Chandra. I am sure that other members on this side of the House would feel the same.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr COOPER:** Are members having fun? They should continue chatting amongst themselves.

I rise in defence of the people in the law and order system of this State who will come under attack. We have already seen a portent of what we can expect in relation to the various initiatives that we undertook, whether they be crime prevention partnerships, school-based constables, the Proactive Support Group, or the PIN—Proactive Intelligence Network—initiative. All of those initiatives were set up for a reason, namely, to enhance security and safety in the prison system and Police Service.

The Minister's approach is to try to destroy, bring down, denigrate and knock those initiatives so that he can replace them with something else that he knows will be far less effective. I want to make sure that the initiatives that we put in place for very definite reasons stay in place. This Minister has a lot to thank us for. His department has had huge budgets and increased police numbers. There have been improvements with respect to police powers and responsibilities and many other initiatives. Following the Mengler review into drugs in jails, certain recommendations were made, one of which was for a Proactive Intelligence Network. Previously, intelligence was always reactive. The CSIU has always done the reactive work. This was the first time ever in the Queensland prison system that we had a proactive intelligence system. It is starting to work, and that is why we are starting to see drugs being found in the prison system. If that system is allowed to continue, it will continue to prove effective.

I pay tribute to Detective Inspector Kev Roberts, who heads up that group. That was one of the main initiatives of the Mengler inquiry, as well as the Proactive Support Group under Greg Howden, who was previously the manager of Arthur Gorrie. He dropped that job and took on the PSG job, which is equivalent to the PSRT in the Police Service. Twenty of the best officers—the cream of the crop—in the prison system were put in place to provide the security and training that the prison system needs.

The Hummers are a part of that safety initiative and will be used to patrol the perimeters of seven of the secure prisons. They were introduced for a very good reason. Even if the Minister thinks of nothing else, he should think of the people who have to drive those vehicles and prevent escapes when they occur. We saw the phenomenon of people using high-powered centre-fire rifles from outside the prison walls. That has never before been seen in this State or nation. We have responded to make sure that the perimeter can be kept secure and that prison officers and the community can be kept safe. The Minister should welcome those initiatives, because they represent a massive improvement to the prison system.

I wish also to mention the police powers and responsibilities that we were able to put in place to enable the police to do their job more effectively. Again, that was something that both sides of the House had been wanting. The police had sought those powers since 1982, but that was implemented only in February of last year. That took a long time. Both sides of politics were tardy. That should never have been the case. All we did was bring the Queensland Police Service up to speed with—and maybe a little better than—the other jurisdictions around the Commonwealth.

We were able to give the police the move-on power and the power to deal with hoons, which has made an enormous difference and given people peace and quiet. The power to detain, the power to move on, as I mentioned, and all of the other various powers are giving the police the necessary tools to do the job that we have wanted them to do. All I am saying is: make sure that the increased police numbers, powers and enhanced security in our prison system and the Police Service stay in place. We brought this State to the cutting edge with respect to crime prevention through the CPPs. The Minister should not let those programs be knocked; he should let them grow, continue and be enhanced. We were set to expand those programs. They were put into about eight places in the State, and we want to see them stay there.

Time expired.

#### **NAIDOC Week Celebration, Kurwongbah State School**

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (7.14 p.m.): From 5 July to 12 July this year the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee celebrations and activities were undertaken all around Australia.

Many schools across Queensland celebrate NAIDOC Week and are playing a vital role towards building a better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This evening I wish to pay tribute to the Kurwongbah State School for embracing the spirit of reconciliation and celebrating NAIDOC Week by having made Thursday, 9 July, such a cultural learning day. I commend the principal, Larry Burke, staff and students and parents for their desire to gain a greater understanding and knowledge of the indigenous culture, heritage, traditions and beliefs.

I am privileged to represent the electorate of Kurwongbah, which takes its name from the local Aboriginal language and is a composite word for "water" and "trees". I note also that the sports houses at the Kurwongbah State School are named after Aboriginal words for water—Kooringa, Mundi, Wyalla and Aroona. However, the unfortunate thing in Kurwongbah is that we have a very small Aboriginal population. Regrettably, many children and adults will go through their lives having little or no direct contact with such a rich and diverse culture. That makes a day such as this all the more special.

A lot of work went into the presentation for the day. Leading up to the day, we had the end of semester school holidays. During those holidays, many parents, students and local contemporary artist Gordon Bennett gave up their valuable time to paint the cement pillars in the covered games area for the students. This delighted the students upon returning to school after the school holidays.

They also had ATSI classroom displays and in various classrooms teachings about the significance of NAIDOC Day. To the delight of all, the Honourable Matt Foley, Attorney-General and Minister for The Arts, took time out of his very busy schedule to visit Kurwongbah and the students of the Kurwongbah State School—

**Mr Foley:** And the member for Kurwongbah.

**Mrs LAVARCH:** Yes. The Minister officially opened the Day of Learning on the Thursday. He kicked off the day and got into the spirit of it all by joining in with the Koormurri Dancers in their traditional dancing display. The principal, Larry Burke, and many of the students say that, as personified on the stage that morning, it was the finest emu they have ever seen.

However, on a serious note, I am glad that the Minister is in the House tonight. I take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of the principal, who has expressed to me how

honoured and privileged he was to have the Minister there that morning. The students at Kurwongbah are still talking about it. They replay the video many times and have promised a private viewing for us.

After the official opening by the Honourable Matt Foley, the day got under way with didgeridoo playing, boomerang throwing, face painting and traditional art, story telling, the painting of a small mural and participation in a bush tucker lunch. The day concluded with a corroboree workshop with the teachers, parents, students and members of the dance group. I commend the principal, Larry Burke, staff, parents and students for putting on a great day and doing their part to work towards reconciliation.

The date 9 July marked the seventh year that the Kurwongbah State School has celebrated NAIDOC Week. NAIDOC has a 60-year history and tonight I wish to make special mention of the history of NAIDOC Week. Since 1940—nearly 60 years ago—the National Missionary Council of Australia had been encouraging churches to observe the Sunday before the Australia Day weekend as Aboriginal Sunday. They had taken up the suggestion by a Mr William Cooper, following his successful promotion of a day of mourning on Australia Day 1938. It was in 1955 that the NMCA changed the date to the first Sunday in July and secured the support of the Federal and State Governments as a result—

Time expired.

### Leckie Road Connection

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (7.19 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your elevation to the august post that you now hold? I am particularly delighted for you.

**Mr Cooper:** Crawler.

**Mr SANTORO:** I am not a crawler. I am particularly delighted for you, Mr Deputy Speaker, because, during the many and extensive travels throughout the world that you have undertaken, you have taken a great degree of interest—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr D'Arcy): I remind the member that he has only five minutes.

**Mr SANTORO:**—in parliamentary procedures in the many Parliaments that you have visited, and I am sure that you will serve well in your new post.

I just want to talk briefly this evening about what is euphemistically referred to as

the Leckie Road connection in my electorate of Clayfield. Honourable members who have been in this place for a little while will recall that ghastly decision by the then Goss Labor Government to construct an airport motorway right through my electorate. Of course, honourable members will recall that, as a result of concentrated and very focused community action, we stopped that motorway. I again take time out to pay tribute to the persistence and the fighting spirit of my constituents, particularly those members of what became known as the Airport Motorway Action Committee. We mounted a very good campaign and stopped that motorway absolutely dead in its tracks. In fact, that fight at a local community level was the forerunner of many community skirmishes with the then Goss Labor Government that eventually led to its downfall as it made bad decision after bad decision about road after road. I was very proud to be part of a movement that maintained residential standards and maintained the residential amenity of my electorate.

In Opposition, I and the shadow Minister made a commitment that we would sell off that transport corridor when we came to Government. After giving very serious consideration to the logistics and the implications of that particular commitment, we made the decision as a Government and sold off the Leckie Road connection. We made the decision to sell off that connection. We made that announcement on Thursday, 12 March 1998. Many people in the community were relieved by that decision. It lifted a veil of uncertainty and anxiety that had been hanging over my constituents for the many years that that connection had been proposed.

The sale of the Main Roads properties started to occur. In fact, I received written confirmation from Main Roads that the properties at 78 Park Road, Woolloowin; 49 Fifth Avenue at Kedron; 18 Arnott Street at Kedron; and 56 Gorman Street, Kalinga were for sale. That was confirmation that the wheels were in motion and that the sale of that transportation corridor was to take place. That in itself was an achievement, because it is not often that major transportation corridors such as that are quickly and easily disposed of by a Government. It required an enormous amount of will expressed by the then Minister, Vaughan Johnson, to override what undoubtedly were bureaucratic drags by well-meaning bureaucrats who like to build roads. In this particular case the Minister and I

maintained our commitment and those properties were to be sold.

Honourable members can, therefore, imagine my alarm when I was contacted by a couple of constituents who told me that the "for sale" signs on those properties had been taken down. I feared the worst, but I did not want to go out and sensationalise the issue. So being the very fair and reasonable person that all honourable members in this place know me to be, I made contact with the Department of Main Roads. I was told by a senior and well-meaning officer that the removal of the signs was part of normal process, that the tenders were in, that the tender documents were now before the Minister and that he had to make the decision to sell the properties. I was told that it was part of the normal tender process and that, as soon as the Minister made the decision to sell off and dispose of those particular properties to the highest tenderer, that process would be concluded and then other properties would go up for sale.

I managed to clarify that and I want to place on record my desire and that of my constituents to have that process of selling off that corridor expedited and concluded as quickly as possible. I ask the new Minister for Transport to act with due haste and diligence in terms of maintaining that commitment and the decision by the previous Government. I know that as he does so he will continue to please the many residents who were affected by that decision to acquire the properties. As he continues to do so, I make the commitment that I will continue to give him and the Government credit for proceeding with the decision made by the previous Government. We want it done with reasonable haste, but we do not want to flood the market with all of the properties because that would have a deleterious effect on property values in the areas of Woolloowin, Kalinga, Lutwyche and parts of Clayfield. However, we do want to move with reasonable haste because that issue is of great importance to my constituents.

### **Kessels Road**

**Hon. J. C. SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (7.25 p.m.): I wish to draw the attention of the House to the misleading statements presently being made by the Federal member for Moreton, Mr Gary Hardgrave, concerning his

self-proclaimed big win for south-side residents and businesses from his representation for the deregistration of the Kessels and Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road corridor as a Commonwealth road. In his newsletter to his electorate called the Hardgrave Report, Mr Hardgrave claimed that a deregulation of this road would bring great benefits to the people of the south side. Let me read some of these benefits. He says they are—

"Reduced traffic congestion, especially around Garden City.

Reduced traffic noise, especially at night, when sleep deprivation is a consequence.

Reduced air pollution, for improved community health.

Reduced community cost in road works which might have been necessary if the road corridor had been kept as a designated road funded by the Commonwealth Government."

I think that Mr Hardgrave's claims represent the biggest con perpetuated on the people of the south side in recent times. All of these claims are absolute rubbish. Let us look at what the deregistration of a Commonwealth road means. It means one thing: that the responsibility passes from the Commonwealth to the State. It means that the obligation for funding and maintaining that road passes from the Commonwealth to the State. It does not mean reduced traffic congestion. It does not mean less noise pollution, quieter nights for local residents, less air pollution or that savings will be made. The only savings to be made from this deregistration are for the Commonwealth Government.

I believe that this is purely a political ploy by a desperate Federal Liberal member who sees the writing on the wall for his very marginal seat. But he has obviously taken in the local chamber of commerce with this con. He quotes the chamber of commerce in his newsletter. It says—

"They asked the former State Government for action, but found that the Commonwealth Government, through Gary Hardgrave, was the best start point."

So the Chamber of Commerce has been taken in by this con that the deregistration of Kessels Road will somehow benefit the residents of the south side. It will not.

**Mr Mickel:** Kathleen Brookes will beat him.

**Ms SPENCE:** I believe that we have an outstanding candidate for the seat of Moreton in Kathleen Brookes, and no doubt she will be raising these issues further in that electorate.

As Kessels Road runs through the middle of my electorate, I am very concerned that the Federal member is putting out reports and misinformation of this type which will lead my constituents to believe that some improvements are going to be made to Kessels Road, because that simply is not the case. Moving a road from a Commonwealth jurisdiction to a State jurisdiction certainly does not bring about the improvements that Mr Hardgrave would have us believe.

At this point I understand that there have been no discussions with the State Government regarding whether we are prepared or ready to undertake the responsibility of taking over this particular Commonwealth road. So Mr Hardgrave is again misleading his constituents. Just because the Commonwealth Government has made a decision—if it has not had any discussions with the State Government, as far as I can see it is not going ahead. It is a bit of argy-bargy before Budgets are brought down.

Finally, I want to talk about another myth that Mr Hardgrave is talking about, and that is the status of Kessels Road as a dangerous goods road. He is somehow trying to tell people that the change in the designation is going to alter the status of that road as a dangerous goods road, but that simply is not true. I think that very few people understand that dangerous goods roads are preferred routes which have been designated by agreement with the dangerous goods industry following assessment by Queensland Transport and the Department of Main Roads. There is no legal force to the declared dangerous goods preferred route system.

At the moment, however, the State Government is looking at holding some discussions with various sections of the industry to find alternatives for the dangerous goods route from Kessels and Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road, and this is the initiative of the State Labor Government. The coalition would never have done this, despite us asking it to do this for the past two years. This is something that we will be doing.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m.