THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST 1998

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

PRIVILEGE

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I wish to inform the House that I have referred a matter of privilege raised by the Leader of the House to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for its consideration.

PRIVILEGE

Member for Clayfield

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.32 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Yesterday when I was making a ministerial statement, on three occasions I was interrupted by the honourable member for Clayfield claiming outraged innocence in that I had, he said, wrongly said that he had directed his department in relation to advertising. I table a memorandum from the department dated 11 March 1998, when the honourable member was the Minister, which commences thus—

> "The department developed editorial copy and an advertisement for placement in AsiaWeek magazine at the direction of the Minister's office. The Minister's Senior Media Advisor made initial contact with the magazine's agent, media rep, and then contacted the Principal Policy Officer—Media, to draft editorial copy."

And on it goes. Too often the legitimate business of this House is interrupted by posturings of outraged innocence by the honourable member for Clayfield. For the information of the House, I table the memorandum.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Minister is again misrepresenting the statements I made yesterday. The Minister in his ministerial statement——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Under which Standing Order is the member making this point of order?

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker, the Minister——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Under which Standing Order is the member making this point of order?

Mr SANTORO: Well, I find the comments the Minister has made offensive, because they are untrue, and I ask him to withdraw them. I will make a statement at the appropriate time.

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

Mr SANTORO: There is a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member——

Mr SANTORO: I find the——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member again: under which Standing Order are you making this point of order?

Mr SANTORO: It is the Standing Order which enables me to object——

Mr SPEAKER: Which Standing Order?

Mr SANTORO: It is Standing Order 120. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the courtesy of your question. Under that Standing Order, which obviously you are checking out, I find the comments of the Honourable Minister offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BRADDY: Again he interrupts the business of the House. I have clearly put evidence before the House that what he said yesterday was incorrect and misleading, and to be asked to withdraw a statement which is proved accurate by this evidence impinges on the obligations of the member to make sensible and proper points of order.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will consult with the Clerk after question time and respond to both members on the matter of the point of order. I also warn the member for Clayfield about frivolous points of order. We had this yesterday and I do not intend to tolerate it.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker, I refer to the comments you have just made and I would ask for a ruling and for your courtesy and indulgence. If a member in this place finds the comments of another member offensive and seeks that they be withdrawn under Standing Order 119, do you regard that as a frivolous point of order?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! After question time today I will give the honourable member an answer on all issues.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker, in that case——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will warn the member for Clayfield.

Mr SANTORO: I rise on a point of personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SANTORO: I rise on a point of personal explanation. The reason I am persisting——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr SANTORO: The reason I——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will now warn the member under Standing Order 123A(3). I warn him; that is my final warning.

Mr BORBIDGE: I move—

"That the member for Clayfield be further heard."

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the member wishes to make a personal explanation, he should seek the leave of the House. He has not done so.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I have moved a motion that the member for Clayfield be further heard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition cannot do that. He is out of order.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Point of Order

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: The reason I insisted on making that point of order and asked the Minister to withdraw his remarks is that I found them offensive. I accepted your ruling, Mr Speaker, that you would go and consider the points made by the Honourable the Minister and by me. Yet immediately after that, Mr Speaker, you then made the claim that the point of order I was raising was frivolous. With respect, that comment was inconsistent with the statement you had previously made. Mr Speaker, if you wish to reserve your decision—I say that to you with respect—you are welcome to do so and I will accept that ruling, but you cannot——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member accepts that, he should now resume his seat and we can get on with the business of the House.

Mr SANTORO: But, Mr Speaker——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr SANTORO: The reason I was proceeding then——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Clayfield. I do not intend to tolerate this sort of behaviour. This House, as I said in my speech when I accepted the position of Speaker, will be a place of dignity, and I do not think the behaviour shown this morning is very dignified. I notify the member for Clayfield again that I will discuss this matter with the Clerk after question time and come back to him with a response. If we can get on now with the business of the Parliament, I would appreciate it.

Mr BRADDY: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I was not going to ask that you consider referring this matter to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, but in view of the behaviour of the member for Clayfield I ask that you so consider it.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Rheumatology Clinic, Bundaberg

From **Mrs J. I. Cunningham** (5,247 petitioners) requesting the House to assist with the provision and establishment of a suitably staffed rheumatology clinic in Bundaberg.

Land Valuations, Coorparoo

From **Mr Fenlon** (267 petitioners) requesting the Minister for Natural Resources to conduct an immediate review of valuations imposed on residents within the Coorparoo valuation district and adjust them to a just and reasonable level.

Petitions received.

PAPER

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PETITION

The Clerk tabled the following response to a petition—

response from the Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities (Mr Mackenroth) to a petition presented by Mr Mackenroth from 183 petitioners, regarding Tiaro Shire Council and its Councillors.

Tiaro Shire Councillors

24 August 1998

Thank you for your letter of 6 August 1998 forwarding a copy of a petition to the Parliament, lodged by Ms B Paterson of

Gunalda, requesting an investigation into certain allegations made in respect of the Tiaro Shire Council and its Councillors.

Please note that I had previously received a copy of the petition and have subsequently written to Ms Paterson in respect of the allegations made. A copy of my letter of 10 August is enclosed for your information.

I trust this information is helpful to you. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

—

MIN/22049.98-LAA/3739

10 August 1998

Ms B Paterson
Fairview
M.S. 279
GUNALDA Q 4570

Dear Ms Paterson

I wish to advise that your petition containing 183 signatures and calling for an investigation into allegations raised against the majority of the Tiaro Shire Councillors was tabled in the Parliament on 4 August 1998.

I have noted the allegations and am advised that some of these have been referred to the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) for investigation. I consider they should most appropriately be left for the CJC to deal with and therefore do not propose to take any action on them.

With regard to the further allegations raised by the petition, officers of my Department recently visited Tiaro to assess the situation. The officers have spoken to the Mayor, the Acting Chief Executive Officer and certain Councillors regarding certain matters and the information obtained together with further documentation provided by the Council are currently being examined and assessed by my Department.

You may be assured that your representations will receive full consideration as part of that review.

Once the Department's assessment of information to hand is completed, a report will be made to me at which time I will decide what action, if any, is required to be taken in respect of the Tiaro Shire Council.

I trust this information is helpful to you. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely

Terry Mackenroth

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Carpentaria/Mount Isa Minerals Province

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.41 a.m.), by leave: As all honourable members are aware, the Carpentaria/Mount Isa Minerals Province of Queensland is one of the great mining regions of the world, promising to inject at least $30 billion into the State economy and generate more than 10,000 jobs. Indeed, the province is central to my Government's strategy to generate jobs throughout Queensland—at the mines themselves, in the nearby regional towns and cities such as Mount Isa, and in the coastal towns and cities such as Townsville.

Two weeks ago, I visited the Ernest Henry copper/gold mine and officially opened the extensions to the nearby Cloncurry airport, which paves the way for that great mine to get up to full production. Next week I will officially open the Phosphate Hill mine south of Mount Isa, but tomorrow, together with the Minister for Mines and Energy, I will travel to the BHP owned Cannington mine for the opening ceremony.

Cannington is a $500m operation which, like the other big six mines of the Carpentaria/Mount Isa Minerals Province, generates services, growth and, most importantly, jobs. For the record, Cannington is the world's largest single mine producer of silver and lead. At full production, it will mine and process 1.5 million tonnes of ore a year. Each year it will produce 750 tonnes of silver. Cannington will produce 6% of the forecast developed world's primary silver production. It will also produce about 7% of the world's primary lead output. Export earnings are projected to be $4.3 billion. But the benefits to Australia will not stop there. BHP Minerals will pay a total tax bill of about $1.1 billion. That is money in the bank as far as Australia is concerned. It is money for health, education, roads and the like.

The specific benefits for Queenslanders are also worth putting on the record. At the mine site, 400 Queenslanders will have jobs. That is 400 more jobs for Queenslanders. Importantly, many of these jobs will be for people who live in the north-west. In fact, many jobs have already been generated in the region in the gearing-up stage of the Cannington mine. To date, Cannington has pumped about $400m into the Queensland economy, much of that in the north-west.

Projects such as Cannington are also important because of the improved infrastructure that they bring—services such as transport, communications, water, health and education. For example, the new mining projects in the region prompted Queensland Rail's decision to spend $200m to upgrade the line from Mount Isa to Townsville. This has

been one of the biggest such engineering undertakings in the world. It will be a major factor in opening up the region and generating economic growth. It will bring faster freight services and greater capacity. That means the entire region benefits through improved general freight, agricultural and passenger services.

The previous Labor Government recognised that all of these benefits, but particularly the jobs, could be realised only if there was a coordinated approach. Labor got the major players together, cut the red tape and drove the development of this great mining region. Now the people of north-west Queensland are starting to reap the benefits of yet another Labor initiative.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: I seek leave to table my report on a recent visit to Hong Kong and Japan. In doing so, I point out that about 23,000 Queenslanders owe their jobs to Hong Kong and Japan buying our goods and to tourists from Hong Kong and Japan visiting Queensland.

Leave granted.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I have a lengthy statement. I seek your leave to incorporate it in Hansard. In doing so, I table for the record of the Parliament the full details of my report. I point out that I promised the honourable member for Nicklin in my correspondence with him that in relation to any overseas trip I would make sure that there was a detailed report to the Parliament. Here it is.

Leave granted.

About 23,000 Queenslanders owe their jobs to Hong Kong and Japan buying our goods and to tourists from Hong Kong and Japan visiting Queensland.

Many of these jobs have been put at risk by the financial downturn in several Asian countries and extensive adverse publicity about the State election.

The Hong Kong Trade Office reported that they continued to receive inquiries from people worried about Queensland's attitude towards Asia.

It was essential for me as the new Premier of Queensland to act quickly not just to minimise that risk but to boost trade and tourism so that we can actually create new jobs.

That is why I spent five days last week assuring the governments and business leaders of Hong Kong and Japan that Queensland is still a State full of friendly people.

And I told them—repeatedly—we are the greatest place in which to invest and to visit in the world.

In Hong Kong, a media lunch and conference attracted nearly 50 senior journalists and media executives to hear the positive message about Queensland.

In addition, I was able to spread my positive message to 20 million households in 29 Asia-Pacific countries in a live interview on CNN.

Other major media outlets such as Radio Television Hong Kong, TVBI, Apple Daily and Ming Pao also requested separate interviews.

About 20 million people watched the interview with TVBI, which is the operating arm of Television Broadcasts Ltd, the world's largest producer and distributor of Chinese language programmes.

I was able to send a strong positive message to more than 70 of Hong Kong's leading business people who came to a reception specially to hear what I had to say.

Many of them bore titles such as chairman, managing director, president or chief executive.

At dinner that night I spoke privately to seven of Hong Kong's most powerful business leaders, extolling Queensland's virtues as a tourist and investment destination.

In Japan about 200 leading business people, including chairmen, managing directors, presidents and chief executives, came to meet me and listen to my positive message about Queensland investment and trade opportunities at an official reception.

The reception was judged to be the most successful ever held by Queensland.

Senior executives from eight of the nine major Japanese trading houses known as Sogo Shosha—which have global sales worth double Australia's GDP—had private talks with me over dinner.

Journalists from Japan's leading news outlets, including Yomiuri Shimbun with its circulation of 4.4 million, interviewed me for nearly an hour.

The first question they asked me was about the influence of One Nation.

The media also attended my meetings with the heads of government which I set out to see: Mr Tung Chee Hwa, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, (pop: 6.5M), Governor Tsuchiya of Saitama Prefecture (pop:6.8M), Governor Iga of Ehime Prefecture (Pop: 1.5M) and Governor Knock Yokoyama of Osaka Prefecture (pop: 8.7M) .

At each of the meetings with these representatives of 23.5 million people I was able to talk at length about the wonderful investment opportunities available in Queensland.

Queensland businesses such as Claypave and Golden Circle have shown how it is possible to ignore the economic downturn and have succeeded in gaining major new contracts.

The Queensland Government is also determined to seek new markets and sales.

I have announced that we will extend the lease of our Tokyo Trade Office by five years and we are re-structuring the office to put a new focus on major projects.

As a result of my visit, media coverage about Queensland has been extensive and positive.

And governments appreciated that by visiting them only two months after becoming Premier I was sending the strongest possible signal that Queensland will be a friend through the bad economic times.

And we will be even better friends in the good times.

They applauded my message that our history may be in Europe but our future is with Asia.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: I have always viewed the purpose of overseas travel by Ministers as being to foster good relations with the host nation and to build trade opportunities for Queensland exporters, to look for suitable investors for worthy Queensland projects and to promote Queensland as a venue for tourists and students. Queensland has a series of advantages which makes it easier to sell as a destination.

Potential investors find our natural assets, our skilled and educated work force and our low taxes a desirable lure. Similarly, students and tourists have long been attracted by the natural beauty and highly developed tourism and education infrastructure that we have to offer. Governments of both political persuasions have overseen this growth, even at times when they have been placing different emphasis on how and where our successes should be achieved. These issues are fundamental to every Queenslander. Every tourist, every student, every investor and every successful exporter means one thing for Queensland: more jobs, and the sorts of jobs that I hope we all want—long-term, secure and well-paid jobs.

My recent trip was radically different from the ones that I undertook when I was a Minister in our former Government. I suspect that many members of this House who have travelled overseas on official business in the past will find very different conditions when they travel overseas now. The difference in this trip was that for the first time I encountered genuine concern about Queensland as a secure destination or source of products. At times, I even encountered hostility towards this State. It is irrelevant whether these concerns are borne out of a full or detailed understanding of our political situation. In many cases, the beliefs that people held about Queensland were very wrong indeed. The fact is that these concerns are there and, if they are allowed to go unchallenged, they will cost Queensland dearly in terms of lost opportunities. That will lead to one thing—more unemployed Queenslanders.

A major challenge lies ahead for all Queenslanders to ensure that an accurate image of Queensland is projected to the world. We must remain a State that welcomes tourists and students, that welcomes investment and that welcomes migrants, especially business migrants, on a totally non-discriminatory basis. Not only must we be such a State; we must also be seen to be such a State. If we fail to rise to this challenge, we will doom ourselves to being an insular, inward looking society that cannot afford to provide economic growth and therefore jobs and wealth for the community. Our quality of life would diminish. Failure would also condemn our exporters to trying to sell in hostile and unwelcoming markets. These issues are being raised by the Premier and many others in our community and they need to be given detailed, rational consideration.

I have a report on my trip to Taiwan and Korea. I have further detail in boxes that I will present to the member for Nicklin. In view of the time constraints today, I table a report for the information of the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Suncorp-Metway Ltd

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House that this Government is honouring its pre-election commitment to proceed with the planned sell-down of the Government shareholding in Suncorp-Metway Ltd. Accordingly, the Government announced to the Australian Stock Exchange yesterday that it is proceeding with the planned one-for-two entitlement issue to Suncorp-Metway shareholders. This entitlement issue gives investors who are registered shareholders in Suncorp-Metway Ltd on 1 December 1998 the right to purchase one additional Suncorp-Metway share for every two held for a price of $5 a share. This compares with a closing price for Suncorp-Metway shares yesterday of $8.36.

I remind the House that the framework for this sell-down was put in place in 1996 as part of the previous Government's merger of Suncorp with Metway Bank and the Queensland Industry Development Corporation. This Government, when then in Opposition, had grave concerns about the process that the previous Borbidge Government adopted in forcing the merger through in the way that it did. Those concerns notwithstanding, we promised to honour the commitments they had made to reduce the Government's stake in the bank.

Accordingly, the Government is now settling a timetable for the offer with the Australian Stock Exchange. The offer will be non-renounceable, meaning that entitlements not taken up at the time of the offer will lapse. Shareholders who wish to derive value from the offer but are not in a position to take up the full amount should consult their financial advisers. Eligible shareholders will receive formal notification of their entitlement as soon as practicable after 1 December. This notification will outline all relevant details in terms of entitlement and payment date. Assuming the entitlement offer is taken up by all shareholders registered at 1 December, it is expected that the Government's holding in Suncorp-Metway will be reduced from about 45% to about 31%.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Co-location of Public and Private Hospitals

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: I rise to advise the House of my approval for Queensland Health to proceed with negotiations over co-locating private hospitals on public hospital sites. I want to make it clear that I have decided to allow exclusive dealings to commence with the preferred proponents now that I am satisfied of the public benefit of these projects. Briefly, the projects represent around $150m in benefits to the Queensland Government and almost 3,500 jobs in the construction of the new hospitals. The benefits will include—

a broader variety of services on the one campus;

better teaching and medical research opportunities;

economies for Queensland Health in the purchase and use of expensive medical equipment;

potential earnings for Queensland Health in providing services to the private hospitals;

training and employment opportunities for Queensland Health employees; and

a greater choice for public and private patients.

The proposed projects are—

a co-located hospital built by the Holy Spirit/Sisters of Charity Consortium at the Prince Charles Hospital site at Chermside;

co-location of the St Andrews War Memorial Hospital at Spring Hill to a new facility at the Herston Hospital Complex;

co-location of the Ramsay Health Care Group's Greenslopes Private Hospital to a new facility at the Princess Alexandra Hospital; and

a new private hospital run by the Sisters of Mercy, operators of the Mater, on the site of the Redland Hospital.

I have never opposed any of these co-locations publicly. I have always supported them in principle, but sought to make sure that there was a public benefit, as should be expected by any Queensland Government. I have advised the chief executives of the organisations involved that Queensland Health will deal exclusively with them as the preferred proponents. In fact, discussions are already under way over the Redland Hospital.

My re-examination of these proposals has not just been a political exercise by a new Government. This is proven by my decision to accept the same advice from Queensland Health as my predecessor, the member for Toowoomba South, and to allow the negotiations to proceed. However, my chief concerns have been to establish a clear public benefit and to provide the proponents with a decision as soon as possible so that we do not have a blanket freeze on major capital works—as we saw under the previous Government—delaying important Health projects. No blanket capital works freeze for this Health Minister!

Pending the outcome of the negotiations between Queensland Health and the proponents, I propose to return to Cabinet early next year to seek approval for finalised agreements. I will do so completely convinced that those co-locations will deliver significant benefits to Queensland's health care consumers and to our public health care system.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Erosion of Housing Funds

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.53 a.m.), by leave: Today I wish to inform honourable members of the deliberate running down of public housing funds undertaken by the previous State Government.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Members opposite should stick around; there is plenty more to come.

Since becoming Minister for Housing, I have been made aware that funds totalling more than $130m have been eroded from the Queensland Government's housing program over the past few years as a result of decisions taken by the previous Government. This occurred at a time when many Queenslanders were in desperate need of accommodation. It occurred at a time when thousands of people were being turned away from crisis accommodation throughout the State. It also occurred at a time when housing funds were urgently needed to help provide jobs in the building industry, especially for young people seeking training through apprenticeships.

It is difficult to imagine that in such circumstances any Government could be sufficiently cold-blooded to implement a strategy that saw millions of dollars in desperately needed funds diverted from the budget of the Department of Housing. Records in my department show that in 1996-97 the coalition State Government effectively forfeited $30m in funds under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement in order to meet the Howard Government's deficit reduction strategy. In that very same year, an estimated 16,000 people were turned away from crisis accommodation in this State. Surely the public housing program is not the place to make savage cuts when so many Queenslanders in urgent need are unable to find a bed for the night. Yet the same Government again forfeited the same amount—$30m—in the following year, 1997-98, and had plans in train to sacrifice a further $15m this financial year.

I want to underline the significance of what the previous State Government did. It deliberately elected to finance its share of the Howard Government's deficit reduction plan by slashing housing funds. It was the housing budget that carried the burden, and we are all now paying for it. A quick look at the statistics for the provision——

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: The member opposite ought to be ashamed of himself. He cost the building industry in this State nearly $1 billion through his irresponsibility. He should just sit there and cop it.

A quick look at the statistics for the provision of public housing tells the story. In recent years the number of public housing dwellings commenced or bought by the Department of Housing has more than halved from an average of 1,900 in the last three full years of the previous Labor Government to a projected 833 this financial year. It is all very well for Federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, to now brag about a $1.2 billion Budget surplus, but Queenslanders, especially the tens of thousands on public housing waiting lists, should remember that they have paid to achieve a fair slice of the "point 2" of that figure by forgoing housing funds.

Apart from offering up the housing budget as a sacrifice on the Howard Government's fiscal altar, the previous State Government used a number of other mechanisms to erode housing funds. This included withdrawing previously committed moneys in the 1995-96 Budget. In the past four years they withdrew almost $37m in consolidated revenue funding from the Home Assist and Home Secure programs, the institutional reform program, and the Community Housing Partnership Program. This forced the Department of Housing to divert capital funding to continue those schemes. It also paid a total of $33.7m to Queensland Treasury as part of an imposed savings target.

Unfortunately, the Department of Housing is locked into returning almost $10.6m to Treasury in 1998-99 to meet Budget commitments made by the previous Government. All this occurred in the context of a significant overall decrease in Federal funds through the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement. My advice is that it has been very difficult for the Department of Housing to credibly argue for the maintenance of funding levels from the Federal Government at the same time as the State coalition Government was handing back housing funds.

The Department of Housing sought to make up this funding shortfall through a variety of strategies. Firstly, it borrowed $50m from the Queensland Treasury Corporation and sold land-holdings in order to continue to provide a decent level of service to Queenslanders in housing need. Clearly these strategies are unsustainable in the long term. It is beyond belief that any Government would actively

support the loss of more than $130m in housing funds. Yet the former coalition Government did just that, largely to pay for the political sleight of hand that—surprise, surprise—now delivers a Federal Budget surplus just weeks before a Federal election.

It takes no more than an amateur economist to realise how much impact $130m would have had on the housing sector and jobs in the building industry over the past few years. Yet those opportunities and those jobs were forfeited because the former Government willingly cut back spending on housing at the behest of its Federal friends. As honourable members would understand, it is a big effort to redress the loss of over $130m from Queensland's housing budget over a four-year period.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Forde Inquiry; Mr H. Heilpern

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (10 a.m.), by leave: In Parliament yesterday, the Opposition raised allegations in relation to the appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern as a commissioner to the Forde inquiry. These are serious allegations and I, as responsible Minister, have an obligation to ensure those allegations are examined. Since those matters have been raised, departmental officers have undertaken a search of the findings of the Wood royal commission. The allegations have been put to Mr Heilpern and a copy of the relevant material has been delivered to Commissioner Forde. I have had these allegations examined and no evidence has been found to substantiate them.

In response to the specific issues, let me say this: the Opposition alleged firstly that the Wood royal commission criticised Mr Heilpern for failing to appropriately investigate complaints of a departmental officer sexually assaulting children. The truth is that the report of the Wood commission did not name Mr Heilpern in any of its six volumes, notwithstanding three years of inquiry. Mr Heilpern was not called before the inquiry, made no submission to the inquiry and was not required to give evidence.

There is one reference in the six-volume report of the inquiry to Mr Heilpern's time as Director-General of the Department of Youth and Community Services, or YACS as it was known. This reference is in relation to a single anonymous complaint about an officer of his department in 1984. The report actually confirms at page 886 of volume 4 that Mr Heilpern, as director-general, obtained a report from the relevant district office and that the allegation was not substantiated at that time. There was no personal criticism of Mr Heilpern in the report. Further complaints were made four years later—two years after Mr Heilpern left the department.

The second allegation is that Mr Heilpern was publicly sacked from his position as director-general amid claims that the department was "rudderless" and that his leadership decisions were "bizarre". The truth is that Mr Heilpern resigned his position of director-general to accept an appointment as chair of the New South Wales Commercial Tribunal—a position which enjoys the status of a District Court judge. He was reappointed as deputy chair of this tribunal in 1992 by the then New South Wales Liberal Government.

Thirdly, the Opposition alleges that under Mr Heilpern's leadership the department encouraged the break-up of families, encouraged children to divorce their parents and refused an adoption on the grounds that parents were too fat. What is the source of these allegations? Honourable members will no doubt be surprised to hear that the source is none other than the Sydney Daily Telegraph! If the Opposition had bothered to check before making these scurrilous accusations it would have found that the whole truth was the subject of a ministerial statement in the New South Wales Parliament in December 1986.

In making these claims the Leader of the Opposition relied on a report in the Sydney Daily Telegraph which alleged that a pamphlet distributed by the department incited children to divorce their parents. The Minister assured the New South Wales Parliament that he had thoroughly investigated the claim, had even interviewed a set of parents and the daughter who originally made the claim, and found that the department had never printed any such pamphlet; nor was there any evidence of any such pamphlet ever existing or being distributed.

Further, the same Hansard record indicates that a New South Wales couple was, indeed, denied the right to adopt a child while Mr Heilpern was director-general on the grounds of their health and weight. The adoption application related to an intercountry adoption. The restriction on health and weight requirements on the adoptive parents was imposed by the authorities in South Korea and not by the Minister, Mr Heilpern, or the department.

The Leader of the Opposition, when he sets out to impugn the reputation of a commissioner of inquiry, may wish to place his faith in the wild assertions of sensationalist southern tabloids. I prefer to rely on the Hansard records of the New South Wales Parliament.

Further, the member for Surfers Paradise related claims that the department had been "rudderless". The origin of this claim—Ms Virginia Chadwick, the Liberal shadow Minister. The source of the material—not the Wood royal commission report but, again, the Sydney Daily Telegraph. The source was not Commissioner Wood. In fact, there was no reputable source.

Fourthly, the Opposition alleges that Mr Heilpern is a Labor Party hack. This is without foundation. The truth is that Mr Heilpern has been appointed and reappointed to a number of senior positions under Governments of all political persuasions. But I would not expect the Leader of the Opposition to take my word on this. I refer him instead to the media release of a former New South Wales Liberal Minister issued in 1991 upon the secondment of Mr Heilpern to the Commonwealth Government's implementation of the Aboriginal deaths in custody report. The media release states that this Minister was "delighted" that Mr Heilpern had been chosen by the Commonwealth to work on this report. I quote from his media release—

> "Mr Heilpern is highly regarded in the social welfare area."

And further—

> "The implementation of these changes will provide significant challenges which transcend politics and will require the skills of an experienced negotiator such as Mr Heilpern."

Which so-called Labor hack do those opposite think issued this glowing press release about Mr Heilpern? It was none other than the current Liberal Leader of the New South Wales Opposition, Mr Peter Collins, QC. I table the press release for the information of honourable members.

My concern that this inquiry not only be independent, but be seen to be independent, is well established. As I outlined yesterday, I took great care to check whether any potential appointee to the commission had any real or perceived conflict of interest. It is a matter of public record that Mr Heilpern undertook a short consultancy for the Department of Family Services in 1993. The consultancy assisted the department in the preparation of a mid-year Budget review submission relating to the physical infrastructure of the juvenile justice system. I sought Crown law advice on this matter and was advised that there was "no real possibility of a case of apprehended bias being made out against Mr Heilpern."

This Government is the first Government in the history of Queensland to have the courage to establish a properly constituted and thorough inquiry into the issues of abuse and neglect of children in all our institutions. The appointments of Leneen Forde and her assistant commissioners were made with regard to the skills and attributes which would contribute to a thorough investigation of all of the issues surrounding the operation of our institutions for children.

I have been concerned for some time by disturbing reports which have reached my office about attempts to undermine the Forde inquiry. As honourable members may be aware, a demonstration was held outside the Children's Commission yesterday to criticise the Forde inquiry. I have received a statutory declaration which asserts that a senior officer of the Children's Commission, Mr Graham Weeks, requested clients of the Children's Commission to attend this demonstration. Mr Weeks is a former police officer and a previous staff member of former Police Minister Russell Cooper. Any involvement of this officer in the organisation of a public demonstration against the Forde inquiry is a deeply disturbing matter.

I have this morning forwarded this statutory declaration to the Children's Commissioner with a request that he take urgent action to establish the veracity or otherwise of this serious allegation. Quite frankly, I am very surprised by these assertions, given the support of the Children's Commissioner himself for the Forde inquiry.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition asserted in interjection that I had "wiped out" the Children's Commissioner in the establishment of the inquiry. Again, some facts are necessary. After announcing an intention to conduct this inquiry, I invited the Children's Commissioner to make a submission regarding its formation. Mr Alford forwarded a submission to me on 23 July on a number of issues, including the appropriate role of his commission. He stated—

> "The Children's Commissioner could face an accusation of bias if appointed to conduct the inquiry because initial allegations were lodged with the Commission."

I table Mr Alford's submission. I had, up until this point, been considering recommending Mr

Alford for appointment as deputy commissioner to the inquiry. Given Mr Alford's concerns regarding bias, I sought Crown law advice, which states—

> "I am of the view that, if the Children's Commissioner was appointed as a Deputy to the Commission, there exists a strong possibility that a case of apprehended bias may be raised by a potential party appearing before the inquiry."

Further—

> "It would be possible for the Children's Commissioner to render assistance to the inquiry if the Commissioners of the inquiry form the view that this is appropriate to assist their investigations."

It is now a matter for the commissioners. I table the Crown law advice to that effect.

I have been rigorous in my determination to conduct an inquiry which is beyond reproach. I have had the allegations made by the Opposition yesterday investigated and have yet to find any evidence of any substance to support them. Public confidence in this inquiry is more important than any short-term political point scoring that the Opposition may wish to achieve. I have treated the allegations of the Opposition with due care and diligence.

I call on the Leader of the Opposition to cease the political vendetta and either produce any substantial evidence or abandon his vicious attack on the inquiry headed by former Governor Leneen Forde. It is a serious matter to call into question the integrity of a senior officer in a commission of inquiry. Frankly, the decision to do so should rely on sources more reputable than the unfounded claims of the Sydney Daily Telegraph. I urge all honourable members to support the inquiry in its efforts to make life better for the children of Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Building Services Authority

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) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to inform the House that on Tuesday of last week I had the opportunity to visit the offices of the Queensland Building Services Authority at South Brisbane and meet with a large number of BSA staff. I was impressed by their dedication and professionalism. However, despite this high level of professionalism and dedication, it is my unfortunate duty to inform the Parliament that over the past three years the BSA has operated at a deficit.

The BSA was established in 1992 and operated in financial surplus until the financial year 1995-96. In 1995-96 the BSA recorded a $3.8m operational shortfall. In 1996-97 the BSA operated at a $1.8m shortfall. Although I have not yet been provided with the audited statement of accounts for the financial year 1997-98, the loss for the last financial year is expected to be $1.8m. I understand that there is also a possible projected loss by the BSA general fund of $2.9m for the current financial year.

To fund this budget deficit the BSA has been running down its assets. This practice is not sustainable. The former Government recognised this. The previous Minister for Housing, the present Leader of the Liberal Party, went to the then Treasurer for an advance of $2.9m to help fund this year's operating deficit. I have been advised that the then Treasurer agreed to provide an advance of $1.45m to cover the black hole for six months. The advice I have from the BSA is that notwithstanding the advance, the BSA's 1998-99 forecasts show a preliminary deficit in the order of $2.6m.

The former Government did nothing to assist the BSA by putting in place a strategy to rectify the financial problems for which, as the Government of the day, they were responsible. In fact, the former Minister, Dr Watson, tabled in the Parliament the 1996-97 BSA annual report which stated on page 10 that—

> "The BSA's financial position continues to be sound despite the losses experienced during the year."

The annual report went on to state that—

> "The intention to incur budget deficits was adopted in light of the sound level of net assets and the importance of activities such as financial performance audits in minimising the adverse impacts of business failure and non-payment of the building industry at this time."

Despite the claims in the report, it is expected that at the end of next financial year, two years after the 1996-97 annual report was written, with expected fee increases and an advance from Treasury, the BSA would still be $2.6m in the red and the BSA's net assets value will be near zero.

The previous Government and the previous Minister, being tipped off to the fact

that there would be an operational shortfall and that the long-term position of the BSA was not viable, did nothing to either curb the operations of the BSA or to improve its funding base. In effect, the previous Government was writing cheques for the BSA with money that it did not have. They deferred any decision to address fee increases because of the election. They put political expediency before financial responsibility. Even if no reforms were to be implemented, it would still be necessary to obtain funding for the BSA for it to avoid technical insolvency.

Numerous Ministers of this Government, from the Premier down, have given a commitment that there will be prudent expenditure of public funds. On 6 August I gave a commitment to this House that expenditure of moneys by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils will be scrupulous. I expect the same from all areas of my portfolio. I will not be harder on one part of my portfolio responsibilities than any other. I therefore give the same commitment to this House on the expenditure of funds by the BSA. I will insist that the BSA operates within its means. However, I would like to place on the record my commitment to the reforms proposed by the ISC to ensure that there is security of payment in the building industry. These reforms will not just be a means of addressing the financial shortcomings of the BSA but will go a long way towards removing from it those that give the building industry a bad name.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wharps Pastoral Holding

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.14 a.m.), by leave: I bring to the attention of the House a matter of grave concern about the conduct of the previous Government. The joint State/Commonwealth Sugar Coast Environmental Rescue Package was established in 1995 to secure habitat of the mahogany glider in the Tully/Ingham region and to provide protection for rare and threatened species and ecosystems endangered by cane expansion along the coastline. One of the most important holdings identified as being worthy of protection was a leasehold property about nine kilometres south-west of Ingham called Wharps Pastoral Holding. It is leased by brothers Arthur, Edward and William Hobbs and contains an area of 10,900 hectares, most of which is in its natural timbered state and used for cattle grazing.

In November 1997 the Department of Natural Resources commissioned a valuation from a private firm, Taylor Byrne rural valuers, to assist with negotiations with the lessees to acquire the property. In negotiations between the Hobbs family and departmental officers on 28 January 1998 a without-prejudice offer to the lessees included their retention of up to 450 hectares and a cash payment of $1.25m for the balance of the conservation area. This offer was apparently viewed positively by the lessees. But during the next few days there was a dramatic change. The land-holder approached the Borbidge Government, and suddenly three National Party Ministers, and later a fourth, started interfering with a legitimate agreement process. Suddenly the lessees wanted much, much more. Why?

Let me tell members about a meeting that took place on the 15th floor of the Executive Building in the then Premier's office on Wednesday, 4 February this year—just six days after the in-principle agreement between the land-holder and the departmental officers. Those present at the meeting included the then Premier, Mr Borbidge, the then Environment Minister, Mr Littleproud, and the then Natural Resources Minister, Mr Howard Hobbs. At that meeting, the land-holder was informed by the National Party that by a special deal the leasehold would be allowed to be converted to freehold title—not just the 450 hectares but a massive 1,000 hectares. On top of that, they were led to believe that they would also be compensated for the loss of the balance area on the basis that tree-clearing regulations in relation to the land would not apply.

These Ministers were happy to go along with the destruction of critical mahogany glider habitat in direct contravention of the Commonwealth/State agreement. The Ministers just wanted to give "one of theirs" a lucrative golden handshake at the expense of every Queensland taxpayer and against the best legal and departmental advice on offer. Not only that, advice from both departments at the time was that this sort of grubby deal could not and should not go ahead because of native title implications and because of the impact that this would have on the valuations of all other State lands. In effect, the deal would have set an extraordinary and dangerous precedent that could have more than doubled the compensation value of all leasehold land in the State.

Unluckily for the land-holder, but luckily for the rest of us, their namesake, the honourable member for Warrego, resigned in disgrace on Friday, 13 February—nine days after the 15th floor meeting. Luckily for all Queenslanders, the land could not be converted to freehold title, despite further political lobbying by the land-holder and some misguided cane interests in the area. But that did not stop the former Government from trying. They had another clandestine meeting.

This time the new Natural Resources Minister, Mr Springborg, took up where his ignominious predecessor left off. Minister Springborg, now the shadow Attorney-General and shadow Minister for Justice, met with Environment Minister Littleproud and lessee Arthur Hobbs on Tuesday, 28 April. This time the Ministers agreed that the lessees should apply for a permit to destroy all the trees over the 1,000 hectares that they had earlier tried to transfer to freehold. They offered to get Cabinet approval for compensation to the lessees on the basis that the tree-clearing regulations did not apply. In fact, the solicitors representing the land-holder enthusiastically drafted a Cabinet submission to that effect for the Minister. But that was not all.

To assist in the preparation of the Cabinet submission on the compensation issue a second private valuation was obtained from Taylor Byrne rural valuers. This valuation cost the Government $1,750. As it was meant to, this valuation ignored the tree-clearing regulations. It rocketed the compensatable value of the property from $1.25m to $4.6m—a massive $3.35m windfall—a $4.6m publicly funded down payment on mahogany glider extinction. How was the extra money to be paid? Was it to be through extra funding from the Commonwealth or was the former Natural Resources Minister going to pressure the department to do his dirty work, to make an unbudgeted ex gratia payment?

It is obvious why these deals were kept secret by the previous Government. This is one of the biggest potential land scandals this State has ever seen. What would have happened if the coalition forces had retained power? Not only would the land-holders be busy slashing and burning 1,000 hectares of critical mahogany glider habitat on Wharps Holding; they would have been banking nearly five million taxpayer dollars and possibly selling off the equivalent of 10 canefarms—another potential $5m windfall—given to them gratis by these over-friendly former Ministers. $10m—can members believe it? How warped can one be?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.21 a.m.), by leave: Queensland's Fire and Rescue Authority is a financial basket case. The independent report by Price Waterhouse Coopers on the state of the QFRA's finances has shown the situation to be even worse than I expected. It shows the trust fund will be $118m in the red within 6 years. That is the legacy of the previous Government. The report is a shocking indictment on my predecessor, the member for Southport, and the former Government. Listen to what the report says—

> "A continuation of the QFRA's operations on the current basis will lead to reduced effectiveness and insolvency."

"Insolvency"! Queensland's fire service is going broke. This report tells us that if we do not do something now then our fire brigades, and our firefighters, will not—will not—be able to protect our communities to the standard Queenslanders have a right to expect. And what else does the report say? It says—

> "... there is little evidence to suggest that action has been taken to rectify the major financial issues."

It says—

> "Political issues have stalled action that should have been taken by the Board."

This report details a financial and accountability no-man's-land between the board and the previous Minister and Government. It outlines a complete lack of resolve to deal with the financial mess that is the QFRA trust fund. This mess has occurred because the former Minister, the Nero of Southport, fiddled while the fire service was burning. The former Minister, now forgotten and forlorn on the Opposition backbench, was playing Russian roulette with our communities, mortgaging the financial future and viability of the fire service.

With their unfunded 1995 election promises on additional firefighters, with their refusal to make adequate provision to fund the current enterprise agreement, with their refusal to fund the recommendations of the Staib review—which the board went about blithely implementing without worrying where the money was coming from—the coalition demonstrated a breathtaking level of financial irresponsibility. It is now my task to clean up this mess, and that is exactly what I am doing. I am currently negotiating a financial rescue package with the Premier and the Treasurer.

Let me reassure Queenslanders that, despite the havoc wreaked on our fire service by the thoughtless and reckless actions of the previous Government, the safety of our communities will not be compromised. The fire service will be kept in the black. It will be pulled back from the brink of bankruptcy, and it will continue to deliver an efficient, timely and professional fire and rescue service to Queensland. I will return the QFRA to a sound financial footing without it costing firefighters' jobs or adversely impacting on the QFRA's operational capacity.

STANDING ORDERS; ORDER OF BUSINESS

Sessional Order

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.24 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing and Sessional Orders, for this day's sitting, the House can continue to meet past 7.30pm.
>
> Private Members' motions will be debated between 6 and 7pm.
>
> The House can then break for dinner and resume its sitting at 8.30pm.
>
> Government Business will take precedence for the remainder of the day's sitting except for a 30-minute grievance debate."

Motion agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Parliamentary Criminal Justice Commissioner

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): I wish to report to the House on an important decision of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. As members are aware, on 13 September 1996 the honourable member for Broadwater made allegations in Parliament that Mr Le Grand, of the Criminal Justice Commission, had leaked confidential information concerning Operation Wallah. The third PCJC determined that the matter should be considered by the Connolly/Ryan Commission of Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the Criminal Justice Commission, which was established soon after the allegations were made. However, following an order of the Supreme Court 10 months later, that inquiry was terminated. Soon after, the then Government introduced amendments to the Criminal Justice Act 1989 creating the position of Parliamentary Criminal Justice Commissioner. By letter dated 5 May 1998, the third Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee requested the Parliamentary Commissioner to investigate the allegations made by Mr Grice against Mr Le Grand, and a number of associated issues relating to the conduct of the CJC.

The current committee understands that the previous committee made that reference in an attempt, at the CJC's urging, to expedite the final investigation of the allegations, which remain unresolved. The current committee supports the actions of the third PCJC in this regard. The current committee has recently become aware that the CJC has received legal advice indicating that this reference of the third PCJC was not valid. If this view is correct any investigation conducted by the Parliamentary Commissioner pursuant to this reference would also be invalid. That would have the effect of frustrating the intention of the bipartisan reference by the PCJC to the Parliamentary Commissioner with respect to the Grice/Le Grand matter. This committee does not concur with this view. In fact, the current PCJC has itself received legal advice from Queen's Counsel that the reference of the third PCJC was, in fact, valid. However counsel also advised that the matter is not without some doubt.

We therefore consider that it is in the interests of the public and all of the parties involved that the matter be clarified as quickly as possible. There is agreement between the committee and the Criminal Justice Commission that the most expeditious way of resolving this matter is to make an application to the Supreme Court for a declaration as to the correct interpretation of the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice Act. We intend to proceed with this course of action.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Forde Inquiry; Mr H. Heilpern

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (10.27 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

> "That this House, whilst affirming its confidence in Mrs Leneen Forde as Commissioner of the Inquiry into Government and Non-Government Institutions and Detention Centres, expresses its lack of confidence in the appointment of Hans Heilpern as Assistant Commissioner and calls on the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care to recommend to the

Governor-in-Council that his commission be revoked immediately."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Goods and Services Tax

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): Over the past couple of days we have heard a lot of claptrap from members on the other side of the Chamber regarding the Federal Government's proposed tax package. What we have heard has been the same old short-term politicking Labor line based on mistruths, deception and misunderstanding. Let us turn to some of the factual debate. Let us consider the impact of the tax package on rural and regional Queensland and our primary industries, those industries that are the engine room of the State's economy, those industries that have suffered more than most from the ramshackle and punitive tax system that we certainly have, those industries that provide the wealth and employment for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

What has been the response from the Beattie Government to the impact of the tax package on those primary industries and the people who run them? Deathly silence! Quite to the contrary, Queensland's farmers' organisations have welcomed the move to tax reform for which they have long campaigned. They have welcomed the proposed removal of the raft of inefficient taxes, including the wholesale sales tax. They have welcomed the significant reduction of the diesel fuel excise for heavy transport and off-road machinery. They have welcomed the removal of provisional tax and the removal of fringe benefit tax on accommodation in the pastoral industries. They have welcomed the increase in tax-free threshold and the reduction in marginal tax rates. They have welcomed the enhanced family payment arrangements. They have welcomed the exemption of GST on exports as a true means of boosting the international competitiveness and productivity of industries.

Let us consider some of their responses. The National Farmers Federation has welcomed the Government's tax reform package as a comprehensive attempt at true tax reform which addresses many longstanding shortcomings in the current system. The Queensland Graingrowers Association has applauded Prime Minister John Howard's tax reform package as an overdue vision for Australia. The Cattlemen's Union has said that they can easily say that rural people will be better off and that the GST will simplify to a degree the complex taxes they have now. They said that they might be able to understand this system. Lex Buchanan of the Queensland Farmers Federation stated—

> "Labor seems to be taking a very opportunistic approach to opposing the tax proposals. In some cases, short term politics is replacing strategic leadership."

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for private members' statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Forde Inquiry; Mr H. Heilpern

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services to her ministerial statement this morning which contained several inaccuracies that will be dealt with by the Opposition in the 6 o'clock debate tonight. I refer to her unquestioning loyalty to, support for and defence of Mr Hans Heilpern in his role as assistant commissioner of the Minister's inquiry into child abuse in institutions, and I ask: why does she not regard major criticism of a department led by Mr Heilpern by a royal commission in the context of child abuse matters as serious?

Ms BLIGH: I am happy to take the question from the Leader of the Opposition. I do not think there is anything in my ministerial statement which indicates that I do not believe that the recommendations of the Wood royal commission are not of a serious nature. What I draw his attention to is that the recommendations of the Wood royal commission of inquiry contain a number of criticisms and recommendations in relation to, yes, the Department of Youth and Community Services, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the Department of Police in New South Wales. The question before the Parliament, and the matter which I have to consider, is whether the royal commission of inquiry was critical in any way of Mr Heilpern.

I do not believe that anything that has been brought to my attention in any way substantiates a complaint against Mr Heilpern during the time that he was director-general of the department.

Mr Borbidge: He was the director-general.

Ms BLIGH: Yes, there are complaints about the department. Mr Heilpern was never called to give evidence. He was never called before the inquiry. There were 240 witnesses to the inquiry specifically in relation to the paedophilia inquiry. Mr Heilpern was not one of

them. Two previous directors-general were called before the inquiry; he was not one of them.

The Leader of the Opposition should ask himself this question. Mr Wood's inquiry met for three and a half years. His report runs to six volumes. He had all the powers of a commissioner of inquiry at his disposal. If he or his assistants had any concerns about this man, or any member of the public had any concerns, or any former staff had any concerns, would they not have drawn it to his attention and would it not have been resolved?

Forde Inquiry; Mr H. Heilpern

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a further question to the same Minister in reference to Mr Hans Heilpern, the man whom she has rigorously defended here today, and to comments attributed to him and, as I understand, never disputed by him, made on 2 November 1986 when he was then the Director-General of the Department of Youth and Community Services in New South Wales but about to be removed. This gentleman, whom the Minister has defended today, said—

> "I think it's damaging when people get the image that people who assault their children are some sort of monsters."

I ask the Minister: is this an acceptable attitude from an assistant commissioner to an inquiry into child abuse? Was the Minister aware of these views when she recommended the appointment of this person? What confidence could the victims of abuse have in a man who has publicly expressed such views?

Ms BLIGH: Again, I am happy to take the question. I draw the attention of the Leader of the Opposition to the Hansard record of question time yesterday in which I suggested to him that if he had any serious concerns or, indeed, if any other member of the House has any serious concerns, I am very happy to consider them. I am not prepared to consider baseless allegations, sourced from the Daily Telegraph, without any substance.

Mr Borbidge: Direct quote.

Ms BLIGH: From where? What is the source? The Leader of the Opposition alleges that this is a direct quote. I have not seen it and he is not prepared to name the source. Given the sources of his other material, one can only dream about why he might not be prepared to name the source.

This is a witch-hunt. This is a disgrace. I think that at least one of the messages that every member of this House should and could have taken from the election result in July this year is that the members of the Queensland community expect some things to be above politics. They expect people in this House to be able to come together on issues of public importance without considering their own political fortunes. If child abuse is not one of the things that the people in this State expect our bipartisan support on, I cannot imagine what is.

It is time that the Opposition put aside this vendetta. I have invited the Opposition to act responsibly. I have invited the Opposition to take responsible action and bring to me any serious complaints that have any substance. I think it is reasonable that I ask for the source of those complaints. I give the Opposition my assurance, as I did yesterday, that I will investigate them.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the Howard Government's disastrous policy to impose a good and services tax, and I ask: is he aware of any criticism of this plan by special interest groups?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Chermside for his question. Every social interest group has criticised this plan for a GST. Churches, family groups, social workers, trade unions—anyone who is concerned about quality of life has criticised the GST plan. The Prime Minister, Mr Howard, has clipped them all behind the ear like a schoolyard bully for not agreeing with him. Talk about political arrogance!

Those well-known humanitarians Peter Costello and Peter Reith have also got into the act. Remember what those three amigos said initially about the GST? They said that it would never happen because it was not fair. The three amigos never supported the GST because it was not fair. I have also heard special interest groups called whingers—by Peter Costello and others—and I think that is a bit rich. These groups do not always agree with the Labor Party, but at least we acknowledge their right to be critical and at least we acknowledge their right to have a view that we will consider.

I have seen other special interest groups criticised by the Federal Government, such as interest groups from tourism and housing. Why would the interest groups from tourism and housing be opposed to a GST? Bearing in mind that the GST is an anti-Queensland tax, the two big industries in this State that will

suffer the most as a result of John Howard's GST are tourism and housing. Where do most of the jobs come from in the building industry? They come out of housing construction. Why has Queensland done so well over the years? There has been interstate migration, there has been construction, there has been demand and there has been jobs.

This GST will undermine jobs. That is what it will do. It is anti-Queensland and it will undermine jobs. We are going to fight this GST all the way down the line because it is anti-Queensland. It is not good for Queensland. I cannot understand why the National Party, which represents the people who will be most disadvantaged by this, are not arguing in this place against the GST. I remind the House of what I said yesterday in relation to the member for Surfers Paradise and what the Minister for Tourism, Bob Gibbs, has said about this matter. The tourism destinations in this State will be severely disadvantaged. One of the areas that will be disadvantaged the most is the Gold Coast. I cannot understand why the Leader of the Opposition is not standing up and fighting for his own electorate. If he is not prepared to fight for Queensland, one would at least expect him to fight for his own electorate. He is not even prepared to do that.

I let the Opposition know this: in Townsville, Mackay, Cairns, Maryborough—everywhere down the coast—the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, we will be reminding people that the Opposition in this Parliament is prepared to support a tax that will destroy jobs in their areas.

Forde Inquiry; Mr H. Heilpern

Mr BEANLAND: My question without notice is to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services. I refer to comments the Minister made yesterday regarding the appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern to the Forde inquiry. In Hansard she said—

> "I therefore took a very rigorous approach in locating people who would be suitably qualified to undertake the work that has to be done."

Later on ABC radio she said—

> "In fact, in relation to Mr Heilpern's appointment, I went interstate to find somebody who had some experience of child protection systems."

I ask: what kind of rigorous approach could possibly have seen Mr Heilpern selected? Is there such a dearth of appropriate talent in Queensland that the Minister needs to go interstate to dig up a mate of the Labor Party? What was the Minister trying to hide in her press release of 13 August, to which she referred in the House yesterday in defending her openness on Mr Heilpern's history and in which she failed to mention that he was a former somewhat disgraced general manager and registrar of the Queensland Building Services Authority?

Ms BLIGH: Let me start from the very beginning all over again. When looking at this question I think it is important to go back to the heart of the matter. Within the first few weeks of becoming Minister, I met with members of the Neerkol Victims Support Group, something the former Minister, the member for Beaudesert, never did, despite all of his rhetoric in this Parliament.

I, one of my staff and my then acting director-general spent two hours with the group. The group's representatives were four men and a woman. They were all in their late 40s and early 50s. I spent some two hours listening to what I can only describe as deeply personal, deeply painful and quite shocking stories. Nobody in this House could have sat through those two hours and failed to be moved by those stories. I and my staff in fact spent most of that time fighting back tears. In my view, what is happening in this House betrays the courage of those people in coming forward.

When I left the room that afternoon, my determination to investigate the allegations, to provide a forum in which these people could come forward, was strengthened. I knew that when I embarked on this course there would be people who resisted it. I said to my staff, "The road ahead on this matter will be a very rocky one. This is very difficult territory and there will be plenty out there who seek to undermine our efforts. But every time it gets tough, remember the two hours we've just had. Remember the people who have had the personal strength to come forward and make their stories known."

I have not forgotten these people. Those opposite do not know their stories. As the Forde inquiry progresses, they will hear them. As they do, I hope they feel a deep sense of personal shame that they have done anything to taint that inquiry, that they have come forward to attack personally, with no substance, one of the commissioners who will get to the heart of these matters and provide a forum in which these people can have their stories heard. The proof of this inquiry will be in the opportunity that it provides for people, and

the sooner those opposite stop this vendetta the better it will be for all of them.

Forde Inquiry

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Premier to the continuing attacks by the Opposition on the integrity of the Forde inquiry into child abuse, and I ask: will these attacks undermine the Government's commitment to the inquiry?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for his question. The saboteurs will not win. This inquiry into child abuse will go ahead, because we are interested in the welfare of children. We as a Government will not allow politics to be put ahead of the interests of children, which is exactly what is happening here. I remind the House that the Leader of the Liberal Party in New South Wales, the man who holds himself out to be Premier of that State, has endorsed this man in a news release. In it he states—

> "Mr Heilpern is highly regarded in the social welfare area and was previously the head of the former department."

The Leader of the Liberal Party in New South Wales says that this man is highly regarded. Let us look at the half-truths we have heard from the Opposition on this issue that misrepresent and seek to destroy an honest man. Those opposite said that this man was supervising policies that refused adoption on the basis that parents were too fat. Let us look at what the Hansard says. It states—

> "That fact was that Mr and Mrs Murnane"—

that is, the people seeking the adoption—

> "were unable to adopt a child from Korea because, under the conditional requirements stipulated by the Korean authorities, Mr and Mrs Murnane were ineligible."

Anyone listening yesterday would have thought that that was Mr Heilpern's responsibility, but that is not the case. It happens to be the Korean authorities, and that is set out in Hansard. We are hearing dishonest half-truths in order to undermine a legitimate and proper inquiry into child abuse. It is putting politics above children. The Leader of the Opposition says that the report referred to the department during a certain period of time. It referred to the department between 1983 and 1989. Was Mr Heilpern the director-general during all of that time? The answer is no, he was not. This is another half-truth.

This is simply putting politics above children. Those opposite have behaved in the most despicable way I have ever seen an Opposition behave. The whole lot of them should be ashamed of themselves. The way they have behaved they are not fit to be members of this Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition is not fit to hold that position. He has put his political self-interest ahead of children. This is the most dishonest performance from any Opposition in a generation.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I am getting used to being subjected to personal abuse by the Premier, according to his brave new standards in Parliament. I find those remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn. He referred to me as being dishonest.

Mr BEATTIE: I was referring to the Opposition as being dishonest.

Mr BORBIDGE: He said "the Opposition Leader".

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: Whatever the Opposition Leader finds personally offensive I am happy to withdraw. The record speaks for itself.

Forde Inquiry; Mr H. Heilpern

Mr HORAN: I address my question without notice to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. I refer to her gross mishandling of the appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern as assistant commissioner to the Forde inquiry into child abuse. Given that Mr Heilpern's department was adversely named in the Wood royal commission for ignoring allegations of child sex abuse, given his very public removal from the position of Director-General of the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services and given Mr Heilpern's public comments, where he defends the monsters who assault their children, I ask: in the interest of ensuring full public confidence in this very important inquiry into child abuse, which is supported by all members in this House, will the Minister, who is responsible for protecting Queensland children, now take the appropriate action and replace Mr Heilpern?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for his question. I note an assertion in his question, and in fact in some of the statements made by previous speakers from his side of the House, that the Opposition supports the inquiry. One can only ask what the Opposition would be doing if it opposed the inquiry! If this is its idea of how to support a difficult, sensitive inquiry and its idea of generating public confidence in the inquiry, I

dread to think what it would be doing if it had actually consciously set out to undermine the inquiry.

What those opposite ought to be doing if they are interested in supporting this inquiry is putting out a newsletter to their electorates, telling their constituents about the inquiry and inviting them to make submissions, and talking to the community organisations in their electorates that provide support to people who have been in these institutions in the past. I believe that I have answered, as has the Premier, the further claims that the shadow Minister makes, and I do not believe there is any need to waste any more of the Parliament's time.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr WILSON: I refer the Treasurer to the Howard Government's proposal for a $32 billion goods and services tax, and I ask: what is the expected impact on low income earners and what safeguards are in the tax package to prevent those people from being further disadvantaged by profiteering at the hands of unscrupulous traders?

Mr HAMILL: The concerns of organisations such as ACOSS, the churches and the welfare lobby about the impact that the GST would have on low income families, pensioners and self-funded retirees have been well documented. Those are the people who would not be adequately compensated in terms of their costs of living through the imposition of a 10% GST. Those are the people who would not be adequately compensated by any short-term one-off payment as against the impacts of the GST.

The issue of concern that the honourable member raised was similarly raised with the Prime Minister recently on radio in Townsville. A caller asked the Prime Minister how consumers would be protected from unscrupulous traders who might seek to profiteer by putting up their prices for the various goods being offered for sale. The Prime Minister—"Honest John", who understands the needs of ordinary people—responded to the caller. I thought his remarks would offer real comfort to those who would be concerned about the impact of a GST upon the household budget.

For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I point out that this is a direct quote from the Prime Minister. He stated—

> "Go into the supermarket with a copy of the Townsville Bulletin"—

he was on radio in Townsville—

> "and say, 'Look, according to the Townsville Bulletin this detergent was 'X' before the GST and now it should be 'X', you know, minus 'Y' after the GST. Why isn't it?' "

I can imagine that question being asked of the sales assistant in Woollies!

Mr Schwarten: For a packet of Surf.

Mr HAMILL: Yes, for a packet of Surf.

If perhaps the consumer was not satisfied with the response, the Prime Minister had some further advice, which was—

> "I'd go back to him and get a list of all of his input costs and I'd find out whether he's telling you the complete picture and, if I were you, I'd find out whether he pays any wholesale sales tax."

I can imagine my mum going into Woollies and asking the sales assistant, "What are the input costs on the packet of Surf? Could you please provide me with the details? And by the way, what is the wholesale sales tax component of the 'X' price before we got to the 'Y' price?" Little wonder there is so much community disquiet about the impact of the GST on the household budget. Little wonder why groups like those mentioned have those concerns when the Prime Minister cannot do any better than that.

Time expired.

Forde Inquiry; Mr H. Heilpern

Dr WATSON: In directing a question to the Premier, I reiterate the Opposition's support for the Forde inquiry and its belief in the complete integrity of that inquiry. I refer to the answer yesterday from two of the Government's Cabinet Ministers regarding the appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern as an assistant commissioner to the Forde inquiry. The Minister for Fair Trading, responsible for the statutory authority which had previously employed Mr Heilpern in Queensland, stated, "I have little relevance as a Minister in the appointment of the commissioner to this particular inquiry." Further, the Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts later said, "I am unaware of the allegations against that gentleman." I ask: did the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care inform the Premier of any potential problems with the appointment of Mr Heilpern, or was he also kept in the dark?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question. The assassins are continuing to weave to try to destroy the only

properly constituted inquiry into child abuse that has been established in a generation.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Just think about this for a minute. The Leader of the Opposition came in here——

Mr Grice: Give us a bit of Macbeth.

Mr BEATTIE: The member does not want to hear the truth, does he?

The Leader of the Opposition came in here today and "quoted" Mr Heilpern. But did he give a source? My challenge to the Leader of the Opposition is this: table your source.

Mr Borbidge: I will.

Mr BEATTIE: Tell us who your source is. Did you make it up or read it on the back of a Kelloggs Cornflakes packet? If you are going to come in here and make allegations, you should absolutely be prepared to include your material.

The relevant Minister here has said, "If you are prepared to provide details of allegations, they will be examined." You have not done so. For two days we have had the assassins trying under parliamentary privilege to destroy the credibility of a man without one shred of evidence. The Leader of the Opposition came in here and would not even source a quote. Even my children in Year 7 at primary school know that you have to source your information. Any teacher will tell you that—not one source. It is assassination by innuendo.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: And now he cannot even take it when we reply.

Mr BORBIDGE: We made our sources readily available yesterday and we will do so today.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr BEATTIE: It is assassination by innuendo. It is an attempt to destroy a man's reputation and to destroy the only legitimate inquiry——

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Not only that, the difference is this: the National Party tried to establish an inquiry into John Oxley in 1989 and it could not even get it right.

Ms Bligh: And who was one of the architects of that?

Mr BEATTIE: We are the only Government to have established a proper inquiry. The Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet when the National Party sought to establish that flawed inquiry in 1989.

The truth is this: this man has been under attack from the Opposition for two days. They are yet to provide one shred of evidence. The process that was gone through to examine this——

Dr Watson: Did you know about the allegations?

Mr BEATTIE: I am answering your question. The process that was gone through to examine this man's credibility and suitability for appointment was thorough, and you have not found one matter in the last two days that detracts from his appointment—not one. If you have material, then put it up. I repeat what I said yesterday: your behaviour—the Opposition's behaviour here is supporting the child molesters and the abusers.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Again, the Premier said "your behaviour", pointing to me, and then he said "the Opposition". Under Standing Order 120——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! He said "the Opposition's" behaviour. There is no point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, he said "you" first and pointed at me and then said "the Opposition".

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I call the honourable member for Kurwongbah.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I give notice of dissent from your ruling.

Mrs LAVARCH: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I consider that a reflection on the Chair. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to apologise.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I have been called a child abuser by the Premier. I am entitled to some protection from the Chair.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I have not said that in relation to the Premier. I said that in relation to the Opposition.

Mr BORBIDGE: You said "you". It is in Hansard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition claims that he was called a child abuser. I did not hear those words.

Mr Borbidge: I did.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I listened very carefully and I am willing again to go back to Hansard on that ruling. But at this stage I consider that the Leader of the Opposition's words "so much for the new standards" were a reflection on the Chair. I am trying to raise the standards in this place. Unfortunately, the new standards have been disrupted quite considerably over the past two days. I say to both sides of the House that I will not tolerate it. I will continue to stand here and waste the question time of members until we have some good order and dignity in this place.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I just make the point that I will not be called a child abuser by the Premier or honourable members opposite, and you, Sir, have a responsibility to make sure that the Standing Orders in this place are accurately enforced.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have just responded to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr GRICE: Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Yesterday——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member may not rise on a point of privilege suddenly arising in question time.

Mr GRICE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Under which Standing Order are you taking a point of order?

Mr GRICE: Yesterday the Premier said——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I refer to the comments made by the Premier yesterday in which he said, "Here today those opposite are supporting the abusers. They are covering up for the paedophiles. They are covering up for the abusers." They were the words.

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

Mr BORBIDGE: Each and every one of us can stand up one by one and ask for that comment to be withdrawn if that is what we have to do.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has already taken two points of order. He has already given notice of dissent from my ruling. I am quite happy to listen to that point of dissent, but question time is an occasion for members of the Opposition to ask questions of Ministers. The Leader of the Opposition in this case is wasting the time that he has here. He is destroying the dignity of this place. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

Mr BORBIDGE: I have not called anyone on that side of the House a child abuser. Who is destroying the dignity of this place? This is outrageous—absolutely outrageous!

Small Business Confidence

Mrs LAVARCH: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can he advise the House of the feeling amongst Queensland business as revealed in recent surveys?

Mr ELDER: The most recent Yellow Pages survey shows that confidence has returned to Queensland. The report says that confidence among Queensland's small business proprietors has risen to its highest level since May 1996 and its second highest level since February 1995. It goes further to say that a net 45% of respondents among Queensland small businesses expected confidence in their business prospects to improve over the next 12 months. That is well up from the 23% recorded last year. This shows that small business now has confidence in the stability that only a Labor Government can offer for Queensland.

In response to all the cries from those opposite about their understanding small business, I say that small business has voted with its feet, and this recent survey shows that. The result is quite different from the position in the rest of the nation. In fact, Queensland is the only place in Australia in which small business confidence rose. The survey showed that Queensland small business had increases in sales, wages, prices, profitability and capital expenditure during the August quarter. The only area that was lagging was employment. Naturally, I would have liked to have seen that area go up as well, but good performances in those other areas that I have just outlined—wages, profitability and capital expenditure—mean that more money is going to go to those individual businesses and thus they will be able to expand and employ more people.

Importantly, though, the positive outlook for small business over the coming three months was reflected in, as I said, the increase in sales, wages and profitability. However, in the next few years, we do expect to see about 12% of small businesses putting on more people. I get anecdotal evidence when I travel around the State that small business has concerns about the Asian economic crisis. There is a concern about how that will impact

on Queensland and Australia in particular, and those small businesses are certainly preparing for it. Whilst the business confidence is there, the anecdotal evidence from around the State would suggest that they are expecting it to be tough over the next few years.

The last feature in the survey, though, was interesting. It showed that, at the last Federal election, 65% of small businesses voted for John Howard but only 40% have said that they will vote for him this time—and why? GST! As to the $500m compensation package for small business—given that there are over one million small businesses in Australia, that means that only $500 in compensation will go to each small business. When one considers that the input costs for small businesses will range between $6,500 to $7,000 per small business to actually administer and meet the requirements of the GST, one can see why small businesses are voting with their feet. John Howard will find out that his revival, particularly in Queensland, will be significantly dented by the view of small business and the way that small business will vote in the Federal election.

Downgrading of Regional Hospitals

Dr PRENZLER: I ask the Minister for Health: is she aware that West Moreton Regional Health is downgrading the Boonah Hospital virtually by stealth to what could only be called a community health centre? This has been going on for a number of years. At the moment the hospital's operating theatre is being removed to be replaced by a doctor's clinic. Without this theatre, no minor surgery or baby deliveries can be performed, with all patients being transported to Ipswich hospitals. Further, when will Queensland Health stop downgrading regional hospitals and start to encourage the use of these facilities so that the pressures on large city hospitals can be decreased?

Mrs EDMOND: The situation at Boonah Hospital is not one that I know about off the top of my head. I should say also that the member has not raised his concerns with me in writing so that I could give him a detailed response. However, we are trying to modify that hospital and to provide private rooms in the hope of attracting extra doctors to that area. I think at various times the member for Crows Nest has raised with me the problem of these small hospitals, and we are trying to do our best to attract extra doctors to the area.

The problem of delivery of babies and providing other services to the area is not so much to do with the hospital as with the shortage of doctors who are prepared to work in rural areas. It is a problem that we are concerned about. The package that my colleague the member for Capalaba introduced when he was Health Minister did do a lot in terms of attracting medical specialists to hospitals in rural areas. Unfortunately, that has dwindled away over the past couple of years. If the member wants to come and see me and speak to me about the matter in more detail and tell me exactly what his concerns are, I will be happy to discuss them with him.

Bundaberg Women's Domestic Violence Service

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I refer the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services to recent reports in the Bundaberg News-Mail regarding the Bundaberg Women's Domestic Violence Service, and I ask: can she inform the House of the process of restructuring the service and the provision of services to women in my electorate of Bundaberg?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for her question and I commend her for raising this matter with me. It is a pleasure to see a member focusing on the issues in her electorate and working for her constituents. I would encourage some of the members opposite to do the same.

The member for Bundaberg is committed to seeing good quality domestic violence services provided to the women of her electorate and their children. The Bundaberg Women's Domestic Violence Service has been providing these services for some 21 years. Recent reports in the Bundaberg media indicated that this service may well have been closing its doors. I have examined this matter and I can say that, contrary to those media reports, at no time was the service closed. In fact, the services were reduced for a one-month period during which staff were on leave while the organisation was restructured.

From time to time community organisations, like all organisations, have an obligation to examine the way in which they operate and to make sure that they are doing the best that they can do. Undertaking a restructure in a community organisation is, in fact, a sign of good health, and I commend that particular organisation for it. The management committee of the domestic violence service has been working in conjunction with officers of my department in Bundaberg and Maryborough to ensure that services to women and children escaping domestic violence are of the highest quality.

The management committee of this organisation, like the management committees of all community-based organisations, comprises volunteers. They give their time freely and they give their time willingly because they are committed to providing these services in their community. They deserve our commendation, and I have no hesitation in commending the management committee of the Bundaberg Women's Domestic Violence Service for the work that it has done.

This service will be fully operational next week. I commend the member for Bundaberg for drawing these media reports to my attention. I am making sure that the media in Bundaberg carries some rebuttal from my department to ensure that concerns are not raised unnecessarily. I commend the member for Bundaberg and I look forward to working with her in the future to ensure that services in her electorate are maintained and maintained at the highest possible standard.

Business Enterprise Centre

Mr FELDMAN: I direct my question to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. The Business Enterprise Centre in Caboolture is leading the way in job creation and small business support in this State, particularly in the Caboolture area. I ask the Minister: can he give the people of Queensland an assurance that he will stand by his pre-election promise that funding to the business enterprise centres in Queensland will not be cut in the coming Budget?

Mr BRADDY: I visited the Caboolture Enterprise Centre when we were in Opposition and I met with the people there. I must say that I was very impressed by the progress that has been made there over the years. Questions of future funding are under discussion with my colleagues, particularly the Treasurer and the Cabinet Budget Review Committee. At this stage I can only indicate that funding for Caboolture, which is of particular concern to the Government, will be dealt with in the Budget. The honourable member should wait to see the Budget and the further arrangements that will be made by this Government during its term in office. I certainly did not make such an open-ended statement in relation to the business enterprise centres in Queensland as the honourable member suggested. My statements at the time related to the Caboolture centre, which is approaching a situation where it may be considered to be self-supporting.

The situation was that in the Budget which was tabled by the former Treasurer all funding for business support centres was totally withdrawn. The centres were going to be left to languish and to wither on the vine. This incoming Government will be looking at these matters in the context of the Budget. The situation will become clear in due course.

Government Air Wing

Mr MICKEL: I direct my question to the Honourable the Premier. I refer to a list of policies published by Pauline Hanson's One Nation and in particular I refer to a proposal to abolish the State Government Air Wing. I ask: can the Premier inform the House of the role played by the State Government Air Wing?

Mr BEATTIE: I indicate to the House that I am aware that there have been a number of One Nation policies published, including the abolition of the Arts grants, abolition of the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, abolition of the National Firearm Control Scheme and the abolition of the Office of Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs. I am also aware of the policy for the abolition of the Government Air Wing.

I have to say that I believe this is pure populist politics at its worst because the Air Wing provides an invaluable service to Queenslanders right throughout the State. Emergency flights, particularly for organ transplants, are the main task carried out by the Air Wing. These flights take priority. During a recent visit to Gladstone, where I carried out a number of official tasks including meeting with the member for Gladstone, the Government jet was needed to make a mercy dash to New Zealand to collect a donor organ. The Leader of the Opposition also faced this type of situation on one occasion. I gladly stood aside. I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition stood aside also on the occasion that I referred to.

This is what the Air Wing is used for. I think I should say to all honourable members that in a State like Queensland having a Government Air Wing is absolutely essential. I would urge all members of One Nation to consider the public benefit that the Air Wing provides, not only in terms of health requirements but in terms of other services to the people of this State. I know that it is very easy to go down the road of populist politics, but sometimes the public interest comes ahead of populist politics. That is the case here. I notice a former Minister sitting over there on the other side of the House. He was not in his ministerial position long enough to

appreciate the benefits of the Air Wing. I know that the former Premier, now Leader of the Opposition, shares my view in this regard. I say to the One Nation members that we have to think of the benefits that are involved. I will be happy to talk to those members about those benefits at any time.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority

Mr MALONE: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: is it true that the acting Director-General of Emergency Services, Mr Michael Kinnane, instructed the Chief Commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, Mr Wayne Hartley, to sack four senior staff members of the QFRA, contrary to the Premier's election promise, namely: Mr Kevin Foster, Area Director (Rank) and Operational Officer for more than 30 years; Dr Paul Barnes, acting Director of Public Safety; Ms Jacqueline Malouf, acting Director of Marketing and Public Education; and Mr Anthony Gould, acting Executive Director, Business Services? Is the Minister aware that two of these people have been developing a long-awaited risk mapping strategy for fire and rescue delivery across the State over the past 12 months, along with the President of the United Firefighters Union, Mr Henry Lawrence, as a third development officer? Does the Minister want Mr Lawrence to complete this program on his own? The risk management strategy determines the resources required for safe service delivery for communities across the State. Would the Minister please indicate her position relative to these matters?

Mrs ROSE: With regard to the four positions that the honourable member has referred to within the QFRA, I must say that I am unaware that any of those people have received notices indicating that they are no longer employed with the department.

Opposition members: They have.

Mrs ROSE: Have they? The honourable member asked me. As far as I am aware they are still employed within the QFRA.

Pork Industry

Dr CLARK: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. I refer to the plight of Queensland pig producers. Whilst I note that the key issues for the embattled pig producers include such things as international trade and truth in labelling which are Commonwealth policies, I ask: what measures can the State Government take to assist our producers?

Mr PALASZCZUK: The honourable member has raised a very important issue in relation to pork producers in Queensland. As she said, the industry acknowledges that its difficulties with international trade and labelling are Federal issues, but here we are talking about Queensland families and Queensland jobs.

Sadly, some within the Federal Government do not believe in Queensland families and Queensland jobs and have dismissed the industry's SOS with just a wave of the hand. They do not want to know about it. I want to inform the House that we on this side of the House are different. I am a Minister in a Government that cares about people.

I have worked with the industry on a three-point plan. This three-point plan was developed between industry and myself virtually from the first week since I became Minister for Primary Industries. In the first part of the plan, the University of Queensland report into the pig industry found that imports were a major contributor to the current woeful market conditions. This work needed to be followed up, and the University of Queensland report deserves as much spotlight as we can give it.

Secondly, as Minister, I am going to be putting forward a comprehensive submission to the Productivity Commission into the pig and pig meats industry. This is where the third part of the plan fits in. A seminar is to be held tomorrow to get some real answers on the impact of imported pork on our domestic market. I will be opening the seminar, and I understand that ABARE and University of Queensland representatives have also been invited to attend. What is more important, there will be an observer from the Productivity Commission at the seminar. I understand that the member for Crows Nest, Mr Cooper, will also attend. We are approaching this event in a bipartisan manner to try to get the best results possible for Queenslanders. Producers are rightly concerned about some of the conflicting information being circulated about the industry. We have to get it right. Time is running out. And once again——

Time expired.

Acting Director-General, Emergency Services Department

Mr QUINN: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: is it true that her acting director-general recently addressed senior managers of the QFRA and the Queensland Ambulance Service and advised them that he

has no intention of doing business with Asia? Is it true that he made this statement at or about the time the Premier was trying to market Queensland in Asia? Since this directly contradicts official Government policy, what action does the Minister intend to take in this matter?

Mrs ROSE: I am unaware of what transpired at that meeting. I was not there. I obviously do not have some of those powers——

A Government member: ESP.

Mrs ROSE: I do not have ESP. I am unaware of what transpired at that meeting. I have a lot of confidence in my acting director-general. I am more than happy to ask him what transpired at that meeting, if the member would like to know that, but I personally have no knowledge of what transpired at that meeting.

Wharps Pastoral Holding; Mahogany Glider Habitat

Mr ROBERTS: I ask the Minister for Natural Resources: could he inform the House of the current situation with the Wharps Pastoral Holding property near Ingham and this Government's attempts to preserve critical mahogany glider habitat?

Mr WELFORD: I thank the honourable member for his question and interest in this matter. The current situation at Wharps Pastoral Holding is that on 29 July the Queensland Government,involving members of both of my departments, conducted a without-prejudice conference with the land-holders, the Hobbs family. An offer of $1.75m under all heads was made. This offer took into account the value of 315 hectares to be retained by the lessees and costs reasonably incurred by them in this matter. The Hobbs family has been informed, and I wish to inform the House today, that the current offer remains on the table for 60 days. It is fair, it is just and I urge the lessees to reflect on the messy manipulation of the public purse in which they have been implicated by the previous Government.

I actually believe that the lessees are the victims of a gross political scam in that they were pressured into believing they could get an extravagant and unconscionable benefit from a bunch of smarmy political shysters who obviously thought nothing of trampling on accepted land tenure rules and regulations of this State with impunity. Had the proposal to pay compensation to them on the basis that existing land-use requirements would be ignored—in this case tree-clearing guidelines—been proceeded with, a dangerous precedent——

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. This position was taken in negotiations well before the tree-clearing guidelines came in.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr WELFORD: A dangerous precedent contrary to that accepted for the fair valuation of land would have been created Queenslandwide, exposing Queensland taxpayers to an absolute haemorrhaging of the public purse.

I also wish to say that at all times departmental officers have acted in good faith and in accordance with the law. The same cannot be said for the former Ministers sitting smugly on the other side of the Chamber. I commend the officers of the department for their restraint in the face of grossly improper misdirection by a series of National Party Ministers. They have been found out doing what their predecessors turned into an art form—shady deals, tantamount to corrupt deals. It is almost in their genes. They sit there exposed. They sit there condemned. Thank goodness times and standards have changed.

Mr HOBBS: I rise to a point of order. I find those words offensive and ask that they be withdrawn. That is totally untrue. The Minister is gilding the lily a bit.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has made his point of order. The Minister will withdraw the remark.

Mr WELFORD: I made no reference to the member, but I withdraw nevertheless.

Mr R. Attwood

Mr VEIVERS: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: is it true that a member of her own staff, Mr Ron Attwood, who just happens to be the husband of the newly elected member for Mount Ommaney, was on forced leave prior to the recent election pending the outcome of an internal investigation into his alleged leaking of confidential documents? Does the Minister intend to allow this investigation to be completed?

Mrs ROSE: I have no knowledge of any such inquiry.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr FENLON: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to recent

statements by the Housing Industry Association and other mainstream industry groups about the likely impact of a goods and services tax on the private housing sector in Queensland, and I ask: can the Minister outline any flow-on effects a GST could have on the public housing sector?

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is pleasing to see that somebody in this place is taking an interest in the issues that really matter to the people out there. Over the past couple of days it has been appalling to see the grubby depths which Opposition members have plumbed. This has reinforced that the Labor Party is the only party in this place that is significantly interested in many of the battlers out there. Come election day—whenever Mr Howard calls the election—the battlers will have their own GST: they will get square with the Tories.

The housing industry in this State is completely opposed to the GST. Honourable members opposite would do well to listen to their normal allies, the HIA and the QMBA, and their predictions on what effect it is going to have. Their first prediction is that housing costs will rise by as much as 8%, which will add about $16,000 to a $200,000 house and land package. Howard's handout of $7,000 is meant to displace that sort of loss. The reality is that that is an admission that housing costs are going to go up. What about the real costs? From when the first shovel full of concrete goes into the footings until the last roof screw goes into the roof people will be paying more. One does not have to be Einstein to work out that rents will rise, the cost of housing is going to rise, the cost of alterations to homes is going to rise, and for two years the building industry is going to fall, just as it did in New Zealand after the introduction there of a GST. Indeed, it is a grim warning to Queensland.

What is going to happen when landlords are forced, because of extra maintenance costs, to increase their rents? What are people going to do? They are going to come knocking on the door of public housing in Queensland in ever-increasing numbers. As further and further out of reach goes private home ownership, more and more burden is going to fall upon public housing in this State, and we will be caught in the double whammy trap.

Over the past three years in Government, members opposite adopted a disgraceful attitude by giving $130m back to Howard as part of their shoddy deal with the coalition to make Mr Costello's Budget figures look good. So there will be less money in the bucket with which to build houses. Then we will find that the tax on 25% of loans that members opposite imposed—when Howard gives his pittance to the——

Time expired.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to her own waiting list figures that show the enormous improvements to Category 1 and Category 2 elective surgery which occurred under the coalition. I also refer to her confirmation yesterday of $103.5m in extra waiting list money which was provided to Queensland under the coalition's Medicare Agreement, and I ask: given that the Minister now has funding to provide an extra 100,000 operations next year, will she meet the coalition's target of reducing Category 3 elective surgery long waits to less than 5%?

Mrs EDMOND: This statement is just a joke. This is a further lot of misinformation about the funding that has come to Queensland. The member has forgotten to tell us about all of the $22m worth of the programs for which the Federal Government has ceased funding, which will have to be covered by that increase, and the hundreds of millions of dollars that the previous Minister splattered around this State. He took the $15m—the only extra money that we have seen from the Commonwealth—and sprayed it like spaghetti around the State. We cannot find it. We cannot find even any benefits from it.

The member needs to ask the previous Health Minister what happened to the $15m that he sprayed around this State. What happened to the promises that he made? They were still making promises in that office two days before the election. The former Minister's personal secretary was promising funding to a dozen different programs a day.

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

ADOPTION OF CHILDREN (HAGUE CONVENTION OF INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (11.30 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Adoption of Children Act 1964 to implement the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of

Intercountry Adoption and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Ms Bligh, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (11.31 a.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is to introduce the Hague Convention on Protection and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption into Queensland's adoption law. This Bill supports current efforts within Queensland, along with every other State and Territory of Australia, in securing the safety and wellbeing of children adopted from one country to another. At the outset, I should acknowledge that the introduction of this Bill represents one of the final steps in a long process which commenced more than 10 years ago—a process involving several Queensland Ministers, together with a range of Commonwealth and Queensland Governments. In particular, former Ministers such as Anne Warner, Margaret Woodgate, Kev Lingard, and Naomi Wilson should each be recognised for their particular role in reaching this point.

This convention was built upon the recognition that despite significant cooperation between the countries of the world, there was substantial room for improvement in the processes surrounding the intercountry adoption of children. Honourable members will all be aware of anecdotal stories concerning the abduction, sale and trafficking of children from one country to another, as well as macabre stories concerning a hidden and sometimes not so hidden trade in children from one country to another. This convention will implement minimum standards to ensure that these types of practices will not occur.

The event usually regarded as marking the beginning of intercountry adoption programs within Australia was an airlift of refugee children from Vietnam in 1975. It is probably fair to say that, despite the best of intentions, the rush to place these children with Australian families meant that adequate standards of assessment were not followed in the zeal to meet the needs of this group of highly disadvantaged children. With the benefit of hindsight, it is now clear that many would have been better helped if they had remained within their own country. Substantial evidence also emerged internationally of unacceptable practices surrounding the intercountry adoption of children. These practices, ranging from the inappropriate placement of children to their outright abduction and sale, occurred in the absence of proper international protocols and guidelines about the issue.

Between 1977 and 1981 the then Council of Australian Social Welfare Ministers convened a committee which carried out substantial work in monitoring arrangements and developing standards concerning intercountry adoptions by Australian jurisdictions. While this work went some way towards regulating intercountry adoptions, by October 1988 strong support had emerged for the development of a convention on intercountry adoption. It was considered by the international community that the subject matter was of such importance as to warrant the development of a binding international convention. A special commission was established to work on this project from 1990 to 1993. The convention was finalised on 29 May 1993, and entered into force on 1 May 1995 after being ratified by three countries. At least 32 countries are currently signatories to the convention and it has entered into force in more than 20 countries.

Discussions have occurred over many years about the ratification of the convention by Australia. These negotiations, involving each State and Territory, progressed to the point where, on 30 July 1997, a meeting of all Australian Community Services Ministers unanimously recommended that Australia ratify the convention. This outcome was a historic one which reflects goodwill and cooperation between State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments across the entire political spectrum. Obviously, ratification of the Hague Convention is a responsibility of the Commonwealth under its external affairs power. The Commonwealth Government has indicated that Australia will ratify the convention on 1 December 1998. Other countries who have ratified the convention include Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Spain.

The convention establishes safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoption takes place in the best interests of the child. It also establishes a system and reciprocal recognition amongst convention countries to ensure that these provisions actually result in

good standards of practice—preventing abuses such as the abduction, sale of, or trafficking in children. At the very heart of the convention is the principle that countries should take appropriate measures to enable a child to remain in his/her family of origin, and that a child should, as a matter of preference, remain in their home country if possible. The convention sets minimum standards for participating countries to prevent the exploitation, buying and selling of children. It is worth noting that Australian and Queensland practice currently exceeds these minimum standards. Convention countries must—

communicate with each other about all aspects of intercountry adoption;

only permit intercountry adoptions where both countries agree that the prospective adoptive parents are suitable;

only support adoption overseas where such placement is in the best interests of the child;

ensure that there is no improper financial gain from intercountry adoptions; and

recognise adoption orders made in other convention countries unless to do so would be manifestly contrary to public policy and against the best interests of the child.

The convention, like Queensland adoption law, also provides protection against birth parents being coerced or induced into the giving of their consent to a child's adoption and ensures that the wishes of the child are given due consideration.

The Commonwealth Government has prepared regulations capable of implementing the convention throughout Australia. Each State and Territory has the option of implementing the convention either by relying upon these Commonwealth regulations, or by enacting its own legislation which is substantially similar in effect. On 19 January 1998, former Minister Lingard informed the Commonwealth of Queensland's intention to pursue the latter course of action—the enactment of its own legislation. Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales have also chosen this course of action. This decision ensures that intercountry adoptions within Queensland can continue to be made by the Director-General of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, rather than the more expensive and complicated practice of having these orders made by a court, as would be the case under the Commonwealth regulations. It is worth noting that Queensland is the only State in which adoption orders are made administratively. In each other State and Territory, the relevant department assesses the prospective adopters, makes a recommendation to the court, which then makes the final decision and order.

There has been extensive consultation regarding the implementation of this convention within Australia. A copy of the convention was tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament and scrutinised by the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. A national interest analysis was tabled with the convention, setting out the views of State and Territory Governments, non-Government organisations and other interest groups. In Queensland, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care placed advertisements in newspapers during November 1997 to inform the public of the matter and invite submissions upon it, as well as inviting comment from a range of intercountry adoption interest groups. Responses were forwarded to the Commonwealth for consideration by the joint standing committee. The results of this consultation were highly supportive.

This Bill gives effect to the intention of this Government, previous Queensland Governments, and indeed Governments across Australia that processes surrounding intercountry adoptions should reflect internationally accepted standards to ensure against practices such as the sale, abduction and trafficking of children. The Hague Convention on Protection and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption will be implemented in every Australian jurisdiction, and throughout the world, to achieve this goal. This Bill strengthens Queensland's contribution to the global fight against these abhorrent practices. At the same time, the enactment by Queensland of its own amending legislation will ensure that Queensland can implement the Hague Convention without adding to the cost or complexity of the process of intercountry adoption.

This Bill marks a closing point in a process that commenced more than 10 years ago, involving not only Governments, but Ministers, bureaucrats, and the community alike. That these groups could work together, persist in the development and implementation of this convention, and reach a unanimous outcome is a reflection of the level of commitment to the safety and welfare of children within Australia.

I am confident that a similar commitment within this Parliament to the safety and welfare

of children will ensure the smooth passage of this Bill, and I commend it to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

BILLS OF SALE AND OTHER SECURITIES AMENDMENT BILL

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) (11.40 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955, the Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931 and the Motor Vehicles Securities Act 1986."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Ms Spence, read a first time.

Second Reading

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) (11.41 a.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is to modernise and simplify the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955—Bills of Sale Act—and the Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931—the Liens on Crops Act. Members would be aware that this Bill was introduced into Parliament earlier this year and has since lapsed. I am taking this opportunity to introduce it again because I agree that the amendments contained in the Bill are not only commercially sensible but are an example of Queensland leading the way in modernising and streamlining this important area of the law.

No other jurisdiction in Australia has attempted such progressive changes to its bill of sale and liens on crops legislation as introduced by this Bill. There has been extensive consultation on the amendments with members of the business and finance sectors, sugar industry representatives and consumer groups. All agree that the simple registration rules introduced by the Bill will help keep compliance costs for business down whilst promoting registry efficiency. Lenders and potential purchasers can have added confidence in the system, safe in the knowledge that they have greater protection as the result of these amendments.

Members would be aware that the Office of Fair Trading of the Department of Equity and Fair Trading has a charter to maintain the registers under the Bills of Sale Act and the Liens on Crops Act; however, the registration procedures prescribed under those Acts are complicated and in need of reform. The Bill updates and streamlines those outdated registration procedures by making two major amendments. First, the district divisions and registries prescribed in the Acts have been omitted and replaced with one centralised registry. Second, the Bill introduces a simple and efficient, interest-based system of registration.

What changes are being made?

Under both items of legislation, Queensland is divided into various districts for registration purposes. This system contributes to a registration process that is cumbersome, confusing and outdated. For instance, under the Bills of Sale Act, it is necessary to lodge two copies of a bill of sale in each registration district in which chattels are located at the time of execution of the bill of sale. The Bill removes the district divisions from each Act, replacing the district system with one central computerised registry. Thus, once a security interest or lien is registered under the relevant legislation, registration will be effective throughout the State.

Who benefits from such a change?

A direct benefit of this new streamlined approach will be that security holders will no longer be required to go to the expense and inconvenience of having to register in all districts to fully protect their security interest. One registration involving one registration cost at one central registry will be all that is required. This means, therefore, that security holders will not have to pay the multiple costs of registration associated with registering in all district registries. The centralised registry will be located in Brisbane and regional offices of the Office of Fair Trading will also be able to register security interests and liens and allow applicants to inspect the register to search for particular security interests. Regional and rural Queenslanders will not be disadvantaged in any way. In fact, consumers will benefit from these changes in that one search covers the whole State, which will result in fewer disputes.

The other important change

The registration of interests, known as "notice filing", is the other important change

proposed for both Acts. Under the current legislation hard copy lodgment, that is, lodgment or filing of the actual instrument in each registration district, is required for registration purposes. Many of these instruments can be extremely lengthy and complex documents, often consisting of up to 50 or 60 pages! Hard copy lodgment is time consuming and costly compared with a more simple procedure that would require a person to simply file a one-page application for registration of an interest in the prescribed form. Registration of the security interest gives "notice" of the person's interest, hence the expression "notice filing".

The necessity of filing the instrument evidencing a security interest has a number of disadvantages—

the length of documentation can involve time delays and reproduction of paper records, and it is generally unnecessary for another party to read the entire text of the document;

the security agreement may contain provisions which are confidential to the parties and which they do not want included on a public record; and

instrument filing is administratively inconvenient and costly and impedes the computerisation of records.

Notice filing on the other hand will promote registry efficiency, minimise disputes and administrative and compliance costs and deliver a simple and modern interest-based registration scheme. Notice filing is currently the registration procedure prescribed in the Motor Vehicles Securities Act 1986 and to a very large extent the amendments contained in the Bill are a natural consequence of the successful operation of the Motor Vehicles Securities Registry—REVS—which governs a large percentage of all executed bills of sale. Finally, the Bill contains a number of miscellaneous amendments to the Bills of Sale Act which will help to improve the operation of that Act.

Today, in introducing a Bill to amend the Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Act 1955 and the Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Act 1931, Queensland is reforming this important area for the benefit of consumers and business. The Bill delivers a simple, modern registration scheme—a system that is easily understood, efficient, and cheap. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Davidson, adjourned.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (11.47 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Corrective Services Act 1988 and the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Mr Springborg, read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (11.48 a.m.): I move—

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

In the lead-up to the 13 June State election, the coalition promised the people of Queensland that it would introduce legislation to make mandatory 100% custodial sentences for offenders convicted of serious violent offences. Honourable members are aware that the coalition in Government significantly increased the custodial sentences of convicted offenders defined by the law and by the courts as having committed serious violent offences. The law introduced by the coalition Government required these classifications of prisoners to serve at least 80% of their sentences in custody—up from the 50% requirement previously in place.

This arrangement was felt by the coalition at the time to meet the reasonable demand of ordinary, law-abiding Queenslanders that violent criminals be held accountable for their actions and that the community be kept safe from these predators. It also met the requirement that criminals convicted of serious violent offences should not only demonstrate remorse but also genuine achievements in the direction of their rehabilitation.

The coalition's election policy platform announced by my honourable friend the member for Surfers Paradise on 1 June included a promise that the coalition would act to increase to 100% of sentence the time serious violent offenders should serve in custody. The legislation I have introduced into the House under the private member's Bill provisions delivers on that commitment.

The Corrective Services and Penalties and Sentences Amendment Bill 1998 provides for 100% custodial sentences for specified classes of violent offenders. It also provides for certain flow-on changes that are required as a consequence of this.

It is a sensible legislative proposal which deserves the support of every member of the House. It matches community expectations that punishment must fit the crime—a most basic expectation that I believe is beyond debate. It is fair to the overwhelming majority of Queenslanders—the ordinary, decent Queenslanders who do not bash or rape or murder. It is fair to the ordinary, decent Queenslanders who reasonably expect that their Governments will do all they can to protect the innocent from the perverted depredation of the evil few. It is fair to the violent law-breakers who will in the future be dealt with under the law.

This Bill provides for the new 100% rule to take effect from the date of assent to the legislation. No existing prisoner will be affected by the new law for the sentence they are currently serving. No-one convicted of an offence before the Bill is assented to will be affected. Only people who commit such crimes on or after the date of assent will be subject to the new laws. It is therefore a prime deterrent, a stronger deterrent, a deterrent whose effect is to mandate that the full term of a prison sentence will be served by a serious violent offender.

There will be no more fictional sentences of so many years comprising some period, often an extensive period, of freedom in the community under often very lax supervision. Ten years will mean 10 years. A sentence given will be the sentence served. Judges will have all the discretion they currently have in sentencing, but they will approach sentences under this legislation with the full knowledge that if they sentence someone as a serious violent offender in the 10 years plus category they will serve their full sentence. If a sentence is in the five to 10-year category, it will be left to the judge's discretion to determine if that person should be sentenced as a serious violent offender for the purposes of this Act.

There are some consequential changes that will be made necessary by the provisions of this Bill. These will be in relation to the release back into the community of serious violent offenders at the completion of their 100 per cent sentences. The Bill provides for a mandatory six-month period of community supervision for every 100 per cent prisoner upon release. This is not a further penalty, and I do not believe the community will view it as such. It is a period of supervision designed to assist the reintegration of and convey the offender back into the community in a responsible mode of conduct after he or she has paid the full price of their crime. This provision will ensure that the community is adequately protected and that violent offenders are not cast back into the community willy-nilly or without support or sufficient acquired social skills.

The Bill provides for the hearing of matters relating to community supervision well before the offender is due for release. It requires that this hearing be by a judge of the sentencing court and happens not more than six months and not less than three months before the completion of the sentence. It requires that a prisoner may be placed under a supervision order for up to five years after release—in other words, the mandatory six months—and, if the judge so determines, up to an additional four years and six months. Assessment for community supervision will be based on a prisoner's rehabilitation progress and behaviour while in prison.

The incentive for the prisoner is the existing classification system which recognises good behaviour. Also, the potential length of the post-sentence supervision period is an incentive for good behaviour and rehabilitation.

We intend that the sensible provisions proposed in this Bill be the subject of community discussion during the period the legislation is before the House. We believe that this is both sensible, in that the widest possible community discussion of policy issues is obviously a desirable thing, and fair to all concerned. It will enable everyone with an interest in community value-based government to have a say. It will mean that anyone with a genuine grievance against the legislation will have an opportunity to raise that grievance before we debate the Bill.

This is a wholesome process. It is an exercise in participatory democracy. It is inclusive of the whole community in the business of legislation. However, it is impossible, in my view, to argue against the basic premise on which this policy is based—the premise that an offender defined by this Bill must serve the full sentence for the crime committed.

I look forward particularly to the contribution my learned opponent, the Attorney-General, will be able to make to this process if he so desires, but I hope his comments are not confined to lamenting the wellbeing of serious violent offenders before

the wellbeing of the victims and the community at large.

I believe that the novel circumstances of this 49th Parliament, in which the effectively two-party system we are used to in Queensland has been set aside, provide us all with many opportunities as well as challenges. I believe that, as members of a representative Chamber, we should all welcome this. Parliament is not the incessantly combative place that some like to see it as and portray it as. At any time in a democratic community, as well as in a Westminster-style Parliament, much more binds us together than drives us apart. It is in that spirit that I bring this Bill to the House. The issue it addresses is not one that should divide us. It is about making people who have committed heinous crimes pay the full price for those crimes. Criminal justice should not be administered like a discount mart.

The Bill is forward thinking; it delivers the very essence of natural justice. The Bill does not place unbearable strain on the public resources that Queensland must outlay to manage and contain those who commit the foulest of crimes.

Serious violent offenders as defined by the existing Act—and we do not propose in this Bill to make any changes to those definitions—are a small portion of the prison population. No-one sentenced under the provisions we propose in this Bill will become a custodial problem, in the sense of creating an additional accommodation problem, for some time into the future. No-one sentenced under the provisions of this Bill will serve less than five years, giving the Government of the day, and indeed future Governments, considerable time to address the issues of adequate resources and management of additional supervision.

The general resourcing of offender programs and supervision of offenders whilst on parole is something Government must continue to address quite separate to this legislation. It is an indictment on the management ability of any Government if it cannot forward budget for between five and 10 years.

Existing rules for serious violent offenders require that these people serve at least 80% of their sentence behind bars. This Bill mandates only the additional 20%—the final and, may I say, deserved one-fifth of their penalty.

This Bill will not create chaos in the prison system tomorrow, or indeed ever, if sensible forward planning is undertaken. It is the principal task of the Government of the day to engage in sensible forward planning. Resources and funding are issues for the Government of the day. The community would be justifiably outraged if any Government chose to discount prison sentences in the interests of budget savings. That is not an option for any side of politics. The safety of our community and the rights of victims are too fundamental, just as it is the right of people to expect that a Government will deliver natural justice. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Foley, adjourned.

WORKPLACE RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 26 August (see p. 1962).

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (11.59 a.m.), continuing: The Beattie Government does not care about small business in this State; it wants to reinstate Labor's discredited and unfair dismissal laws for small business. Those moves alone will cost jobs. Going "back to the future" simply contradicts the notion that the Labor Government is trying to create jobs.

Under the former coalition Government, Queensland achieved the best job creation record of all States and it was tipped to lead Australia in economic growth for the next five years. Alas, that opportunity is no longer available to this great State, because the Beattie Labor Government is determined to turn back the clock and ruin that enormously positive prospect in its determination to dismantle the very framework that would create jobs. For the many reasons that I have outlined, I strenuously urge honourable members to oppose the Government's Workplace Relations Amendment Bill 1998.

Before concluding my speech, I wish to reiterate that the sugar industry, which operates seven days a week, makes great use of flexible workplace arrangements—something it has been doing for some time. The flexibility in that industry—for example, in the milling and also the cane growing and harvesting sectors—improves the employment prospects of a lot of people in regional areas. For example, contracted haul-out operators are required to work odd hours and sometimes have to start at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to deliver bins of cane to mill sidings. The flexible working arrangements arrived at by agreement between the owners and the people working for them mean that cane is able to be delivered into sidings without a great deal of difficulty. We are finding that those people who

wish to work certain hours during the day and at night-time are able to be accommodated because of the flexibility provided by the system. For example, some people might hold down two jobs. They might start one early in the morning and the other later in the day. The flexibility that allows them to do that is inherent in the awards.

Working arrangements can be agreed to whereby there is no impact on the returns to employees. Flexibility in the workplace has always been necessary in rural industry. However, under QWAs that flexibility is set in concrete. Right across rural industries we are finding that the provision of flexibility has enhanced the understanding between employees and employers, and greater numbers of people are able to be employed in rural industries. That is the best way to go. Unfortunately, if we return to the way things were before, the employment prospects of people in rural areas across Queensland will be impacted severely. I am not speaking so much about organised workplaces but more so about those workplaces where there are two to five people and where flexible arrangements have been reached by agreement. I urge all members to oppose this Bill.

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (12.04 p.m.): Today I am delighted to speak on the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill and to emphasise its two central components: the retention of a relevant and up-to-date award system, rather than restricting our industrial relations system to 20 allowable matters; and the removal of QWAs from the industrial relations fabric of this State.

The previous Government's industrial relations policy mirrored the Howard Government's draconian anti-worker policies. The former Minister had a "me too" attitude; if the Federal Minister jumped, he jumped, too. Today we need to acknowledge the basic philosophical differences between the Government and the coalition on these matters. Our philosophy is very much encapsulated in this Bill today. The Liberal/National Parties' philosophy is against workers' rights. It has a bias towards employers and big business rather than employees. It has a hatred of unions and anyone who advocates for a better go for workers.

Before entering Parliament I spent two years as the president of the James Cook University National Tertiary Education Branch. In that work I had first-hand knowledge at that workplace level of how hard workers have to fight for their rights, especially against the onslaught of the anti-worker legislation brought into play in this House over the past two years and also at the Federal Government level. We can reflect also on two disgraceful attacks on Queensland workers during the term of the previous coalition Government. The first one I refer to is the attack on workers' rights through the emasculation of the Queensland workers compensation scheme. That was the most disgraceful attack on workers in the history of this Parliament.

I was the convenor of the Townsville Workers Rights Coalition, and I fought strongly against this repugnant attack on workers at the time. In common with other workers' rights coalition groups, we campaigned in marginal seats, including the seat of Mundingburra. The former member for Mundingburra, Frank Tanti, ignored this attack on workers compensation, I believe at his peril.

In the Parliament and in the community the former Minister for Industrial Relations pats himself on the head as he lauds and skites about how he successfully took away the rights of Queensland workers—the rights to a fair and equitable workers compensation scheme and industrial relations system. I find it amazing that in my short time in this Chamber no former coalition Ministers have been willing to admit that any of their policies were unpopular. They ignore the fact that they lost 12 seats at the recent State election, both in metropolitan Queensland and, of course, in rural, remote and regional Queensland. The industrial relations agenda of the coalition has been anti-worker, anti-family and unfairly biased towards business and employer groups. It is anti the battler, in favour of big business, against individuals and it smacks of the coalition's close association with the top end of town.

The other disgraceful attack on workers and their rights under Mr Reith's and former Minister Santo Santoro's industrial relations regime was the MUA/Patrick's dispute. When I visited Townsville's port, I was ashamed to see the Patrick security guards and dogs locking out the workers. That action was not only un-Australian but also strongly supported by coalition Governments at a State and Federal level. It was also an attack on workers whose productivity and efficiency was acclaimed by management. As the former chairman of the Townsville Port Authority between 1990 and 1996, I was aware that the port authority which had been targeted had increased its trade throughput by 100% in that time, with about $300m worth of development attracted to the port. That un-Australian attack on workers epitomises the blind philosophy of the Liberal and National Parties.

Another major attack on workers and those on static incomes is the proposed introduction of a goods and services tax. The Liberal and National Parties want not only to disadvantage workers with draconian industrial relations measures but also to further erode their standard of living. I wish to elaborate on some of the real inequities and disadvantages that the GST will impose on people living in regional and remote Queensland. It is hard to overstate the disadvantages and disincentives that a goods and services tax would introduce for people living in regional and remote Queensland.

For my constituents in the north, the inequities and overall negative impact will be felt very keenly in myriad ways, so much so that it is clear that Mr Howard's advisers have little concept of life beyond the metropolitan fringe. In fact, the inequities of the GST in regional Queensland parallel the inequities in the present IR laws, as they impact more greatly on rural and regional areas, where 51% to 52% of workers are covered solely by awards—something which highlights the need for a strong and viable awards system.

Some years ago a certain Australian historian made his name with a book called the Tyranny of Distance. Under the Prime Minister's GST, the tyranny of distance will take on a whole new meaning. It will feel more like persecution. Why? Because north Queenslanders depend more heavily on the transportation of goods than does the rest of Australia. Freight is a very large component in the cost structure of the north Queensland economy. We are one of Australia's fastest developing regions, yet our development is heavily reliant on the importation of the essential materials of life, such as food, clothing, building materials and vehicle components, from Australia's metropolitan centres many thousands of kilometres away. There is the rub. Because transportation is a service, it will attract the 10% GST. Add that to the cost of the product itself, which will also attract a GST, and honourable members will start to get the picture. From our point of view, this is a horror story.

Of course, the double whammy will also affect our own competitiveness. A GST will be imposed on every product that leaves north Queensland. Every time our tomatoes go from Bowen to the Rocklea markets or our exotic fruits leave the tablelands bound for the Melbourne markets, a hefty new cost component will have to be factored into the business transaction. So the inequities for north Queensland growers will be compounded. Because they do not live close to their principal markets, they will in effect experience a huge disincentive in that they will be paying so much GST on freight. Clearly, if there is one country in the world in which a GST is not suitable, it is Australia. The fact that nobody has ever considered the tyranny of distance when analysing the GST just goes to show how remote Canberra-based politicians and public servants are from the realities of life for people living beyond the Canberra-Sydney-Melbourne triangle.

Residents of regional Queensland already feel under siege, as evidenced by the result of the last election held in this State. They are under siege from the Liberal and National Parties which have imposed their ruthless and unfair industrial laws on them. If the Federal Government thinks it is going to woo over voters in regional Australia with a goods and services tax and an industrial relations neo-Right, anti-worker regime, then for the first time in my life I find myself in part agreeing with Bob Katter Jnr. They have rocks in their head or, to put it in Katter's vernacular, "Howard is a Kamikaze pilot." This head-in-the-sand attitude and sticking to a narrow individualistic "I'm all right, Jack" philosophy is, of course, illustrated again today in the Opposition's attacks on this Bill. It does not care about workers' rights. It does not care about the need for comprehensive awards setting workers' wages and living conditions.

One of north Queensland's major industries is tourism. By its very nature, tourism is a service industry, and a very competitive service industry at that. We are currently fighting a strong but noble battle to compete with tourism operators in South-East Asia. We know that the industrial relations agenda of the coalition impacts heavily on that industry, as does the goods and services tax. If honourable members have checked out the price of a holiday to Bali or Kuala Lumpur lately, they would have found that, with the Asian financial crisis, holiday packages in South-East Asia are going at ridiculous bargain basement prices.

The GST will be the straw that breaks the back of Queensland's second largest industry. Instead of coming to north Queensland to see the Great Barrier Reef and other attractions, holiday makers will fly over us on their way to nearby overseas resorts. In short, the tourism industry, which employs 125,000 Queenslanders, is going to be bashed around the head with an axe, to quote the Premier. Thousands of Queensland jobs will be shed. Everyone living in north Queensland will be worse off because that kind of a hit to an

important industry such as tourism will have all kinds of economic ramifications.

On top of this, the Opposition in this Parliament and the Federal coalition Government want to wind back the awards rights of those 125,000 Queenslanders employed in the tourism industry and to continue an inequitable system of QWAs, which decrease the wages and working conditions of tens of thousands of workers in the tourism industry. In contrast, this Labor Government is committed to the establishment of a modern and progressive system of industrial relations, which promotes stability and economic growth throughout the State. In contrast, this Labor Government strenuously opposes the twin evils of a GST, which will have major ramifications for Queensland workers and their families.

Given these very serious broad-brush problems with a GST, it hurts me to think about the other myriad irritations that this horrific so-called reform will impose on ordinary north Queenslanders. Every time they go to the supermarket, turn on their lights, pick up the phone, send their children on a school excursion or go to the cinema, they will be slugged by the Howard/Costello GST. The inequities will be felt insidiously in every aspect of their everyday life.

Take one example of relevance: community libraries play an important part in the social lives of regional Queenslanders, but they will in effect have a 10% budget cut, resulting in fewer new books. Borrowing a library book is one of the few entertainments left for people struggling to bring up a family—something that the Opposition would know little about—on $25,000 or $30,000 a year. Honourable members should imagine how the GST will bump up telephone and electricity bills coming into the house. As the Premier, Peter Beattie, put it recently, why should the hardworking people of Weipa, Winton and Wooloowin pay 10% more for their electricity and phone service just so that the millionaires of Woollahra can get a tax cut?

It is time that we started to recognise those aspects of our social and legal framework which have worked so well for us in the past. Everyone has change fatigue. The award system has worked well for the majority of Australians for many decades. It has underpinned some of the most dramatic development in the history of the State of Queensland and Australia as a nation. Likewise, we have survived and prospered without a GST. The country with the world's largest and most successful economy, the US, has survived and prospered without a GST.

It is time that we put a halt to the eager-beaver social engineers in Canberra who are keen to dismantle every aspect of our system without due regard for what has worked so well in the past. It is time to put a halt to the eager-beaver social engineers from the past two and a half years of the coalition Government who dismantled the industrial relations system in this State. It is time that we told the change merchants to proceed a little more cautiously. It is very clear that the electorate wants this to be the case. Let us preserve what is right about Australia.

A GST and taxation reform do not necessarily go together. This is a false coupling. It assumes that we cannot reform our taxation system without introducing a GST. That is factually wrong. There is mounting evidence around the world that a GST is not a cure-all or a godsend, but simply an economic tool with as many disadvantages as advantages. Honourable members should just ask the Canadians. It is wrong to suggest that a GST is a necessary component of taxation reform just as it is wrong to suggest that awards must go for the sake of economic growth.

Workplace agreements are not a cure-all or a godsend, just as a GST is not a cure-all or a godsend. We do not need a GST and we do not need QWAs. We have done well without them. Let us halt award stripping for the same reason that we should halt a GST. Both represent enormous change to our economic foundations and social fabric which are unwarranted and, in fact, quite damaging to the Australian way of life. I am simply representing the views of my constituents when I say that most Australians do not buy these false arguments any more. They have change fatigue and, when it comes to tampering with a system that has served us so well in the past, they want the ideologists in Government employ to proceed a lot more cautiously than they have in recent decades.

As for the Canberra duo, who suggest that the cost of a GST will be offset by proposed income tax cuts, who do they think they are kidding? By now just about everyone who can add up has figured out that the sums do not make a fairer system, but a system balanced in favour of the rich. As the Australian's national affairs editor, Mike Steketee, pointed out in that newspaper's weekend edition, the Government's tables exaggerate the benefits to lower income

earners and understate them for those on higher incomes.

A very simple example tells the story. Food takes up a much higher proportion of the budgets of low-income households than it does for high-income households. So a GST on food is a significant impost on families already struggling to meet their budgets. Let us not forget that, in regional areas of Australia such as north Queensland, food costs more anyway because of freight. Factor in a 10% GST on top of that and one starts to see the folly of a GST in this country. The tyranny of distance is not something that existed only in the past. It is a keenly felt reality in the present for many ordinary Australians. The last thing that we need is a GST that actually feeds off that tyranny. The last thing we need is a disastrous tampering with our long-cherished award system with a system of workplace agreements that caters for the top end of town.

For someone with a lifelong interest in welfare issues, it worries me that Steketee and another well regarded commentator, Julian Disney, the President of the International Council on Social Welfare, point out that the so-called tax reforms do little to close income tax loopholes currently enjoyed by the rich. In fact, Disney says that the tax package will encourage greater tax avoidance. As a consequence, he says, the net cost of the tax package would almost certainly be substantially higher than estimated because the reduction in tax avoidance is greatly overstated.

What a horror story! It is bad news for regional Australia. It is bad news for anyone except the wealthy. Is it any wonder that this proposal has been put forward by a Liberal/National Party team in touch with the boardrooms of Sydney and Melbourne but drastically out of touch with the great majority of Australians? The Australian ethos has always emphasised the importance of a fair go. Our very history reinforces the importance of social justice. It is time to obtain a perspective that takes into account the large and small realities of life, as most people know them, but we will need a change of Federal Government to get that into being.

Future historians will look back on this time in Australian history as a time when ordinary Australians have been under siege. Business profits, economic growth and development are only worth pursuing if they serve the overall community. We are now in a period when businesses attempt to convince us that we should perceive these ends for their own sake, forgetting that social justice, equity, health and a clean, wholesome environment are also integral to the wellbeing of Australian society. GSTs, workplace agreements, the winding back of our award system, economic rationalism—these are the catchcries of our times and they all have the potential to undermine the quality of life of ordinary hardworking Australians, the people who have been the backbone of this country despite their cynical treatment at times by big business and its sycophants.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (12.22 p.m.): The speech by the member for Townsville was an indication of how little comment the Labor Party has to make in relation to the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill because he talked about everything but the legislation currently before the House. He threw in a couple of mentions of workplace agreements but his whole argument was based upon other factors and had nothing to do with this legislation.

That brings me to the real thrust of this legislation. The Labor Party tells us how it has changed. It tells us that it has a new policy and new proposals. It tell us how it is New Labor. However, today we see that it is old Labor with the old philosophies—back to the future yet again. Over and over we see this same philosophical view in legislation coming before this House. It is the old Labor view. Nothing has changed at all. Labor is fighting the same old fights. Labor is paying back its financiers.

We are seeing a return to the past—back to the future. Today, the Labor Party is bringing forward legislation to wind back one of the most constructive pieces of legislation that the former National/Liberal coalition brought into this Parliament. It was a flexible piece of legislation designed for the benefit of all Queenslanders. It was designed for Queensland workers, Queensland families, for people seeking jobs and for Queensland businesses which have to grow in order to create the long-term jobs. What we see today is an attempt to return Queensland to the bad old union days. Labor wants to restore the award system as the primary vehicle for determining wages and conditions. Labor wants to put square pegs in round holes, abolish Queensland workplace agreements, remove flexibility and put back the rigidity in the workforce that previously existed. Labor wants to abolish the rights of employers and employees to negotiate wages and conditions specific to individual jobs.

Not only are we seeing a return to the same old philosophy and the same old

arguments, but it is worthwhile noting how little consultation there has been around the State in relation to this legislation. I look at the Explanatory Notes and I see the words "relevant consultation has been undertaken". One could well ask: consultation with whom? The Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been most outspoken about the lack of consultation in relation to this matter. The QCCI believes emphatically that this is not the way for this Government, or any Government, to behave towards the primary industry group in this State. The QCCI is expected to create jobs. We hear a lot about jobs from those opposite. Businesses represent the powerhouse which leads to growth and development in the community. Jobs will not be created if the businesses are not functioning properly. Business is clearly saying that this legislation is not good for jobs.

Small business is now speaking up. In the last few days small business operators have been commenting in media outlets about this situation. I have received correspondence from small business in relation to this matter. We are told how this legislation will detrimentally affect the operations of small business.

As I say, this is a payback to the union financiers. It certainly indicates that New Labor has returned to the past. The Labor Party is putting in a down payment on its debt to the unions. Labor is sitting on the Government benches because of the union movement and today the union movement is receiving its pound of flesh. It is well known that most union members unknowingly contribute a percentage of their union dues to the Labor Party. Union bosses are now demanding their pound of flesh from the Labor Party. This legislation represents a payback to the union bosses.

The Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has already been forced to put his union mates, Bill Ludwig and John Thompson, on the WorkCover Board. That action has not gone down well with business in this State. We all know that the former Government went to great lengths to prop up the WorkCover scheme. We put $35m a year over three years—$105m—into the scheme to bail it out. There were also additional contributions from a range of other people. If that action had not been taken, small business in this State would have been faced with an horrific debt. The former Government inherited that situation from the Goss Labor Government. This legislation represents a continuation of that process.

The Minister for Education has arranged for an industrial advocate from the Queensland Teachers Union to take up residence in Education House. The union bosses are getting their way. No doubt the union bosses will continue to pressure Labor until their demands are met in a number of other areas. This is an ongoing down payment on that debt to the union movement.

As I say, the Bill represents a return to the bad old days. In this legislation the Labor Party wants to expose Queenslanders to some of the worst elements of industrial relations policies of the past. How well we remember those! The abolition of QWAs and the re-emergence of the old award system is not the way for a modern economy to go. A modern competitive economy cannot exist with an archaic centralised industrial relations system.

What will the Premier's new-found friends in Asia think of this legislation? What would any potential investor in Queensland think of this legislation? I am sure the Premier did not mention it on his recent visit to Asia. I bet this was the last thing that the Premier would have mentioned to business people in the countries he visited. Business people are looking forward to flexibility and opportunities in order to grow and create additional jobs. This is one of the reasons why the former Government was able to attract so much business to this State from such institutions as Boeing and other technology companies. The coalition Government managed to give that flexibility and opportunity to the business community. If we are serious about creating jobs and generating growth in the community we need flexibility.

This Bill is an anti-jobs piece of legislation. This legislation is the first real test of the Premier's commitment, or lack of commitment, to Queensland. Queenslanders need a highly competitive workforce to ensure the success of our industries.

The passage of this legislation will put Queensland's industry at a great disadvantage to most other Australian States and many other countries of the world, particularly our near neighbours. The passage of this legislation will encourage jurisdiction hopping from State to Commonwealth awards. That is something else that one needs to take into account. Companies will be encouraged by this legislation to leave the State and set up elsewhere. We know that other States are very keen to attract companies, small businesses and large businesses that operate in this State. No doubt this will give them a great competitive edge to do just that. Of course, it will deter some companies from even considering Queensland as a place in which to

establish their operations. There is no doubt that this legislation will cost Queensland jobs. It will cost Queensland businesses as they move to other States or countries. Under this Labor Government, Queensland will again become a backwater. When one considers economic growth and employment rates in other countries of the world, one finds that this has been brought about by making hard decisions and by having flexibility. Whether it be the United Kingdom, Great Britain, the United States, Asia or wherever, they do have that flexibility.

We have heard a lot of talk and promises from the Labor Party about reducing unemployment to 5%. This legislation will not reduce it; in fact, the reverse will be the case. I notice that Labor's 5% unemployment promise drifted out from 5% over one year to 5% over three years and then 5% over five years. It is a bit like Labor's commitment that no child would be living in poverty, which I think was delivered in 1990. A similar situation applies in this case.

The introduction of the Workplace Relations Act by the coalition Government comprehensively overhauled Queensland industrial relations laws and sought to break the shackles that the union bosses had placed on jobs growth in this State. The Act ensured that Queensland legislation complemented that introduced by the Commonwealth. There was a devolution from a centralised awards system into a far more flexible system than we had previously.

The Workplace Relations Act was well received in the community. Many groups and commentators commended the coalition for its industrial relations reforms. Organisations such as the MTIA, which is not always favourable towards this side of the Parliament, was in favour of it. The secretary of that organisation said—

> "... we've got greater capacity to negotiate agreements with employees. Previously you couldn't register a workplace agreement without having a union party to it."

On 23 October 1996, an editorial in the Courier-Mail, which is certainly not noted for supporting this side of the Chamber, stated—

> "Business has welcomed the plans, especially the freeing up of the labour market.
>
> Generally, the additional rights afforded to workers and employers in the proposals are to be applauded.
>
> Everything that can be done to give employers the ability to strike bargains that suit their own conditions and aspirations has our full support."

The coalition was commended for the way in which it introduced those reforms and the even-handed manner in which it sought to consult stakeholders. I have already highlighted that that has not occurred in this particular case. It is interesting to note that the Explanatory Notes state that relevant consultation has been undertaken under that particular section. It is quite clear that most of the stakeholders and business groups involved have not been consulted at all, and we have heard nothing to the contrary from the Minister in that regard.

I believe that the success of the Workplace Relations Act speaks for itself. This was demonstrated clearly by the impressive job creation record of the coalition. It certainly assisted in that regard. The 1998-99 Budget, which was introduced into the Parliament by the former Treasurer, noted that since the coalition had come to power some 91,000 jobs had been created in two years. Some 40% of all jobs created in Australia during 1997-98 were created in Queensland. It is pertinent to keep in mind that we were leading the country; we were the powerhouse for job creation and job growth in this country.

Annual employment growth as at April 1998 was 4.1%—more than double the national average of 1.8%. Unemployment under Labor soared as high as 11.1%. The coalition recorded unemployment rates of 8% to 8.5%. This is something of which we are proud. All members on this side of the Chamber want to ensure that there is adequate growth in the community. If we build up growth and job opportunities, we will certainly reduce the unemployment rate. Also under the coalition, strike rates fell to their lowest levels. In 1997, 92,000 days were lost due to strike action in this State whereas, under Labor, strike rates were as high as 182,700 days lost per annum. Labor claims to be the worker's friend, but it is not the worker's friend at all—far from it. The former coalition Government was creating jobs, keeping down the strike rates and making sure that people were meaningfully employed and that the breadwinners were able to support their families.

Labor's policies and the record of the Goss Government need to be considered. Under that Government, Queensland's unemployment rate soared to 11% and the Queensland economy virtually ground to a halt. States such as Victoria passed our rate of economic growth and created far more jobs

than were created in Queensland. Victoria became a basket case under Labor and nearly went bankrupt. Under the coalition Government in that State, jobs and economic growth took off. The coalition Government in this State managed to overtake the Victorian economy and, once again, put Queensland in the situation where it was the leading State of the nation—not the mediocre position that we held under the former Goss Labor Government. We were leading the nation. I believe that that is the position which we must ensure that we retain. However, we will not retain it with this type of negative legislation which was introduced into this Parliament by the Labor Government, because it is anti-jobs, anti-business and anti-families.

Labor is totally unrepentant for its past failures. No-one from the Labor Party is prepared to admit that it failed Queensland during the Goss years. The Beattie Cabinet contains many of the same old faces with the same old union backgrounds. Unions do not create jobs. In many cases they do not even represent the workers. We must encourage those people in the community who create jobs. The Government does not seem to understand the unions' position; they simply do not create jobs in the community. The Government must realise that unions represent a decreasing proportion of the Queensland work force and, in many cases, are seen by workers to be irrelevant. This Bill shows that the Government wants to restore the power of unions to remove workplace flexibility and freedom of choice. That is exactly what this legislation does.

Premier Beattie cannot be considered to be serious about job creation if he continues with this legislation. It is all very well for him to travel to Asia and other places to promote Queensland, but when trying to attract business to this State, one of the first and fundamental issues raised by businesspeople relates to the labour market and the flexibility or the rigidity of that particular market. Only the private sector can create long-term, meaningful jobs. The private sector can create those jobs only if business is allowed to operate efficiently and to flourish. Efficiency is as much a benefit to employers as it is to employees; both parties benefit.

The Queensland workplace agreements—QWAs—which were put in place by the former Government are agreements between individual employers and employees. The award system was not removed, nor was the right of workers and employers to negotiate a collective agreement. Under the negotiations for QWAs, workers can be represented by a bargaining agent: a union, a friend, an adviser, a committee of employees or whatever. That is something that the Minister likes to brush aside and gloss over. He does not like to give credence or credibility to that. He continually talks about how QWAs disadvantaged the workers. Of course, they had to pass the no disadvantage test, which was included in the legislation by the member for Clayfield. That they had to pass those particular tests has been overlooked.

QWAs have to be approved by the Enterprise Commissioner to ensure that the employees are not disadvantaged in relation to their employment conditions. That is a very important aspect of QWA agreements. If an agreement does not pass the no disadvantage test but the commission is satisfied that it would not be contrary to the public interest, it can be approved.

I turn now to the benefits of QWAs. I mentioned that QWAs provide flexibility in the labour market. A specific package of wages and conditions can be attached to QWAs. QWAs recognise that individual workers and workplaces have varying needs that cannot be accommodated within the one-size-fits-all award system. Again, that is an aspect that seems to have been overlooked in discussions about encouraging growth and development and encouraging businesses wherever they might be to come to this great State of ours. QWAs are not simply a mechanism to increase wages. Labor and unions do not understand that particular point. In the main, QWAs are used to increase flexibility in the workplace for the mutual benefit of the employee and the employer.

The Minister has argued that the failure of QWAs is evident in the low take-up rate. Of course, the Labor Party's policy prior to the State election was to abolish QWAs. Understandably, Queensland business was reluctant to use the QWAs until the uncertainty of the election was removed. If the coalition were still in Government, there is no doubt that a greater number of employees and employers would have moved to abandon their wait-and-see attitude to this innovation. Unions are threatened by the Workplace Relations Act. The main motivation behind this Labor Bill is that the unions are threatened by QWAs. The main Labor argument has always been that the union bosses feel threatened. The unions fear that the devolution of a centralised wage fixing system will diminish their ability to exert influence and attract members. The union bosses know that if the workers have a right to negotiate without them, they probably will, as more and more of them

have been doing. In the past, unions could interfere in non-union workplaces and they survived on other practices such as the closed shop and preference clauses. Unions no longer represent the majority of Australian workers.

Time expired.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (12.42 p.m.): When the coalition Government pushed Queensland workplace agreements on the industrial community in March last year, it promised innovation, flexibility and benefits to both employers and employees, yet nothing could be further from the truth. The coalition's praise for QWAs in this debate denies reality. Like some Alices in Wonderland through some distorted looking glass, they deny that their legislation has been a failure. QWAs are individual agreements that are characterised by secrecy. Unlike awards and collective agreements, QWAs are not subject to public scrutiny. There are heavy penalties for disclosure, which, understandably, gives rise to suspicion. Unlike QWAs, Labor's opposition to those agreements and its intention to remove them from the legislation has never been a secret.

Removing QWAs from the current legislation is not a backward step as the coalition would have us believe. It is a necessary step if there is to be fairness in the system. Like VEAs before them, QWAs have not delivered what was promised. QWAs were flawed in their foundation. They were a bad experiment that could never have been expected to succeed. The previous Government refused to recognise that. Even now, the former Minister, the honourable member for Clayfield, still asks this House to give QWAs more time. However, the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations' report on QWAs is damning in its findings, and the coalition must concede that.

This report reveals that employees covered by QWAs have suffered substantial erosion of their entitlements. For example, 38.7% of QWAs increased the ordinary weekly hours, 53% increased the span of hours and 42.5% removed overtime. This focus on increasing the number of hours that can be worked consecutively without appropriate compensation has detrimental consequences. Not only might it lead to decreased worker morale, there are possible workplace health and safety issues that could arise. The secrecy of QWAs can impact detrimentally on parties to the agreement in a number of other ways. Most obviously, QWAs can create inferior wages and conditions of employment, particularly for those most vulnerable in the community. For example, employees working on a casual or part-time basis, apprentices, trainees and young job seekers are particularly vulnerable as they are likely to have little bargaining power.

The coalition would have us believe the equation that individual contracts equals freedom of choice. Nonsense! What choice does an unemployed person have when offered a job contingent on the signing of a pro forma QWA, a QWA that removes overtime provisions, increases hours of work or removes allowances while giving little or no increase in the rate of pay? The coalition legislated that removal of choice in the Workplace Relations Act 1997. This is not mere supposition; it is fact as evidenced by the report previously referred to. As my Federal colleague the Honourable Bob McMullan recently observed, employees in the expanding retail and service sectors face demands to work longer and more flexible hours. That is causing excessive tiredness and social alienation and is interfering with family routines. For low-paid employees forced onto individual contracts of employment with no realistic opportunity for a union to represent them, there are grave risks of exploitation and perpetual poverty traps. This Government's commitment to reducing Queensland's unemployment rate to 5% is real. However, we refuse to sacrifice the human element of employment in order to achieve this goal at the expense of workers' entitlements and employment conditions.

QWAs are detrimental to both employees and employers. They directly promote division and unhealthy competition between employees in the workplace. The seeds of suspicion and mistrust are sown in the minds of workers who have secret individual agreements. It is no surprise that he or she wonders: is that employee being paid the same amount as I am? Hidden and different conditions and entitlements in a workplace lead to unhappiness, confrontation and disputation, not to harmony, productivity and fair pay and conditions. The coalition's Taylorist view that workers are simply a dispensable commodity is evidenced by the underlying design of QWAs, that is, unscrupulous employers have been given the opportunity to force unfair conditions and rates of pay on employees desperate for employment. If one employee does not agree to the terms of the QWA, then another who really wants the job will. That is an unfortunate reality in our current environment of competition, unemployment

and job insecurity. It is also unacceptable. Employees and prospective employees have lives, families and rights. They deserve to be valued and treated decently. It is not just employees; this system is also unfair to decent employers who have to compete with the unscrupulous ones.

Furthermore, QWAs interrupt normal working conditions. QWAs are designed to lock an employee into the terms and conditions of the agreement for the life of the agreement. That is problematic on two fronts. Firstly, it suggests a shaky tenure, a temporary appointment, where employees may not feel confident in committing themselves to a long-term goal, such as buying a house. There is no guarantee that an employee will be offered the same conditions when the QWA expires. That is unlike the award system, which has nothing to hide and places no use-by date on entitlements. Workers can get on with their lives. Secondly, by being bound to the rates of pay and conditions of a QWA for the life of the agreement, an employee could find himself or herself in a situation of winning a higher position and not being remunerated accordingly. That is in direct opposition to awards and collective agreements, which provide for different classification levels and progressive pay scales.

Another potential problem with QWAs is that a situation may exist in which there are a number of employees with the same capabilities, doing the same job, all with different QWAs containing different conditions and rates of pay. Additionally, because a QWA is a secret and approved on an agreement-by-agreement basis, it is open to employers to negotiate inequitable agreements among employees in the workplace. Stemming from this is the possibility that an employer could discriminate on the basis of sex, race or other attributes under the guise of making a tailored, individual agreement and no-one would ever be the wiser. So much for equal pay for equal work in a non-discriminatory workplace!

As to the issue of flexibility and contrary to the impressions of the honourable member for Indooroopilly, who in his rambling, rose-coloured remembrances of his Government's time made mention of small business, consultations with employers in Cairns as well as my own experience as a small business employer made it clear that although employers want flexibility, they prefer not to negotiate secret deals one by one with each employee and they prefer not to use up precious time negotiating one by one with each employee. Instead, they prefer options such as varying the award or making a collective enterprise agreement.

It is also worth highlighting the potential cost to parties in negotiating a QWA. The legislation provides that a bargaining agent can represent either party. It is reasonable to suggest that if a solicitor or an industrial advocate were representing one party, the other party would also wish to seek representation—if, of course, he or she were in a financial position to do so. This is another hidden inequity. What chance does a person, who badly wants a job, have of being able to afford a solicitor or industrial advocate to negotiate on his or her behalf. Next to none!

Furthermore, the cost to large employers is increased as they try to negotiate, implement and administer a number of individual agreements. Additionally, every time a new employee is engaged or an existing QWA expires, a new agreement has to be negotiated and put through the lengthy filing and approval process. Compare that to collective awards and agreements that apply to the whole workplace and do not need to be altered as employees come and go.

QWAs or any other form of secret individual agreement are not the solution to providing innovation, flexibility and fairness in Queensland workplaces. An open, collective system of awards and agreements is. This is not to deny that individual contracts of employment exist and have always existed but they are exactly that—common law contracts for employees such as those in management positions who fall outside the realm of the award system and who have much more equal bargaining power with their employers.

Contrary to what the previous Government led people to believe, QWAs are not a form of deregulation of the labour market; they are simply another form of regulating employment and wages—a form that regulates away from the accepted benchmarks of decency, fairness and equity. Unlike awards and collective agreements that can be publicly scrutinised and evaluated, QWAs regulate in private and are shrouded in secrecy. This secrecy has created the opportunity for the exploitation of employees by undermining their wages and working conditions. QWAs do not honour private arrangements between individuals but hide the fact that these arrangements are ripping people off and are cutting real wages and conditions. Employers who are unscrupulous must not be given the chance to exploit employees by taking away their rights and opportunity to have a say.

Job insecurity is a fact of life. Workers are unsure whether they will have their job next week, let alone in a year's time. Many workers are struggling to get by to feed their families decent meals or to pay their rent or mortgage. In this sort of environment, QWAs are resigning these workers to lives of poverty, insecurity and despair. Consequently, the swift removal of QWAs from the industrial relations system is essential for the welfare of Queensland workers.

I listened to yesterday's diatribe against unionism by the honourable member for Surfers Paradise and former Premier, and I was dismayed—that is, until he referred to us as "Braddy's bunch". I say to him that I am proud to be on the side of honest, open, stable employment. In that way, I am proud to be one of "Braddy's bunch". I congratulate the Minister on introducing this legislation that is now before the House.

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (12.54 p.m.): On 26 November 1996 we heralded an exciting new era in Queensland industrial relations for it was the day on which the former Minister for Industrial Relations, the honourable member for Clayfield, Santo Santoro, introduced the Workplace Relations Bill, which established the framework of Queensland to compete and thrive into the 21st century. In introducing the Bill, the Minister stated—

> "We must take the necessary steps to meet the economic and workplace challenges of the future. Queensland's coalition Government is committed to providing the State's businesses, particularly small businesses, with the best industrial relations system possible to meet the economic challenges of the future."

Today we are debating amendments to the Act which firmly turn back the clock and set Queensland's industrial relations regime firmly in the hands of the union movement. The essential package of the coalition Government's industrial relations reforms, that is, choice of agreement-making options, flexibility in the workplace, freedom of association and enterprise focus have all been removed. It is a smack in the face for business in this State.

The disadvantages of the Labor Government amendments are many. The amendment Bill is anti-jobs. It will discourage job creation and it will pose a threat to existing jobs because it is anti-business. It will encourage jurisdiction hopping to Federal awards and, therefore, make industrial relations more expensive and bureaucratic for Queensland business. It is a back-to-the-future approach because it reverts back to an emphasis on awards—a one-size-fits-all approach rather than an enterprise-based approach.

The motivational factors behind the Labor Government's amendments is union domination of the Labor Party, union demands of the Labor Party for payback and union determination to put themselves back into every agreement-making option in Queensland workplace agreements that could be entered into without union involvement. It is a winner takes all attitude or, as John Thompson, the Queensland Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions stated, "To the victors the spoils."

The Workplace Relations Amendment Bill is not only anti-jobs and anti-business but also anti-economic growth. In understanding why the amendments should be opposed strenuously, honourable members need to revisit the original intention of the favourably accepted Workplace Relations Act. The Workplace Relations Act encouraged more harmonious relations between employers and employees by stressing cooperation and common goals rather than conflict. The Workplace Relations Act enabled people to work more productively while enjoying greater job satisfaction and higher standards of living. The Workplace Relations Act provided the flexibility that business required to be efficient and innovative in order to respond effectively to changing customer demands and increased competition. The Workplace Relations Act ensured genuine safety net protection and provided a fair go all round, underpinning greater flexibility for employers and employees alike. The Workplace Relations Act promoted sustainable economic growth, job and training opportunities and national and international competitiveness. Queensland workers had the freedom to choose whether or not to join a union. Compulsory unionism is anti-democratic, anti-Australian and strikes at the heart of the basic freedoms and rights of every Australian worker.

The industrial relations reforms introduced by the Borbidge coalition Government reduced industrial disputation to a record low. Prior to the introduction of the Workplace Relations Act, Queensland's strike rate was the highest in Australia. Queensland was regarded as the strike capital of Australia. In September 1996, the Queensland figure for working days lost per 1,000 employees to the 12 months ended was higher than the Australian strike rate: Queensland was 167 days per 1,000 days and

Australia was 138 days per 1,000 days. During the 12 months prior to that, industrial action cost Queensland an estimated $7.5m in lost wages for workers and $20m in lost production.

Clearly, reckless industrial action by the trade union movement damages Queensland's economy and Queensland's ability to create employment. Employees and employers alike are looking for stability and good industrial relations law as the two essential ingredients for business confidence and economic growth.

In the past, Labor's industrial relations laws failed and will fail again in the future to seriously tackle the issue of unemployment, which steadily worsened during the past 10 years of Labor Government across Australia. The coalition Government's industrial relations reforms were fair in that they supported individual rights and freedom of choice while at the same time protected those most vulnerable in the work force. The coalition Government's consultative approach provided an arena of goodwill and a spirit of cooperation. A feature of the coalition's industrial relations policies was the extensive consultation process conducted under the direction of the former Minister for Industrial Relations, the Honourable Santo Santoro. That consultation program is in marked contrast to the attitude and actions of the Labor Government.

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

Mr DAVIDSON: By now it must be plain to the Government that there is immense unease in the community about plans to return Queensland to the failures of the past in the area of workplace relations. Protests have been heard from business leaders, from business and industrial associations and from the media in commentaries about the bad effect ending access to Queensland workplace agreements would have on the State's working environment. It is of interest, I believe, that these criticisms are coming from all levels—not just from the top.

The Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations should, even at this late hour, take proper note of the fact that what he proposes is neither in the greater interest of Queensland nor to the advantage of Queenslanders—particularly not those Queenslanders who desire the flexibility and independence of action implied by and delivered by the QWA system put in place by the coalition in Government.

The Courier-Mail today carries an editorial comment that I think puts the whole show into perspective. The House should have the benefit of hearing what it says. The comment is headed "Flexible agreements create real jobs". That is what workplace relations policy should be all about. The editorial states—

> "It is understandable that trade unions will fight to keep their privileged position in society, especially if it means maintaining a steady source of income for the industrial organisations. But it is fundamentally abhorrent for unionists to argue they know best when it comes to worker conditions. Using a State Government report, trade unions have mounted a vociferous attack on Queensland Workplace Agreements, which were introduced at the beginning of 1997. The unions say that very few workers use QWAs and they provide no real benefits for workers. Queensland ACTU secretary John Thompson criticises the agreements because they allowed one worker to cash out overtime up to a certain amount of hours worked.
>
> The problem with the organised labour argument is that it does not tell the full story and is disingenuous. Union leaders do not explain they want control of awards so they can maintain and protect their membership base, ensuring an income stream to support their own generous salaries. Also, unionists do not explain that QWAs deliver flexibility to workers so that hours and conditions can be tailored to suit individual needs."

The commentary notes that this is a pro-family policy that provides not just flexible conditions but also funds to support family needs. It goes on to state—

> "QWAs are also subject to a 'no disadvantage test' which ensures that employers can not use the agreements to reduce conditions—a test that is backed by Industrial Relations Commission scrutiny. If an award provides better conditions than those proposed in a QWA, the employer is under an obligation to make up the difference.
>
> The simple fact is, unions have no business dictating to workers what is good for them. Many workers do not need generous sick leave or other typical award conditions and would much prefer to cash out such benefits to meet today's needs. What the unions are proposing is nanny-statism at its patronising arrogant worst. The demands of the global economy

> require people to be more productive and that can only come about with a flexible work force.
>
> A look at the economic growth in the United States and Britain compared with France and Italy demonstrates the tangible benefits from freeing up the labour market and allowing employees to work smarter and better. In France and Italy, unemployment is stuck at 11.8 and 12 percent respectively while Britain has a jobless rate of 6.2 percent and in the US it is 4.5 percent. If the Beattie Government really is 'obsessed' about jobs, keeping the kind of flexibility provided by QWAs should take priority over looking after their union mates."

That is the view of the Courier-Mail. It is a considered, sensible and pro-Queensland view. It is a view that, as the editorial itself suggests, should carry more weight with those opposite, who have declared themselves obsessed with employment. I agree that they should be obsessed more with employment than with doing deals with their union mates to feather their own privileged nests.

There are a number of reasons I oppose these amendments. My main opposition to this legislation stems from union involvement with the Labor Party and its interference in the workplace. The coalition's legislation provided individuals and employees the opportunity of negotiating and entering into an agreement without union interference.

People involved in QWAs, both employers and employees, want freedom of choice. Both groups want the ability to negotiate workplace agreements. Both small and big business want the ability to negotiate suitable workplace agreements. Individuals want the freedom to negotiate the best outcomes for themselves in the workplace.

The reforms of my coalition colleague the member for Clayfield were welcomed by business and employees who had taken the opportunity to become involved in Queensland workplace agreements. People want flexibility in their working lives, to suit both their family lives and their day-to-day requirements. At a time of great change in our society, when many people consider having a job a privilege, it is workplace flexibility that will allow employers and employees to agree to work together.

In the real world today, as our industries and businesses diversify to accommodate the needs of their markets and customers, we should all accept that the workplace of many people has become a seven-day, 24-hour employment place. Long gone are the Monday to Friday eight-hour days for employees. One only has to look at the tourism industry in this State to appreciate that employment opportunities are 24 hours a day, seven days per week. The accommodation sector of the tourism industry is a classic example. Many restaurants, bistros and cafes now open by serving breakfast at 6.30 a.m. and close after serving dinner, in many cases after midnight. Hotels, bars and nightclubs in many cases are operating up to 20 hours per day. For business in the tourism industry to grow and create economic benefit through employment, employers need flexibility in their workplace agreements to ensure that the cost of providing the service is not outweighed by industrial relations practices that price their goods and services out of business.

Over the last few months we have all heard the Premier talk about his target of 5% unemployment. The real challenge this Labor Government now faces is the reduction of unemployment. Every time we receive the monthly unemployment figures, we will be concerned about increases. Increases in unemployment are a real concern not just to businesspeople in Queensland but also to all Queenslanders seeking employment.

I believe the real challenge is to keep economic growth in this State at the levels the coalition Government achieved in the two and a bit years it was in power. That was not done with union involvement; that was done by promoting Queensland as a place where all people could do business. It was done by attracting business to Queensland. Business was attracted to Queensland by the sheer fact that it had confidence in the industrial relations practices in this State. Under workplace agreements, businesses could develop and grow. I believe that the Labor Government, and particularly this Minister, is now putting at great risk the enormous growth we achieved and the economic benefit many Queenslanders have felt over the last couple of years by introducing these amendments to the industrial relations legislation of this State.

I believe that the Labor Government and Queensland workplaces will once again become dominated by trade unions. I believe that individuals who have recently had the luxury to negotiate workplace agreements with their employers will once again be threatened with the loss of their jobs or inflexibility in their working lives. As a small businessperson for 20 years before coming into Parliament, I had in place over-award arrangements with my staff, who in many cases worked 10 and 12 hours a day seven days a week. Those were

arrangements that I made with my staff. I had never had a complaint from any of my staff about either the rates of pay they received or the hours they worked. Many small businesspeople right across this State and country have those sorts of arrangements in place with their employees.

It is a privilege for employers to be able negotiate working arrangements with their part-time, casual or full-time employees. It is the ability of employers to negotiate with employees that leads to extra hours of casual work being created. For example, many people in our community benefit from being able to work in a small business for either three, four, ten or more hours per week. We need that flexibility. We do not need union domination of the workplace. We do not need a Government legislating against arrangements that have been in place for, as I said from my experience, 20 years. Many other businesspeople have enjoyed having similar working arrangements with their staff.

If the Government is fair dinkum about reducing unemployment, giving the business sector confidence, growing the economy in Queensland and attracting new business and investment in this State, it will rue the day that it brought these amendments into the House. One of the major considerations of anyone investing in a business, be it a new business investment or an expansion of an existing business, is the wages paid at the end of the day. Most employers and businesses across our State require flexible workplace arrangements with their staff. We should all appreciate that there has been an enormous investment in the manufacturing industry. Many companies and individuals are investing in technology. Because they have flexibility in their workplaces, those manufacturers are able to compete on the world stage. If we are to continue to expect those businesses to invest in technology and create jobs, they obviously need a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day working week and the flexibility to be able to make arrangements that suit both the employer and employee.

Over the next six months I will be very keen to see the employment figures as they come to hand. I believe that members opposite will be very embarrassed by the fact that business confidence will decline and employment opportunities will not be realised because of this type of legislation. They will be embarrassed by the ever-increasing number of unemployed in this State.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (2.43 p.m.): One of the fundamental differences between the conservatives and the Labor Party has always centred on our approaches to people in the work force and the trade union movement in general. I have been in this Parliament for nearly six years. Over those six years the rhetoric from the conservatives has never changed. We are always hearing that it is the workers' fault, that the economy is bad because it is the workers' fault.

Mr Schwarten: Or the unions.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, or it is because of the unions. It is never because of business practices or management decisions; it is always the workers' fault.

Mr Lucas: Or Heiner.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, or it is Heiner's fault.

Mr Schwarten: That's why the Tories exist.

Mr NUTTALL: That is right. It is always the workers' fault.

The previous speaker said that we are damaging the economy by changing this legislation. I will tell the House who has damaged the economy of this State more than anyone. It was the political party opposite whose decision on preferences at the last State election is still damaging the economy of this State. Members opposite have a lot to answer for. They should not blame the workers of this State for the bad decisions made by their political party.

QWAs are nothing other than a tool to exploit workers. That is all they have ever been. Over the past couple of days in this Chamber the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has given numerous examples of the way in which QWAs exploited workers. Today in this debate I challenge the conservative side of politics to show us half a dozen agreements that have resulted in workers being better off than they were under an awards system. Today we read an article in the Courier-Mail about how wonderful QWAs are. How ironic is that? We are in the middle of debating the workplace relations legislation and today we read only one article about one employee who is happy with his QWA.

Mr Santoro: We've given you more than that.

Mr NUTTALL: The member should wait his turn; I am coming to him.

A number of Government speakers in this debate have outlined the salient points about the disadvantages of QWAs in Queensland and how they have been used time and time

again to reduce the conditions of employment of workers. We saw from the former Minister an ideologically driven attack on not only workers but also the trade union movement.

Mr Lucas: You have got to be fair on him. He is the only one in the Liberal Party who has even got an ideology. At least he's got one!

Mr NUTTALL: The member for Lytton is right. The former Minister never listens to anyone. He has his own ideas, and that is it.

The only safe system to protect workers is the awards system and the Industrial Relations Commission. That fact is proved by the history of this country. When the Minister introduced the Bill, he said that its intent was to maintain the awards system as the primary vehicle for determining wages and employment conditions. That is what the awards system is about. The previous speaker spoke about the inflexibility of the awards system. That is simply not the case. He gave examples of people in hotels, shops and the tourism industry working long hours. Those industries have been around for many decades. Employees in those industries have been able to sit down with their employers and negotiate flexibility in those workplaces. There is nothing in the awards system that will not allow the flexibility that employers seek. If QWAs were such great trailblazers breaking new horizons and creating employment, why is it that the major employer groups did not embark on the process of implementing QWAs? It was because they believe, as we do, that it is far easier and better to negotiate with an organised work force. The trade union movement does not exist to give employers a hard time, it exists to protect the rights of workers. If employers are good employers, they have nothing at all to fear from the awards system.

Let us look at the legacy of the former Minister for Industrial Relations. The honourable member for Clayfield has a track record of leaving carnage wherever he goes. We have only to look at his political party and the damage that he has caused within it. We are grateful to the honourable member for Clayfield; we believe he is one of our greatest assets. His behaviour both inside and outside this Parliament does nothing other than benefit the Labor Party. We are deeply appreciative of that.

The man in the Liberal Party who is the number-cruncher cannot get even four votes from his own parliamentary wing to lead his own party. From this former Minister we saw a break in the conventions of industrial relations. We saw one of the greatest ironies and one of the greatest travesties of justice when Commissioner Dempsey's term was due to be renewed. For the first time in the history of this State, a Minister refused to follow convention and refused to renew the term of that Industrial Relations Commissioner.

Mr Lucas: Tore up the convention.

Mr NUTTALL: He tore up the convention despite the fact that that commissioner was held in high regard by both employer and employee groups within this State. Yet this Minister through blind ideology tore up convention and refused to renew the contract of that Industrial Relations Commissioner. I believe that that decision in itself had weakened the industrial relations system within this State.

I have yet to see where the great job creations have come from in relation to QWAs, as the previous speaker mentioned. I have not seen any marked improvement in unemployment figures simply because we have QWAs. If honourable members want to talk about industrial disputations, there is the Minister who was driving the debate and driving the wedge in the MUA dispute. This former Minister was up to his neck in the MUA dispute. That Minister was hell-bent on trying to destroy the wharfies and their union. That is not the role of a Minister who is out there trying to create jobs. That Minister should have been out there lobbying the Minister for Transport to do something about increasing apprenticeships in the Railways and he should have been lobbying the Energy Minister to do something about increasing——

Mr Johnson: Ten per cent.

Mr NUTTALL: But the former Minister never went to him. The honourable member for Gregory says that that was his policy. If that was his policy, why did the Minister not go over to him and say, "Let us do something about increasing apprenticeships; let us double the number of apprenticeships"? That is what we are going to do in railways. The member opposite had the chance for two and a half years. But what did that bloke sitting there right beside him, the honourable member for Clayfield, do? Did he go to the member for Gregory, knock on his door and say, "Listen, I want to do something about increasing apprentices"?

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: In his dreams he did. He should have been doing that with the Energy Minister. He should have been knocking on his doorstep, saying, "We need to do something

in this State about apprenticeships." But he knows and I know that that is not what he did.

Mr SANTORO: Under the coalition Government, Queensland——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! You have no right to stand up and start——

Mr SANTORO: Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr NUTTALL: The former Minister presided over one of the worst relationships in this State between the Government and the ACTU.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. Under Standing Order 119, I find the comments of the honourable member for Sandgate offensive. I did not preside over the worst history in apprenticeships or industrial disputations. I find those comments offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr NUTTALL: I withdraw. If that comment upsets him, I withdraw.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: No, the honourable member for Clayfield says that I speak an untruth. That is just not correct. History will show—you should have a look at your record and the statistics.

Mr Santoro: Apprenticeships went up.

Mr NUTTALL: No way in the world! Apprenticeships went down. You should get out there and have a look at the real facts.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Sandgate will address the Chair.

Mr NUTTALL: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will. The realities of life are that this former Industrial Relations Minister has a track record of not being concerned about the wellbeing of workers in this State. That is the reality of life.

One of the great things that we need is a balance between employers and employees. That is what the award system in this State offers. It offers a fair and just balance. It offers an impartial umpire in terms of the Industrial Relations Commission. If there are grievances or difficulties, the Industrial Relations Commission is there to assist the parties. The Workplace Relations Amendment Bill before the House today restores that fairness and impartiality, and allows workers to be treated fairly and equitably. It allows employers to be able to get on with the job and create wealth within this State.

It is a fallacy for members opposite to be saying that the trade union movement is anti-development and anti-employer. That simply is not the case. In my experience and the experience of many trade unionists on this side of the Chamber—and people would be well aware of this—most of the industrial disputes are not about money but are about conditions and the way people are treated in their workplace.

I urge honourable members from the new One Nation Party, who are participating in this debate this afternoon, to consider carefully their decision in relation to this Bill. A number of them represent electorates that contain a large number of workers and the decision that those members make today will affect their livelihoods for the future. I urge them to consider carefully their views in relation to that matter.

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—ONP) (2.56 p.m.): This Bill is a result of Labor Party internal politics. The union bullyboys within Labor want this Bill passed to regain influence at the workface. It is simply just another union power grab to give the union bosses inside Labor something to do and somebody to push around again. This is the envious product of the faceless men behind Labor. If honourable members talk to anybody—business leaders or workers on the floor—they will find that all of those people feel that Queensland workplace agreements have worked pretty well. They also agree that this Bill will generate confusion and uncertainty in the workplace without gaining much for business or workers.

The Queensland Workplace Agreements have helped to build trust between employers and employees. This is particularly so in the hard rock mining industry where teamwork is necessary and danger is always lurking. The QWAs are negotiated and flexible arrangements whereby teamwork and cooperation have been maximised, including safety which is now a factor in such QWAs. It is quite obvious that safety is a factor in industry and that industry will be the big loser if this Bill is passed. Safety must suffer when Labor insists on reviving a "we verses them attitude"—the old and discredited system of class warfare which Labor so loves and admires. If this Bill is passed, there will be a very real threat to industry's ability to embrace change. The ability to embrace change will be crippled possibly irretrievably. All of the time and effort that has gone into making QWAs work will be destroyed—destroyed to curry favour with Labor's strong men: the Ludwigs and the likes.

There has been no sensible rationale for these amendments, except that Labor's ideological insensitivities demand these changes. Employers and employees have picked up options to their mutual benefit, and such options taken in good faith are now to be dashed because Labor wants to be seen as a good fellow when dealing with its faceless men. Both workers and management require stability and certainty in the labour market. This Bill is the antithesis of stability and certainty. This is a direct reflection of Labor's intention to create instability and uncertainty and to pander to its union powerbrokers. This Bill is just another power grab by Labor and is guaranteed to generate instability on a broad front.

Historically, a responsible union movement has been the bulwark behind improved working conditions and the protection of workers' rights. We want it to remain that way and not become a plaything for Labor Party powerbrokers and not to become a feeding ground for power-hungry Labor Party politicians seeking to build a career for themselves on the backs of the workers.

During the Hawke/Keating Labor Governments the union superbosses managed to obtain job security as unions were made into huge monopolies, but the workers were forgotten. Many workers have lost their jobs because of Labor Party politics. Many have left the unions. This Bill is just another extension of the Labor idea of using workers for political ends. From the viewpoint of industry and our vital export markets, this Bill is just bad business. I oppose the Bill as a betrayal of both worker and employer and I again stress that it is just bad business.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (3.01 p.m.): I am pleased to speak in support of the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill because this legislation is concerned with abolishing QWAs and removing the requirement to strip awards back to 20 matters. Apart from one period of sabbatical leave, I have been in this Parliament since 1977. One thing I have realised during that time is what makes a conservative politician. I believe there is only one thing that they stand for and truly believe in with zest and passion, and that is their hatred of unions. The conservatives really are anti-union. That is the main ideological stand of those opposite.

A classic example of that ideology is the former Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Santo Santoro. I would like to quote what he said about QWAs when they were first introduced. He said it would provide—

> "... the flexibility business requires to be efficient and innovative in order to effectively respond to changing customer demands and increased competition."

The key words in that statement are "efficient" and "increased competition". These words concern the downward spiral in wages and conditions. I will have more to say about this matter at a later stage.

I want to contribute to this debate because I believe that QWAs impact on low-paid workers or battlers—the sort of people whom the member for Ipswich West should be representing in this Parliament. He should be worried about those people, not big business. I will come back to the views of the One Nation Party later.

Why do QWAs impact badly on battlers and low-paid workers? The answer is that these are the people who are in an unequal bargaining position. People who can negotiate a good agreement with their bosses are not the people with whom we are concerned in this legislation. QWAs are secretive. QWAs are not allowed to be scrutinised. There is great fear of QWAs being scrutinised by unions because, when they are scrutinised, other workers see the nature of these agreements and that is why the uptake of QWAs is so low. QWAs are concerned with the exploitation of workers and destroying the power of unions.

I want to refer to the deregulation of labour. The myth of an open and fair negotiation process in QWAs needs to be dispelled. It is nothing like that at all; it is simply a question of take it or leave it. That is the norm with QWAs. Those bullyboy tactics only work with people who find themselves in the position where they have to go home and say to their husbands or wives, "I had to sign that QWA because we need the money to pay the rent. I had to cop it in the neck. I had to cop it sweet." The report on QWAs clearly shows that many employers simply provide their employees with a pro forma agreement and demand a signature.

I have no doubt that if we had progressive managers the flexibility and productivity that is required by business can be achieved under the award system. We have had great productivity increases in the past 20 years and they have occurred with 98.8% of workers working under the award system. Collective agreements can give fair outcomes.

I want to return to those remarks I quoted from Mr Santoro. The words "efficient" and

"increased competition" stand out. I am really worried about that concept because it really means that Mr Santoro sees QWAs as a method of deregulating the labour market. The member for Noosa said that QWAs were necessary for business confidence. QWAs are directed towards driving down the price of labour. The golden sixties was an era when we had good economic growth, rising prosperity and people were feeling very relaxed. In terms of social cohesion we had a better society in those days.

Let us remember that when John F. Kennedy was speaking about the prospects of rising prosperity, he said that when the water rises every boat on the water rises with it. He meant that prosperity would apply to everyone. That situation is no longer true in the United States of America. Let us have a look at some statistics from that country. In the past 20 years the gross national product in real terms in America has increased by 35%. One would think that America would be the land of milk and honey. There has been marvellous growth in productivity, but what happened was that productivity was growing at a faster rate than wages. If it was not for global marketing, America would not be able to get away with that situation. Americans would not be able to sell all their products locally. One cannot have productivity rising at a much higher level than wages in a closed economy because one would be producing more goods than one could sell. That makes commonsense. In the past 20 years in the USA there has been a 20% decline in the average wages of the bottom 75% of the workforce. In America the top end of town is getting richer.

The One Nation members tell us that they represent the battlers. They tell us that they want to see that everyone has a fair go. In this process those members are supporting deregulation and, by supporting deregulation, they are against the battlers of Australia. That is what happened in the United States of America. Let us look at the richest State, California, in the richest country in the world, the United States of America. This is what happened as a result of market deregulation. We find that less than 10% of people in California belong to unions. One Nation Party members would have got their way. They hate unions; they are anti-union. They can look at the American experience and see what has happened there. The American experience has led to severe social dislocation. Community harmony has been destroyed.

The jails in California are full. California spends more money on prisons than it does on education. There is more money spent on protecting the rich in California than is spent on protecting the rest of the community. One Nation members are doing the same thing here by supporting labour deregulation. It is frightening to sit in this Chamber and listen to the One Nation members. The member for Ipswich West is one of six One Nation members who won seats from the Labor Party. They should be congratulated. Well done! The member for Ipswich West won his seat, and he won it fair and square—no argument.

What I say to One Nation members is this: in supporting deregulation of the labour market they are acting against the wishes of their constituencies. When they vote this way they have to remember that it will be rammed down their throats at the next election. People in the electorates did not know what they were buying. They did not know that One Nation members would come to this Parliament and support the trans-national corporations.

One Nation members are supporting the people who push the competition policies and who want to destroy unions. One Nation members are supporting those people who want economic growth at any price. One Nation members are supporting people who are pushing the competition policy irrespective of its impact on society. They are supporting the rights of the rich to get richer. They are supporting the rights of workers to be screwed—and well and truly screwed. Come the next election, the people in One Nation electorates will know how their members voted on this Bill. This is a democratic place. Those members have a right to express their votes the way they see it. But in the end they are supporting Mr Santoro's concept. He said that this legislation was all about efficiency and increased competition, but it is all about dropping the price of wages and making the rich richer. Members of the One Nation Party should ask themselves quite clearly: is that what the people of their electorates want? It is not, and I believe that they should reconsider their position.

I am pleased to support this legislation. The member for Noosa was being fanciful when he said that QWAs were necessary for business confidence. That is fine. He is a Liberal. He stands for business. He is there for the blue-rinse set. He is there for the people who live at Ascot. He is there for the people who want to drive around in their LTDs. But One Nation members are supposed to be here for the battlers and the workers, and if they do not support this legislation then we will know that they are not.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (3.11 p.m.): With pleasure I join in this debate and support the Opposition's position in relation to opposing the Bill before the House. I would like to pick up on a couple of things that the previous speaker said. He referred to the member for Noosa and said that, as a Liberal, he therefore supports the people who drive around in LTDs. But let us be realistic about this. If he was relying on the people who drive around in LTDs, he would never have been elected.

I hope that everybody here supports the concept of aiming for a better society, a better quality of life, better wages and better profits. At the end of the day, we cannot have good wages without profits, and we cannot have people being employed without people making money. The reality of life is that no-one is going to employ somebody unless they see an opportunity to make a profit. If the Government wants to work towards its 5% unemployment target, it must ensure that people in business are confident enough to employ people and to see their way clear to making a profit.

There seems to be some misconception amongst Government members that the coalition Government's intention was to do away with unions; that it is in favour of big business and is anti-union and anti-workers. That is absolute rubbish, and Government members know it. In the last day and a half I have listened to rhetoric from members on both sides of the House in relation to this issue.

Mr Lucas: What about the rhetoric on your side?

Mr SLACK: The member for Sandgate spoke about the rhetoric that he had listened to from members on this side of the House. I have listened to similar rhetoric from members on his side of the House, claiming that this is all about union bashing. Let us be objective about Queensland workplace agreements. If an employer was able to gain a major advantage by being able to put workers in a position where they could be downtrodden and their quality of life would suffer, do members opposite really think that we would support that?

The reality is that our legislation contained checks and balances to ensure that the people who entered into these agreements were protected. That is why the Enterprise Commissioner was involved to oversee those agreements. But we allowed for some flexibility. If people wanted their unions or their solicitors involved in the negotiations between the employers and themselves, or even if they wanted to do it themselves, we allowed them to do so on the condition that they were not going to be worse off. We allowed some flexibility in relation to wages or overtime, because that is what those agreements were all about.

We live in a very competitive world. Not only do our products have to compete in Queensland and other parts of Australia; they have to compete in the world at large. If we are going to do that, we must be competitive with other nations in the marketplace. I do not know whether Government members have pagers, but I do. I switch it on each morning to get the latest news. The Australian dollar is worth US56.63c at this point in time—the lowest on record.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr SLACK: I thought that the member had more intelligence than to say that that is a result of the Howard Government. The reality is that it is because of what is happening in the world today. It is in response to what has happened in Russia. It is in response to the outlook for commodity prices. It is in response to Australia's competitiveness in the international marketplace. It is the world's judgment on how it sees the Australian economy performing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! If the member addressed the Chair there would be fewer interjections.

Mr SLACK: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I know that you would understand what I am talking about, having been a person who has operated in the international marketplace.

This pager tells me what is happening in the world. We have to be flexible in our approach, because there are changing conditions out there. One of the reasons we introduced Queensland workplace agreements was to accommodate changing conditions in the world, but with the necessary checks and balances to ensure that the workers were protected and to ensure that our society could maintain the standard of living that we are used to and to improve on that standard of living—not just for employers but for employees as well.

Mr Mickel: Why doesn't the National Party accept National Competition Policy?

Mr SLACK: Could the honourable member either interject from his correct seat or listen rather than showing his ignorance of the Standing Orders of the Parliament?

Mr Hegarty: He doesn't know where he should sit.

Mr SLACK: How on earth can he hope to be in a position to run this State if he does not even know where his seat is?

As a former Trade Minister, I had the opportunity to travel overseas. That was supported by the now Premier during the very short time that the coalition was in Government. During that period, I learnt to appreciate very much the necessity for Australia and Queensland to be flexible and to meet market conditions. In order to meet market conditions, we have to be able to export. Queensland has a population of 3.4 million people. Members on both sides of the House acknowledge that we must have productivity. We have to produce consistently a quality article, and the only way to do that is to have some flexibility and choice in the system.

I have had the experience of seeing what flexibility has been able to allow. For instance, Evans Deakin Industries or Walkers Limited in Maryborough have been very successful in the export field. Walkers have made light trains for Malaysia. One of the reasons those companies have been successful in the export arena is that they have a very good, close working relationship with their employees, based on a no-strike agreement in relation to exports.

Mr Lucas: Reached with whom?

Mr SLACK: With the employees.

Mr Lucas: And the union?

Mr SLACK: The unions may be involved.

Mr Lucas: No QWAs?

Mr SLACK: Queensland workplace agreements allow for that type of flexibility to be arrived at. It is all about maximising the opportunities in the export market.

Members can say all they like in this House or outside about One Nation. Regrettably, Australia is a nation that is known for its industrial disputation. I do not believe that is fair, particularly when one considers what has happened in recent years. That is a misconception, but it is a big issue. When one goes to Japan or Korea, it is not so much Pauline Hanson that they talk about. People in Hong Kong said to me, "You come from Queensland. You come from Australia. What are they doing down there? All striking but the matches!" I was horrified. Coal owners in Japan have said to me, "Yes, the price of our coal is okay. The quality of our coal is very good." But they are reluctant to commit, because they are worried about Australia's capacity to deliver on a consistent basis.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SLACK: It is a fact of life. It is not rubbish. I am repeating what I have learnt from the experiences that I have had when talking to people overseas who do business with us.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SLACK: Certainly it is a major factor that has to be taken into consideration. That is why we have to be flexible in this marketplace.

Australians feel very proud that we have been doing well in the export field. However, although our exports have been going up quite significantly, in comparison with the rest of the world in those marketplaces, the percentage of our exports has not been going up. Regrettably, it has been decreasing. Nations that are competitive have learned that increased national productivity is the key. Supplying a cost-efficient quality product is the only way to meet world demand. As to our recent record of sustained high national productivity, I refer to the Federal Productivity Commission, which points out that productivity is not everything, but in the long run it is almost everything. A country's ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker. World War II veterans came home to an economy that doubled its productivity over the next 25 years. As a result, they found themselves achieving living standards their parents had never even imagined. Vietnam veterans came home to an economy that raised its productivity less than 10% in 15 years. As a result, they found themselves living no better, and in many cases worse than their parents. Over the past 25 years, Australia's productivity performance has been significantly below that of the rest of the OECD nations. Those are the conditions that members opposite want to return to.

An examination by the Senate Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs is also very telling. The committee's report compares the costs of producing chicken meat in Australia compared with the USA and Thailand. I point out that both those countries have applied to import chicken meat into Australia. One may think that those countries would not be in the race. However, honourable members should consider the findings of the investigation. The USA can do it cheaper. Their subsidising of grain feed results in Australian feed prices being 50% higher. Honourable members should listen to the whole story. Cheaper labour is a big factor. The USA allows guest workers, usually Mexicans, and has far less

regulation of wage rates. The results are that processing and labour costs in Australia are some three times more expensive than the USA. The net result is that the Australian overall production costs are some two and a half times those of the USA.

For Thailand's chicken meat producers, grain costs are higher, but the plant processing costs are even lower and are thus comparable in production costs to the USA.

Mr Lucas: Are you saying we should reduce our wages costs?

Mr SLACK: I am not suggesting that we go to that situation. What we are suggesting—and what we put into practice and into law when we were in Government—are Queensland work agreements. They provide flexibility with checks and balances. They will assist us to meet the challenges posed by the conditions of our overseas competitors in the marketplaces that we have to export to if we are to have jobs. It is irrelevant and ridiculous for the Premier to come in here and say that Queensland will have 5% unemployment if he is not prepared to have flexibility in the wage rates to allow that to happen. Australia is competing in a big wide world. Members opposite can blame Hanson or whatever circumstances they like; however, we are competing in a big wide world and the bottom line is the production cost of a particular article and the cost of that article to the people who are to buy it. Unless the price is competitive, they will not buy it.

It worries me considerably that middlemen take their percentages and build on a percentage of what producers get and build on what the workers get. That needs to be addressed. I am worried for our future in those environments. We also have to be realists and realise that, although we can address that issue, we also need to have the flexibility within our work force to compete. That is not to be to the disadvantage of the work force; that is to be to their advantage. Unless members opposite are prepared to operate in the 21st century and meet those conditions, they have no hope whatsoever of meeting the 5% unemployment level. That is reality. They can rise in this House and sprout rhetoric in support of their union mates and the monopolistic position of the unions. That is what Labor wants.

I am a farmer. I belong to a farming organisation, but that is by choice. I do not have to. That is what QWAs are about: choice. The people who are in Queensland work agreements to whom members opposite were referring can join a union; that is their choice.

Mr Purcell: What about the sugar growers?

Mr SLACK: The sugar growers can petition——

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr SLACK: The member is not listening.

The sugar growers, the dairy farmers and the fishermen can petition the Minister and by statute can have the statutory organisation disbanded if they wish. That is their choice.

Mr Schwarten: It is not really.

Mr SLACK: Yes, it is; it is their choice.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr SLACK: No. Peanut growers in my electorate are legitimately growing peanuts even though they do not belong to the Peanut Board. It is not the closed shop in the form that members opposite want it to be a closed shop. By choice, sugar growers have a marketing situation that they strongly defend. That position gives them some strength in the international marketplace.

Today and yesterday we have listened to a long tirade of rhetoric. Members opposite have tunnel vision in relation to what the unions have to offer and what the unions are all about. In their view, the unions are the be-all and end-all. However, when one considers the often-quoted figures that the Minister trotted out yesterday, which state that, under QWAs, so many people have not received wage increases and so many people have not received overtime, etc., one realises that those figures are only part of a package. One figure cannot be isolated from another figure. One must consider the total concept of what is being achieved. To try to say that 17 months is a fair test period is absolutely ridiculous. One must bear in mind that the former Government operated in a hung Parliament. There was no certainty in the context in which those agreements were entered into. During the election campaign, Labor was promising to do away with those agreements. At the end of the day, it was an unsure situation for industry. In those circumstances, QWAs were not given a fair trial to work.

Australia and Queensland want to make an impression and want to sell our goods and services in the world marketplace. We will need to do that if Labor is to reach its 5% unemployment target. We cannot do that without some deregulation in the marketplace and the work force. Labor wants deregulation everywhere else, but not in this particular area, because that is its support base. That is fair enough, but we are here to be realistic and

objective about the matter. If we are to be objective, we have to allow for the flexibility that Queensland workplace agreements—with their checks and balances—provide. If they did not have the checks and balances in them, I would agree with the members opposite. However, a lot of thought and a lot of consultation went into the legislation that the Minister at the time introduced into the House. As Government members well know, the sole objective of introducing that legislation was to allow for productivity, to allow for flexibility and to allow for choice without a disadvantage to the workers or a disadvantage to the Queensland economy but in the interests of the Queensland economy.

To try to say for one minute that the Opposition are just for the bosses or for the elite is just plain ridiculous. The Act offered a balanced situation.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr SLACK: I will finish on this note. If the honourable member for Lytton attended the export awards, which are held every year, he would know that every time somebody accepts an award, that person says that he or she has done well because of the close cooperation between the staff and that person and that they have acted as a family. Those people have been able to achieve things through flexibility in industrial relations without the rigidity and without the regulations about which the members opposite are talking and to which they want to return.

Interruption.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Honourable members, before I call the member for Bulimba, I would like to recognise in the gallery a Japanese delegation of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the CEO and other councillors from Sasebo, which is a sister city of Coffs Harbour.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

WORKPLACE RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.31 p.m.): In welcoming our visitors from Japan, I would like to say that, along with the Japanese workers, Australian workers are some of the hardest workers in the world. I think that what a previous member said about Australian workers is not correct. The cheapest coal dug out of the ground anywhere in the world is from Queensland. It is dug out by very hardworking miners. However, we have to get away from saying that we can make things cheap or saleable only by dealing with people individually. That is what we are talking about. The Opposition wants one-on-one contracts. I want to talk about the collective contract. I think that is a much fairer way of doing business.

In any employment relationship, a contract for employment exists between the employer and the employee. This is called a common law contract. For the majority of employees in Queensland, the common law contract is often overlapped by other employment arrangements, such as awards and agreements.

Awards are established by legislation and are legal documents that contain provisions covering rates of pay, conditions of employment and other industry matters. Awards usually cover groups of employers and employees in a particular industry. For example, in Queensland we have approximately 320 State awards. A system based on awards represents a collective approach to industrial relations. Certified agreements are another form of collective industrial relations. Certified agreements are negotiated by a trade union or unions or by a group of employees and the employer. A union does not have to be involved and, in some cases, unions are not involved. The agreement can set out rates of pay and conditions of employment for employees at a particular workplace or enterprise.

Queensland has a history of collective industrial relations—a history of interactive collective labour and management. I remind members that some of the largest building projects in this State were carried out under agreements with Governments of both sides. Certainly, the previous Government was not against agreements, and I can go back to Bjelke-Petersen's day. He recognised how important it was for employers and employees to have agreements—not one-on-one agreements. The Gladstone, Tarong, Stanwell and Callide B Power Stations were large projects that were very important to Queensland, as were the Gladstone smelters and as is the coalmining industry. All of those projects were carried out under collective agreements.

The main objective of labour law, which is what we are talking about, has always been, and I venture to say always will be, to be a

countervailing force to counteract the inequality in the bargaining power which is inherent and must be inherent in the employment relationship. The industrial relations legislation introduced by the coalition Government, the Workplace Relations Act 1997, failed to meet this objective. It did not counteract the inequality in the bargaining power between the employer and the employees. Not only did the Workplace Relations Act 1997 not help to redress the power imbalance between employers and employees but also it actually increased the power imbalance by shifting the focus of the legislation away from collective industrial relations to individual industrial relations.

Collective industrial relations provides workers with a collective voice. By working together, whether as a member of a trade union or as a group of employees, employees become unified and they can shift the balance of power to some extent. As the old saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall." The same goes for employers. I can assure members that, in terms of industrial relations, employers stick together pretty well.

I have had some experience with the building industry and I know that the lowest price is the common denominator. If the workers do not have some sort of collective bargaining system, the lowest common denominator wins the job. That means that the employers who can screw the most out of their workers are the winners. They will get the job because they can offer the lowest price. That continues and the base rate gets lower and lower and lower. We then find that the labour market is depressed.

Mr Santoro: Not everybody does that.

Mr PURCELL: I was in the building industry long enough to know that, in a period like the one we are in at the moment where work is very hard to come by, wages spiral down. People are doing work in this industry now for the same rate that they would have received 10 years ago. That is a fact. They are getting screwed by the people who are offering the work because they can get away with it.

Mr Santoro: What is the union doing about it?

Mr PURCELL: The member knows very well that the union covers about only 10% of the people in the building industry. The Opposition wants to screw that 10% as best it can. There is a free market in the housing industry, and I can assure the member that those people are getting screwed.

As I said, collective industrial relations provides workers with a collective voice. Individual industrial relations has the potential to shift the balance of power away from the worker to the employer. The Workplace Relations Act 1997 provides individual industrial relations in the form of Queensland workplace agreements, or QWAs. They are agreements between a single employer and a single employee. They are secret agreements that are not open to public scrutiny.

The Opposition can say that, if a party wishes, he or she can make the terms of that agreement known. However, if the members opposite want to listen and learn, I will tell them what happens in practice. Recently, I have seen half a dozen to eight agreements that specifically prohibit their publication.

Mr Santoro: That's against the law.

Mr PURCELL: I know it is. However, they specifically prohibit the publication of the contents of the QWA. My young daughter picked up a job. She gave away a part-time job to work for another company. The first day she was there, she had a QWA put under her nose and was asked to come back in the morning with it signed. There were no employers to talk to that day—they were all off somewhere picking their noses. When I came home that night at about 8 o'clock, she was in tears. She had given her job away. I sat up with her until very late.

Mr Santoro: Did you go and confront the boss?

Mr PURCELL: I did not, but I gave her the ammunition with which to front the boss. There were four pages of it, and most of what she was being asked to sign was illegal. However, she had no idea that it was illegal. She is a 21-year-old girl who has no idea what is legal and what is not. She does not know what the Industrial Relations Act does, but her employer does.

Mr Santoro: Was it a State or a Federal?

Mr PURCELL: It was a State award. So the next day my daughter went back to work prepared to snatch the job because they were offering her well under what she was entitled to receive and threatening her with legal action if she published or spoke about what was in the agreement.

Mr Santoro: That's not right.

Mr PURCELL: Well, it is not right. It gives employers the opportunity to exploit young people who do not know any better. I can assure the House that that matter has been sorted out. If I catch him at it again, I will not

have to go to the Industrial Relations Commission. I will snot the bloke.

Mr Santoro: That is where you should take it; you should take it to the Industrial Relations Commission.

Mr PURCELL: He wanted individual action; I took it. The legislation introduced by the coalition Government failed to recognise the power imbalance between employers and employees. Let me state the obvious: employers have more power than employees, particularly in times of high unemployment. Employers aim to make a profit and may be faced with decisions regarding employing a person for a particular job, but employees are faced with earning a living, feeding the kids, paying off the house, paying the school fees, and getting to and from work.

A Government member: And paying the GST.

Mr PURCELL: Well, they will not be, because the coalition will not be in Government. Howard will be down the road. Only a small number of employees are lucky enough to have a level of bargaining power anywhere near on a par with their employers. I think most reasonable people in this House would agree with that. These employees have traditionally been in the field of management or are employees with highly specialised skills. In these cases, common law contracts are often used and they are made on a one-to-one basis. These employees do not need industrial relations legislation to provide for their contract of employment.

QWAs are made by employees who do not have a high level of bargaining power. Industrial relations legislation should be about protecting employees, particularly those employees who may have low levels of bargaining power. A lot of the people I represented when I was in the union movement, in the Builders Labourers Federation, could not read or write. How would they get on with an employer on a one-to-one basis? What sort of bargaining power would they have?

I come from the bush and I call myself a bushie, but most of those blokes were bushies. I got the blokes I knew jobs when they came down here. I played football with them. With a lot of them, I did not know that they could not read or write, but I soon found out because they had trouble getting work. How would these people get on with an employer on a one-to-one basis when they could not even read a contract? But they would sign it to get a job. How would they be exploited? What protection is there for those sorts of people under this legislation? There is none at all.

Industrial relations legislation should not be exposing the weak to inferior wages and conditions. Some organisations have even used individual employment agreements as part of their human resources management strategies. CRA decided to divide and conquer and sign workers up on individual employment agreements. Other organisations such as BHP tend to adopt a collective approach and recognise the benefits associated with collective industrial relations.

Before I left the Builders Labourers Federation, there was a Statewide agreement with BHP to do all its construction in our sphere of influence. BHP gets a deal. We supply it with the workers that can do the job. It finishes on time. BHP makes a quid and the workers make a quid. What is the matter with that? Those opposite should tell me what is the matter with it.

Another important point regarding individualisation of industrial relations has been highlighted by industrial relations experts such as Ron McCallum of Blake Dawson Waldron, professor in industrial relations law at the University of Sydney. These experts have recognised that issues such as occupational health and safety cannot be handled on an individual basis. This is not Pat Purcell talking; this advice is from the experts. Members have often heard me talk about industrial relations in this House, but it seems that I am not the only one with these views. The experts say that pay equity, discrimination, technological change and redundancies are issues which cannot be handled on an individual basis. They need to be dealt with collectively, because the concepts involve the interaction of groups of employees. These things have to be dealt with properly.

As I was saying earlier, the quickest way to lower safety on a building site is to give the job to someone who offers to do it at a price well below what it can be done for. The first thing to be cut will be safety, because it is an indefinable thing. In a lot of cases safety is a state of mind—with people working together to make something safe or make something happen. With this legislation, conditions will disappear and wages will disappear.

Not only did the legislation of the coalition Government provide for these individual contracts; it also attempted to strip awards down to 20 allowable matters in a process called award simplification. This process meant that awards would no longer cover all aspects of the employment relationship. The scope of

awards would be limited. For example, under award simplification, a provision in the award which requires the employer to provide for items and services such as clothing, tools, equipment, laundering and accommodation, which are not in the nature of an allowance, is not an allowable award matter. That represents money out of workers' pockets. No matter what anyone says, when the QWA comes before the commissioner those things are not taken into account because they are not definable and not able to be counted.

People may be surprised at the high cost of a pair of steel-capped boots. The same goes for work clothes and some tools. When I first started in the industry, tools for an apprentice were worth about $60. These days an apprentice would not get much change out of $800 to $1,000 for tools. Under QWAs, those things will no longer be supplied because they are not one of the 20 allowable matters. They will just drop off the end, and those opposite will have their hands in their pockets. If those opposite work out that sort of expenditure over a period of time, they will see that it has a negative impact on the employee's hourly rate and on what an employee would get on a yearly basis. Their wages are reduced fairly savagely.

This stripping back of awards by the coalition Government was intentional. Award simplification discouraged the use of awards by employees. It again illustrates the move away from collective industrial relations and towards individual industrial relations. The simplification of awards was done with an ulterior purpose in mind, that is, to push workers towards negotiating an agreement, preferably a QWA. It was an underhanded and shameful act by a Government supposedly elected to protect the weak in our society.

The coalition Government introduced industrial relations legislation which allowed exploitation of the weak. In contrast, our Government believes in a system of working collectively and in which the rights of individuals are protected through the strength of the collective. That is why we urge the repeal of one of the most harsh and unfair acts in current legislation—individual employment agreements.

Our society is not a nation of individuals. We need to work together. Society is founded upon individual rights existing within the collective. We all know that we have individual rights, but we have to work together. We do not stand together collectively or proudly when we allow individuals to be exploited and their rates of pay and conditions of employment to be eroded. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame.

There are some moral obligations on people in this place in relation to taking the opportunity to take things away from people. It is time for the coalition to learn from its mistakes. It is time for the coalition to take some advice on trying to make individuals the centrepiece of industrial relations.

Those advocating labour deregulation regard the agreements reached between an employer and an individual employee as private in nature. In their view, unless there is law breaking, Government agencies and other people, especially trade unions, have no business in scrutinising these private arrangements. On the contrary, the act of working is a communal and social one and it involves the interaction of people within the public domain. The taking of paid work is a major public activity engaged in by most adults. We will be making sure that it is engaged in by a lot more people than is currently the case. There will be less than 5% not engaged in employment.

Work is such a large part of our lives. Industrial relations legislation regulates that work. It is the responsibility of the Queensland Government to provide industrial relations legislation for the good of all—for the good of society. The Workplace Relations Amendment Bill will do that. The Bill still allows parties to enter into both union and non-union collective certified agreements. Members opposite know that I do not agree with non-union agreements, but I will cop it. The Bill will still enable individual agreements to be entered into through common law contracts. The amendments will simply ensure that the rights of an individual are protected through a collective industrial relations system, as they should be. I urge all honourable members to indicate their intention to protect the weak in our society and to support the Bill.

In my remaining minute I must mention my dealings with a company called Kinetic Power Ltd, which has adopted Howard's and Patrick's approach to industrial relations on the wharf. Two of my constituents are involved in this matter, which concerns a company at Carole Park being placed into receivership. I have spoken to four different employment advocates on different occasions. All they said was, "Get a lawyer." This bloke has been out of work for two weeks and cannot get the dole because his employer will not sign the release form. The people at Centrelink have told him to go away. They do not want to know him. His three kids are starving to death and he has

house payments to make. That is Howard's way of doing business. Employers will take their lead from Governments. The Federal Government condoned what happened with Patrick Stevedoring. Both it and Reith were in it up to their necks. That is why other employers are doing the same thing.

Time expired.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (3.51 p.m.): Strange as it may seem, I always enjoy the contribution of the member for Bulimba when he speaks on industrial relations matters, because he is very colourful and speaks with great passion and vigour. Given his industrial relations background—something he shares with a few other members opposite—I can understand why he is so passionate. However, some things need to be said about what his contribution implied, namely, that there is a general feeling out there that we on this side of politics are not standing up for the battlers.

The battlers include not only the types of people referred to by the member for Bulimba, namely, the battlers from the bush who have not had an education. Battlers can be found in small business across the length and breadth of this State. The work force employed by small businesses is gradually declining, because conditions are getting tougher. Some mum and dad businesses are struggling and cannot put food on the table. They are also battlers.

Mr Lucas: Because of the GST.

Mr HEALY: The member for Lytton continues to denigrate the Federal Government's taxation reform package in this House. I am pretty sure that he does not fully understand it. There are plenty of small businesspeople in the electorate of Lytton and other electorates right around the State who are battlers and who, from time to time, experience industrial relations problems.

The new Labor Government's assault on commonsense workplace regulations has rightly been criticised by the business sector. It is business that this Labor Government and the "Braddy Bunch" want to return to the Dark Ages of industrial relations. However, it is not only business that will suffer from Labor's craven retreat to the past pursued by the whips of the big union movement. It is also the workers and, perhaps even more importantly, the next generation of workers.

The abolition of QWAs, the central point of the regressive legislation that we see before the House today, would place in grave jeopardy the continuing and successful implementation of apprenticeships and traineeships at a school level. How short-sighted and dangerous is that for Queensland's future? It is extremely dangerous. We are approaching the 21st century.

Mr Grice: It's just a rebirth of old Labor.

Mr HEALY: As my colleague said, it is a rebirth of old Labor. The Labor Party in Queensland wants to take it back even further—back 30 years.

It is fair to say that the implementation of New Apprenticeships in Queensland has been a model for many other States with school-based arrangements. It has been an absolutely outstanding success. A large part of this can be attributed to flexible industrial relations arrangements. In particular, the advent of QWAs provided the opportunity for many small and medium-sized businesses to participate in New Apprenticeships where there was not existing award coverage provided for under industrial orders—for example, in the retail, hairdressing and furniture production areas. Therefore, it is a great concern to industry that the Government's proposed changes to the Workplace Relations Act—changes that flow self-evidently from Labor's desire to toady to the unions rather than being a Government for all Queenslanders—will by eliminating QWAs discourage many employers from participating in school-based arrangements.

This is a complex area—evidently more complicated than anything that those opposite want to be bothered comprehending. The non-Labor members of this Parliament are not blinded by devotion to the past or to one side only of what used to be the industrial divide. It would be a terrible shame if Labor's policy of retreat to the past had a heavy impact on the genuine employment-creating opportunities that flow from school-based industry training. It would be a particular tragedy if this effect of Labor's retreat were to impact hard on the regional areas of Queensland, where jobs are scarce and where the Premier's opportunistic 5% unemployment election promise is an absolutely sick joke.

The existing laws, introduced by the reformist coalition Government, apply to school-based arrangements—in hairdressing apprenticeships, cabinet making and furniture production, small business, information technology and child care. I cannot think of a list of useful training applications better suited to precisely those sections of Queensland's young community that has been sidelined by the elites overly represented in the Labor

Party. It is true—and we welcome this, for we on this side are all for choice—that there are alternative industrial relations instruments available, for example, such things as separate orders or certified agreements. However, the reality—and this is the reality that is most missed by the ranks opposite—is that most small employers will not be interested in adopting these options.

They will not be interested because what business in Queensland needs, and what Queenslanders overwhelmingly need, is freedom to move and a reduction in Government interference in their business—their bottom lines, their lives. Clearly, they will not get that from this Government unless, in the instance of the workplace laws that we are debating today, the unique balance of this 49th Queensland Parliament can be brought to bear.

If this Parliament does not vote to throw out this legislation, it will be another kick in the guts for businesses across this State, the small business sector particularly, which is already feeling the effects of the Asian economic downturn and already reeling after, for example, reading in the Courier-Mail on 6 July that the Minister for Industrial Relations had announced that the Government was withdrawing the formal objection in the Industrial Relations Commission to wider Sunday trading—an objection submitted by the previous State Government as a clear message to small business that the Government of the day cared for them and for their future livelihood, cared enough to want to encourage them to employ more people and cared enough for their future so that this ideological target of 5% that the Premier espoused before the election could be reached.

I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the businesses in urban Brisbane and in some of the electorates of members opposite—south-east Queensland and centres such as Toowoomba—who absolutely fear the continued push by the large retail chains now have no confidence whatsoever in the Beattie Labor Government as a result of this legislation. They have no confidence in draconian industrial relations policy; they have no confidence in a Government that is prepared to sit back with its hands in its pockets or in the pockets of its union mates and let business in this State rot and wither on the vine. Today's Labor is no more than yesterday's tired old Neanderthals with a bit of face paint.

The coalition is solidly in opposition to the Braddy Bill. I appeal to the other non-Labor members of this House to oppose this retreat to the past and the disadvantage to many thousands of ordinary Queenslanders that would result and to vote for a Queensland with a future. The abolition of QWAs has repercussions not only for new commencements but also for existing traineeships and apprenticeships. I understand that an order is to be developed to cover all existing traineeships and apprenticeships that do not currently have provision for school-based and part-time arrangements. The Opposition certainly supports that and I place that on record. But the serious concern that we on this side of the Chamber have is what is going to happen in the interim.

Considerable time and resources have been invested by schools and organisations, such as the Queensland apprenticeship services, to promote new apprentices in schools and to encourage industry participation. This has contributed to the success in the uptake of new apprenticeships in schools. It is fair to say that all stakeholders—and I would include the Government in this group, unless the member for Kedron wants to resign from this aspect of life, too—want this momentum to continue. However, industry is concerned that, if the transition period that the Government proposes should insert itself between the removal of QWAs and the implementation of a suitable overarching order, interest and participation in school-based new apprenticeships will definitely decrease.

Perhaps this is also part of Labor's grand scheme to provide the circumstances in which initiative and individual enterprise will be allowed to wither and die in pursuit of the communal effort that it says it desires but in fact—and I think it knows this—cannot deliver. So it is in this context that we have asked the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the State Training Council to give consideration to allowing school-based and part-time new apprenticeships to continue in the immediate term. It certainly seems sensible and it would definitely be honourable for the Government to insist that existing arrangements continue until what is planned to replace them is able to do so.

In my electorate of Toowoomba North, many new developments in small business are exciting employment generators. It is of interest, for example, that in many rural and semi-rural areas of Queensland horticulture

and other rural disciplines are two of the areas covered by award variation and/or orders under the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act. The people of Toowoomba North who, like many regional Queenslanders, are rightly suspicious of the big union orientation of this Government's policy, suspect that Labor's true orientation is to Brisbane and the elites. They will not be happy if the new freedom of choice that was the hallmark of the coalition's workplace relations policy is taken away from them.

Nobody in this Chamber should ever overlook the fact that in excess of 350 school-based new apprenticeships have commenced in the past 10 months. A number of these have been facilitated through group training companies which have negotiated a certified agreement with the major unions to allow for part-time and school-based arrangements. The balance have been arranged with individual employers who, again, tend to be small and medium-sized businesses and, in many cases, family businesses with close personal ties to that school community.

I know that, in a lot of cases that I have come across in which these young people have managed to get themselves one of these apprenticeships through a business in the local area in close proximity to the school, that business is part of the school community and it understands how that school community works. Obviously, there is a spin-off for that business from the parents of that school. Those businesses tend to then reinvest money in a lot of the things that take place at that school when they are asked for sponsorship. So there is a very good relationship between the school and the business community and those young people who are taking on these apprenticeships.

It is precisely at this local level—this very grassroots level which in other parts of the world would be called village level—that we must build great enterprises, and continue to build them. There is serious concern in the community—not just in the business community—that the Government's clear policy direction towards centralised control and bureaucracy, the hallmarks of the failures of the past, will again be inflicted on them. It must also be noted in this context that many small and family operated companies do not have any industrial experience. It needs to be recognised that they are not genuinely prepared to negotiate complicated arrangements for the sake of employing a school student for one day a week. "Mr 5%", the Premier and member for Brisbane Central, should reflect long and hard on that. He has a promise to keep. He will not have a hope of coming within cooee if he concedes the field to the bureaucrats, the experts who pepper Labor Party reforms and the people in the back rooms. He knows that it is these areas in which the use of the QWA has been the preferred arrangement.

I understand that at present in excess of 30 QWAs are in place, and that enables school-based and part-time new apprenticeships to be implemented in the workplace. There are more than 20 school students wanting to commence a school-based apprenticeship for whom the QWA option would provide the best vehicle for establishing an industrial rearrangement. Okay, these numbers are not large. They are not large by any means, but that is no argument for scrapping the scheme. It has only just started. It was just starting to draw away from the kerb. It has not even got onto the highway yet. I say again——

Mr Lucas: I don't think the key was in the ignition.

Mr HEALY: My word the key was in the ignition. It was just about ready to roll over and start on that path of getting those young people into those jobs and apprenticeships.

Mr Lucas: You put the coathanger in the ignition; you were trying to knock it off.

Mr HEALY: I take the interjection from the member for Lytton. What the Government has effectively done is close the door in the interim period until those orders are up and running on the prospects of those young people getting a job some time down the track with the assistance of those small businesspeople.

In introducing the coalition's reformist and advancing workplace relations legislation in 1996, my colleague the member for Clayfield stated—

> "We must take the necessary steps to meet the economic and workplace challenges of the future. Queensland's coalition Government is committed to providing the State's business, particularly small business, with the best industrial relations system possible to meet the economic challenges of the future."

Mr Grice: Our legislation was for the future; their legislation is from the past.

Mr HEALY: I think that the member for Broadwater has summed it up wonderfully well.

Mr Santoro: It was a very wise interjection.

Mr HEALY: It was a wise interjection.

The sorry saga of this legislation is that it is a bit like a bad sitcom. The title of it should be the Braddy Bunch Returns to Jurassic Park. That is exactly how the people of Queensland will see regressive legislation such as this, and the dinosaurs within the union movement—the same old tired faces who were the puppeteers of the Labor Party—will continue to be despised by the great majority of businesses throughout Queensland, both big and small, for plunging industrial relations in this State back into the Dark Ages. As the member for Clayfield said, the Queensland public was happy with the coalition Government's industrial relations policy.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HEALY: I do not have to, because they were such excellent words used by the member for Clayfield. They were words that had the business community, the employers and the employees in this State saying, "At long last we are out of the Dark Ages of Labor Party control and industrial relations." They were the words that were generating jobs. The Minister knows that the unemployment rate was falling when we were in Government. He knows that some of those initiatives that we were putting in place were working. Of course they were working.

The coalition's vision was to return to the people the basic building blocks of prosperity and a generous future. It was to provide choice of agreement making options, flexibility in the workplace, freedom of association and enterprise focus. The coalition's vision is in place. It has physical form and growing presence.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr HEALY: I say to the member for Lytton that I am always on a winner.

Labor wants to kill all that. This is what it calls payback time. The ALP's union minders want to take over the sandpit again. That is what they want to do. That should not be the will of the House on the numbers that the Queensland electorate has provided, and this Bill should be voted down.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (4.08 p.m.): I am pleased to participate in the debate on the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill. This very important legislation was introduced by the Minister for Employment, Industrial Relations and Training. I am particularly pleased to speak in this debate because it is a fundamental aspect of the platform that Peter Beattie campaigned upon at the last State election and it is good to see the Labor Party Government delivering on that promise so soon in its term of office.

We gave a very clear commitment that we would repeal Queensland workplace agreements, and the strong mandate that we have on this side of the House, compared with the mandate that members of the National and Liberal Parties have, is beyond any—

Mr Seeney: 38%.

Mr LUCAS: The honourable member's is about 12%. I will say this about 12%: it is better than 0.2%, and that is how many people have signed Queensland workplace agreements. Those opposite are doing much better than that.

There are two aspects of the odious industrial relations regime that the member for Clayfield, the former Industrial Relations Minister, introduced into the law of this State. I refer to the Workplace Relations Act and the Industrial Organisations Act. He paraded around in them. He wrapped himself in them. It was just like the emperor's new clothes because they turned out to be a disaster and a disgrace, and it is with great pleasure that, hopefully, this House will repeal some of them today.

With regard to the Industrial Organisations Act, the former Minister came in saying that we need a level playing field and that we need to make sure that union donations to political parties should be approved. But where was the legislation about companies? Where was the legislation that gave shareholders in companies a choice? There was no such legislation because the member for Clayfield was not interested in reciprocity; he was simply interested in getting the workers.

Mr Santoro: We were talking about industrial legislation and employer organisations.

Mr LUCAS: I can understand that the member for Clayfield is not too interested in praising the former Attorney-General. As we know, they are not the best of mates. In fact, I have been told that that is why they are sitting at opposite ends of the front bench. They need someone fairly burly like the member for Gregory or the member for Crows Nest to separate them because they have been known to be at each other's throats from time to time.

One of the problems with the Workplace Relations Act was that it disempowered workers. Most people in this society are workers and they have families. These people were disempowered. Imagine the member for Clayfield having the Queensland workplace

agreements as his crowning policy achievement! One would have thought that as they were so good, workers and employers would have been stampeding head over heels to get down to the industrial registry to file them and that the registry would have had to employ extra staff to file the agreements. How many agreements did we get? The answer is they covered 0.2% of the work force.

I will tell honourable members a bit of a story. When I was at school the teachers tried to teach us Italian. If a student took Italian in Year 8 the school was very keen to have him take the subject in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 as well. The Italian teacher used to say that if a student received 30% it was a good, solid mark. I do not believe that anyone could say that 0.2% is a good, solid mark. In fact, it is about the worst mark that one could get. That is the way that workers and employers treated Queensland workplace agreements.

In today's Courier-Mail we saw an article concerning a real estate agent saying how well he has done under a Queensland workplace agreement—

Mr Schwarten: As he would.

Mr LUCAS: As he would, as the Minister quite accurately points out. If he was doing so well, surely he would be happy with a regime where it was open to public scrutiny so that other people could see how good it was. The fact is that people who do well might not need protection, but most ordinary workers do.

Mr Schwarten: He didn't say what the workers said about it.

Mr LUCAS: No. Most people are workers and most people do not have the bargaining power that employers have. That is one of the reasons why it is important that it is seen to be done publicly and that it be open to accountability. One Nation members of this House talk a lot about conspiracy theories. I would have thought they would have been very much in favour of accountability and being able to see what the Queensland workplace agreements are. They do not seem to be demonstrating such an attitude thus far.

Let us have a look in detail at the report that was undertaken in relation to Queensland workplace agreements. This is particularly interesting because the former Minister's own Act provides under section 911 that reports can be issued in relation to various matters under the Act. He was hoist on his own petard. His own Act has been the undoing of his great brainchild, the Queensland workplace agreements. As I said, only 0.2% of the work force have availed themselves of the opportunity of taking up a Queensland workplace agreement. The report says this—

> "The marginal wage increases provided by QWAs ... is indicative of the relatively poor bargaining position that individual workers subject to QWAs have relative to those engaged in open collective bargaining before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission."

In other words, that is before the independent umpire—before the arbiter. They were scared to have something appearing in the light of day before the independent arbiter. When QWAs were compared with certified agreements, the report says this—

> "This is borne out by the analysis of QWAs which shows that 32.5% of the agreements remove overtime provisions, 28.5% increase hours of work, 24.2% remove allowances and 23.6% remove or decrease penalty rates."

And further, an examination of certified agreements since the implementation of the Workplace Relations Act has found—

> "... that clauses contained within the agreements focus on improvements in the workplace. In particular, clauses related to training (75% of agreements), occupational health and safety (67% of agreements), productivity improvement (64% of agreements), multiskilling (45% of agreements) and career paths (45% of agreements) are predominant. Unlike QWAs, only 2% of all agreements examined contained clauses relating to increasing hours of work."

There is another part of the report that I found interesting; it referred to the construction industry and the Civil Construction Award. A particular example was mentioned where a QWA involved an increase in the working week from 38 hours to 60 hours for a 2% wage increase. My colleague the member for Bundaberg, who is very good with figures, did some quick calculations and informs me that that is a 60% increase in hours of work for a 2% increase in pay. That is very good! The workers did very well under that agreement! When people are receiving that sort of treatment, is it any wonder that those opposite want to keep it secret?

Mr Wilson: That's about a 45% decrease in hourly pay.

Mr LUCAS: As the member for Ferny Grove says, that is an hourly decrease in pay of about 45%. A husband or wife could come home and say, "Gee, I really negotiated well

with the boss today. I got a 45% pay cut for the hours I work." If that is the way those opposite work——

Mr Schwarten: They would be proud of that; they are Tories.

Mr LUCAS: They would be proud. I think under the member for Clayfield the Liberal Party received a 45% cut in their representation in this place. Another interesting part of the legislation is the allowable matters section.

Mr Seeney: Tell us about the no disadvantage test.

Mr LUCAS: It is obvious that the no disadvantage test has worked very well when we have a 60% increase in hours of work with a 2% increase in pay! The honourable member might not think that that is a disadvantage. I hope he would be prepared to accept that if he was in the work force. I certainly would not. The honourable member would not have agreed to it.

There are a whole lot of matters in the member for Clayfield's ill-begotten legislation that will be repealed. I want to say a few quick words in relation to the allowable matters. He restricted the allowable matters under award conditions to a maximum of 20. What about other issues? What about redundancy? There is one thing on which we should all agree in this House and that is that the most important political motivating factor in the community today, and the one single issue upon which people agree and which comes to the top of every survey, is job security. If it is not job security for individuals, it is job security for their spouses or for their kids. The member for Clayfield takes provisions for redundancy out of awards. One could not ask for a sillier move than taking out provisions that deal with negotiating the future of workers. The one fundamental message that we have received in this Chamber is jobs and job security. The member for Clayfield has taken that aspect out of awards. There are other important provisions such as protective uniforms, travel, time and wages records and first aid, just to name a few. There are many more than that.

I spoke before about the issue of overtime. I said that a large proportion of QWAs had imposed substantial restrictions on overtime. My principal occupation prior to entering this Parliament was that of a solicitor. That is one group in society who are better paid than the average worker. I worked significant hours in that job.

Mr Rappolt: Did you have an award?

Mr LUCAS: No, I did not have an award. I worked significant hours, but I was well paid for that work.

I also remember my time as a shiftworker for seven years. I had to work split shifts on Sundays, and I got pretty ordinary money, as did the other people with whom I worked. Things are a bit different when one is not getting paid very much. It is one thing for someone who is earning big bucks and who has a future; one day they might become a partner or a proprietor. But for those workers who have to use a bundy clock every day and have to feed their wives, husbands and kids, it makes a lot of difference if they are not compensated for overtime. What is even worse is that the reduction in overtime destroys family life, because it means that there is more and more incentive to make people work on Saturdays, Sundays and after hours.

I enjoy being a member of this place. It is a great honour and privilege to be here. However, my greatest regret—and probably my only regret—about being here is that I do not get to see my kids as much as I would like to. No-one makes us do this job. We volunteer for it. And as I said, I am honoured and proud to do it. But the ordinary workers who have to make ends meet, pay the bills and work those hours are suffering greater penalties as a result of losing their penalty rates. I would like to know how the former Minister could possibly defend a system that yielded average wage increases of 2.6%, compared to certified agreement wage increases of 4.1% and award wage increases of 2.9%. The simple fact of the matter is that those figures speak for themselves. If the workers want to know what puts more money in their pockets then, clearly, on any interpretation, Queensland workplace agreements do not do that. The report to which I have referred gives a breakdown of the conditions that are varied by Queensland workplace agreements. I seek leave to have those conditions incorporated in my speech.

Leave granted.

The following table provides a breakdown of conditions varied by QWAs (excluding QWAs that did not vary award conditions) as found in the sample of agreements by Departmental staff.

QWA Conditions

Increased hours—38.1%
Increased span of hours—53.0%
Remove/Decrease penalty rates—69.4%
Removing overtime—42.5%
Remove leave loading—12.7%
Remove allowances—69.4%
Remove/Decrease sick leave—19.4%
Remove Annual leave—17.9%

Mr LUCAS: A number of members have talked about the interests of small business. I believe that is very important. For every worker, we must have a place where they work. So it is very important to take into account the interests of business. But no-one can convince me that this initiative has been in the interests of small business, when only 0.2% of Queensland workers are covered by QWAs. The facts do not speak for themselves. I am not talking about 2%, 20% or 40%; I am talking about 0.2%. That is a disgrace.

Mr Seeney: Why are you worried about them?

Mr LUCAS: I am worried that 1,516 workers are getting ripped off. As far as I am concerned, that is too many. That is why this is not on.

If members were interested in small business, they would be taking into account the fact that one of the most important determinants of the viability of small business is the purchasing power of the people in the community at large. That is determined by their salaries. So if members take away their purchasing power, those people are not going to spend money at the local fruiterer, the local fish and chip shop or the local mechanic, and small businesspeople will pay the penalty. That is why, during economic downturns, small business does it the hardest. There is a reinforcing cycle: workers get sacked, they have less purchasing power, so they have less money to spend in small business. I say to members opposite: every time you screw down a worker's wage, just remember that you are cutting the throat of small business.

I have no argument with increasing wages in accordance with productivity. Since the advent of the Hawke Government and then the Keating Government, the union movement in this country has been responsible for working with employers to yield real productivity gains whereby this country is now very competitive overseas. A great example of that was when we brought in national superannuation—to the howls of members on the conservative side of the fence.

Economists will tell members that one of the greatest problems in this country is our relatively low percentage of savings as a proportion of our expenditure and gross domestic product. That has an effect on our overseas debt. It also has an effect on how much money we can lend in Australia to small businesses. That is why national superannuation is important. But that was something that members opposite opposed. They were not interested in that. Small businesspeople are the ones who find it hardest to borrow money. They are the ones that the banks will not touch. Banks will touch big business. If we have a pool of funds to lend to small business, we can get small business to develop.

Mr Dalgleish: Did you run a small business?

Mr LUCAS: I worked for small business all my working life. I acted for clients in small business. I worked for small business, and I am very proud to have done that. I was privileged to work with small-business proprietors. I do not know what their politics were. Obviously, a lot of them were not Labor voters, but it was a privilege to work with them, because I got a very good appreciation of what they want. If the member for Hervey Bay is suggesting that one has to run a small business to be able to contribute to this debate, then he is very sadly mistaken.

There is one thing that sums up everything about Queensland workplace agreements. If they were so good, why are they secret? If they were such a great thing, instead of making them secret, the former Minister, the member for Clayfield, would have made it compulsory to pin them up. Instead of saying, "They are secret", he would have said, "You are required to post all Queensland workplace agreements all over the industrial registry and send a few copies to the Courier-Mail as well." That speaks volumes. We know that the member wants them to remain secret, because that is the only way that they can subsist.

Other members and I have indicated in our contributions that, when one looks at the facts and the statistics, one finds that they are nothing but a millstone around the neck of the work force—even if only 0.2% sign them. So the sooner that this legislation is repealed and this important election commitment of the Beattie Labor Government is implemented, the better it will be for all Queenslanders—whether they be workers, their families or small business.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (4.27 p.m.): In rising to speak to this Workplace Relations Amendment Bill 1998, I have to say from the outset: what a sad day it is going to be when we see Queensland workplace agreements removed. In recognition of my colleague the honourable member for Clayfield, the former Minister for workplace relations—what a great job he did for Queensland and the workers of Queensland the day that he introduced workplace agreements in this State. Some 1,500 or

2,000 of these agreements have been negotiated to date. There has never been one repealed in Queensland. Workplace agreements in this State have been very beneficial to the workers and the businesses of this State.

The member for Lytton spoke about small business. I have to say to him that he does not understand the tender situation that small business in this State will be in once this legislation goes through. I hope that commonsense is going to prevail in this House this evening when the vote is taken on this legislation. It is going to rely greatly on the commonsense of the members of this Chamber. One of the issues on which the Labor Party went to the 13 July election was its target of 5% unemployment—over the next five years. I say to Government members: if they are trying to achieve 5% unemployment, they certainly have to change their attitude to workplace agreements, because they are working; they are solid. If they want to kick them out, that will be very detrimental to the cause.

Small businesses in this State are the secret to success. They are the secret to reducing unemployment. They will be the saviours in redeeming some of the problems faced by our youth throughout the length and breadth of this State. They will take the young people on and give them a job in their first years after leaving school. A lot of young people grow from that position. I know that my family has worked in small business and has grown from there. Small business provides opportunities not only for my kids but also for the kids of every member in this Chamber and every parent in this State.

Mr Purcell: Do you want to see your kids ripped off?

Mr JOHNSON: My kids were not ripped off. My kids have never been holders of union tickets. I have always said to my kids that while they are working for their employer, no matter how difficult the situation is, they should be prepared to give an extra half an hour or an extra couple of hours a day. Even if the money is still the same, it is a job. That job is absolutely crucial to saving the small business or enterprise in question. That is something of which I am fiercely proud. My kids have always upheld that tradition. Having come from the land myself, I understand fully how precious it is to have a job. Whether it be the rural industry that is affected or industries in small towns that are affected, QWAs are about saving jobs and then we can get to job creation.

Many of us in this Chamber know well that many small businesspeople are employing people through Queensland workplace agreements and they are working very satisfactorily within those agreements. A classic example of that is explained in this letter from L. J. Hooker. I dare say that Government members have a copy of this letter. This precise document stipulates and identifies how successful workplace agreements have been since they were put in place by the former Minister on 26 November 1996.

Mr Lucas: Real estate agents are worse than lawyers.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Lytton is leaving the Chamber. His trouble is that he could not lace up Tommy Burns' shoelaces. Members opposite talk about the battlers. Tom Burns, the former member for Lytton, was a fair dinkum bloke in terms of what he stood for and his Labor convictions. The present member for Lytton would not know what work is all about. I can tell by the look of him that he has never had dirt under his fingernails in his life. If he returns to his seat, I will serve him right up. He and too many like him come from academia. I come from academia, too: the university I went to was the school of hard knocks. I know exactly what it is all about: busted knuckles and busted teeth. At the same time, it is about people. The members on the other side of the Chamber—and the member for Lytton is a classic example of this—do not understand what people are all about. How many people does he know who are really doing it hard at the moment, who are in small business and employing a young kid out of the goodness of their heart, so that that kid——

Mr Welford: Oh, get out.

Mr JOHNSON: The member would not have a clue. "Get out", he says. I will not get out. I am ashamed to hear the member say that. I say to the member for Lytton——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! It is about time the honourable member for Gregory addressed the Chair and stopped provoking the backbench.

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am referring to an interjection.

I will deal with the issue of small business. A million people are employing kids. They probably cannot afford to employ them. It is out of the goodness of their hearts that they are employing them on the proper wage structure. A lot of them are employed under QWAs. Although they probably should not be

employing them while their overdrafts are going up, they do not want to see those kids who are trying to have a go end up on the scrap heap. That is what every one of us in this place is about: trying to create employment, trying to create productivity and trying to keep this State on a viable path that will be productive for the future generations.

Mr Santoro: You hope that we are all about that, but I don't think those on the other side are.

Mr JOHNSON: Absolutely. When I look around the Chamber I see that there are some very successful people on the other side, too. Yesterday or the day before in this Chamber, the member for Greenslopes was trying to take the micky out of the members on this side who have been successful in their lives. They were successful in their lives because they got out there and had a go. They did it the hard way. They probably employed people and borrowed money. I will come to the matter of borrowing money shortly.

As to consultation on this legislation—I refer to a letter from Clive Bubb, the chief executive officer of QCCI—

> "There has been no consultation by Minister Braddy with employer organisations before these changes were announced and we hope that with future workplace relations changes we will see a greater level of consultation and co-operation with business. It is interesting to note that the Taskforce set up to review the Workplace Relations Act had not been given the opportunity to consider these two major industrial issues and in fact it did not meet until Saturday 8 August 1998, after the Bill was introduced."

What a slap in the face that is to employer organisations. What a slap in the face that is to business. What a slap in the face that is to the people in the productive sector who are out there having a go.

The only consultation this piece of legislation has had is with the unions themselves. This legislation is very non-productive. It is a detrimental, draconian effort. I ask the Minister to please take this legislation away and consult with industry. That is precisely what he has to do to get it right. The unions are not the ones who borrow the money to grow business and to create employment. They are not the ones who have to pay back the money. The structure of workplace agreements, the agreements between the employer and the employees, is working well and proving to be productive. Let business get on with the job of creating a quid and letting this State develop and progress. It is the employer, not the employee, who every month or every six months has to worry about the interest and redemption payment.

Mr Lucas: The GST—they have got to worry about that.

Mr JOHNSON: I will come to the GST, too. It is the employers, the owners of the businesses, who are the people who have to find those dollars every month or every six months to pay the wages, the interest and redemption and the superannuation to keep those people—kids like ours—in a job. They are trying to be responsible and to make an honest profit without being interfered with by bullyboys in unions. There is probably no other member in this Chamber who has had more experience with bullyboys in unions than I have. I have seen a long line of them in the shearing industry. A lot of those heavyweights within the union are the blokes who are telling this Government today how to do it.

Mr Lucas: I will back Bill Ludwig in a blue with you.

Mr JOHNSON: I will come to Bill Ludwig. I know Bill Ludwig fairly well. I probably knew him when the member for Lytton was in nappies. I know all the fellows like Bill Ludwig, Errol Hodder and Dudley Watson. I can go back through the line. I remember an incident at a shearing shed at Woolbuna, my place at Quilpie, just after my old man died. I was 23 years old at the time. One of those blokes came to the shed. He got there at about 8 o'clock in the morning. He walked up and down the board. He said to the boys, "How many of you have got union tickets?" About seven of them did not have tickets. He pulled the work in that shed until those blokes bought a ticket. It was not in his time; it was in my time. Until I wrote a cheque for $700, work in that shed did not start. He had no invitation from me, but he stayed all day, ate my tucker and then stayed the night.

Mr Lucas: How many pay increases did you give them that the award never ordered?

Mr JOHNSON: Mate, the pay increases always came. That is something that you cannot accuse me of, old mate.

Mr Lucas: Only because the award told you to.

Mr JOHNSON: I will tell you now, mate, all my contract staff——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! I ask the honourable member to address members of the House by their correct titles.

Mr JOHNSON: I will run out of time if I keep taking interjections from fruit loops like the member for Lytton.

The point I want to make is that that very afternoon that same bloke came down to me on the bank of the waterhole where I was pumping water and asked, "Have your ringers union tickets?" I said, "I don't have any ringers here; they are contractors", and I said, "and I am not writing out any more cheques for bludging union blokes like you", and I added, "Get going."

They are the blokes who have really caved in businesses in this State and this nation. They have put business on its knees. I say to members opposite that they were in Government from 1989 until when the coalition took over two and a half years ago. Talk about looking after the workers! While I was the Minister for two years and four months, I had deputations from railway unions and other unions affiliated with the transport industry. Those union people told me that they could never get through their Minister's door when the Labor Government was in power for six years and two months. Never did they get through the door! They had to get an invitation.

Mr Sullivan: Rubbish.

Mr JOHNSON: Rubbish be damned! Again, the member would not have a clue. Members opposite did not want to know because those people were trying to get a fair go for their men. The only thing that those blokes opposite are doing is skimming the cream off the top so that they can be kept in the lifestyle to which they have become accustomed. I have to say to them that every union ticket that is purchased in this State helps to keep them in their lifestyle.

Mr Seeney: Ripping them off.

Mr JOHNSON: That is perfectly right. They are ripping them off. I do not know how much union tickets cost now—$250, $300, $150; whatever. That will pay for the tucker for an average family for a week if they live in Brisbane. If they live in Quilpie, Birdsville or somewhere like that, it will pay for only a couple of days worth of tucker, because of the cost involved.

Mr Mickel: What about the GST?

Mr JOHNSON: I will come to the GST and talk about that. Mr Deputy Speaker, you might think that I am getting away from the debate——

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! I hope the GST is relevant to the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill.

Mr JOHNSON: It is relevant. I refer to the Queensland Rail fuel bill of $55m for 90 million litres of fuel. A GST will save the railways $22.5m. That means keeping jobs in QR. While that lot opposite were in power—the members who are the champions of the workers—in six years and two months they got rid of 8,000 people from Queensland Rail. Under the coalition's administration, 200-odd people left through natural attrition.

I say to members that we are in a very, very vulnerable situation. We talk about the Asian crisis and the Premier talks about getting the unemployment rate down to 5% over the next five years. I say to members that everybody in the Opposition will certainly be working very closely with the Premier to make sure that we can get the unemployment rate down. Nobody wants to see the unemployment rate come down more than the Opposition. However, I can assure members opposite that this legislation that they are trying to put through the House is certainly going to be detrimental to getting that unemployment rate down.

I say to the Minister responsible, Mr Braddy, that we are talking about creating jobs, not creating unemployment. I believe that we have to be very careful as we progress into the 21st century. We have to find the marketplace. The Government created the new portfolio of State Development and Trade and talks about jobs in the mining industry, jobs in the rail industry and jobs in the pastoral industry. A couple of days ago we passed the Native Title Bill. I have to say that many people out there are on their knees because of the trying economic times that have been brought upon us by the economic crisis in Asia and some other parts of the world.

Members opposite have to remember that this State and this nation are involved mainly in primary industries. We are not price makers; we are price takers. That makes us very vulnerable. I ask each and every member of the Government to show some thought and understanding for the people in business or for the people who are paying wages and who are endeavouring to employ people. Being an employer myself over a period, I can tell members that employers would rather have a couple of extra hands than be shorthanded. A lot of people are in that predicament. They would rather have an extra man or an extra two men, whether the operation is a mustering camp, a fencing camp, a transport plant, a tank sinkers camp, or whatever. It is always better to have more staff than be understaffed, because that is when the injuries

happen. That is when problems set in and that is when productivity goes down.

Mr Lucas: You didn't need a QWA.

Mr JOHNSON: QWAs worked very well. While I am talking about QWAs, I refer again to Clive Bubb's letter, which states—

"Over 1,500 QWAs have now been approved by the Enterprise Commissioner. These cover in excess of 2,000 employees, and many QCCI members have availed themselves of this type of agreement."

Mr Braddy: 0.2%.

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Braddy knows that it is working.

Mr Braddy: Ha, ha!

Mr JOHNSON: I will take that scoff from the Honourable the Minister. The one thing that I think he should remember is that not one of these Queensland workplace agreements that the former Minister put in place has failed. If anyone wants to talk about the Queensland——

Mr Braddy: Read the report.

Mr JOHNSON: The Queensland concept has not failed. If the Minister wants to talk about what has failed, he should talk about the Federal concept, not the Queensland one. He is talking about the Federal one. The Minister can talk about all the reports he likes but the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Mr Braddy: The proof is in the report.

Mr JOHNSON: I have read the report.

Mr Lucas: You have ignored it.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I do not ignore anything. The members opposite are ignoring it. They have ignored it from day one. In relation to the legislation, they had no consultation with the people who care or with the people who are really doing it the hard way and who are endeavouring to create employment.

The coalition Government's industrial relations reforms were fair. They supported individual rights and freedom of choice whilst at the same time protected those who were most vulnerable in the work force. They are the people whom I think the members opposite have overlooked throughout. The coalition is aware that there are vulnerable people in the work force. We do not want to see people thrown on the scrap heap. I have said it before and I will say it again: the people on this side of the House represent the workers. We are the ones who care about the workers. We are the ones who have created productivity, and we will continue to do so.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (4.47 p.m.): After listening to a speech such as that, I wonder whom the coalminers at Emerald believe represents them. The enterprise bargaining farce, which was introduced by the former Borbidge Government in the form of Queensland workplace agreements, should be abolished from the industrial relations landscape forever. When the honourable member for Clayfield, then the Industrial Relations Minister, introduced the Workplace Relations Bill to Parliament back in November 1996, he gloated about a system that would provide Queensland workers with a fair go all round. He wanted us believe that Queensland workplace agreements would assist to end, in his words, the outdated one-size-fits-all approach.

The honourable member for Clayfield now sits in Opposition. Labor did not believe him then and, most importantly, the people of Queensland did not believe him. That is why the coalition is now in Opposition. Previously, an Opposition member spoke about people congratulating the Minister on introducing the Workplace Relations Bill. Those people congratulated the Minister on 13 June, and that is why the coalition is in Opposition.

The cold, hard reality of QWAs and the member for Clayfield's fair go all round is this: how can it be referred to as an agreement when the only choices for the employees are to sign a QWA regardless of whether or not they accept the terms, not sign a QWA and work in a hostile environment, or say no to a QWA and not get employed? I will outline for the House how a QWA is entered into. A potential employee who attends a job interview can be told, "Yes, you are the right person for the job. However, if you want to work here you have to agree to the terms of a QWA. Here is a copy. You have five days in which to sign it and return it to us or you do not get employed. Tough luck."

What is worse, should the person sign it and commence employment, he or she is automatically under the terms of the QWA, regardless of its content, until the Enterprise Commissioner considers it some time down the track. That may take months—months of underpayment of wages. The coalition said that such employees would be able to head off to the Industrial Magistrates Court to be reimbursed what they should have received in the first place. The coalition did not believe in seeing that employees were protected from day one. If they were not protected, the coalition's attitude was: "Well, the employees

should go and hire a solicitor and get their money back." It is a stupid system.

I have had brought to my attention an example of a company which attempted to have registered a QWA for its work force. State Patrol provided, amongst other things, security employees to work as traffic controllers on civil construction sites. I am advised that much of this work took place in the electorate of Nicklin. State Patrol was able to work its employees to an unregistered QWA. The workplace Act enables this to happen. State Patrol was able to tender for work on the basis of this flawed QWA in the very price competitive security industry. Although this QWA was eventually rejected by the Enterprise Commissioner, the damage had already been done.

As I have previously stated, the legislation provides that the remedy for an employee who has been disadvantaged by a QWA is to take the matter to the Magistrates Court, but in this case State Patrol had gone into liquidation. So the checks and balances mentioned earlier by the member for Burnett are as effective as shutting the gate after the horse has bolted.

Much has been said by speakers opposite about the ability of parties to a QWA to appoint bargaining agents. One of the workers to be covered by the State Patrol QWA in fact did appoint the union as bargaining agent. However, this was completely ignored by the employer, and the secrecy surrounding QWAs meant that no date of hearing was available and there was no way in which the appointed bargaining agent could find out the fate of the agreement. It is a nonsense to say that, in a secret system, a bargaining agent can be appointed and has any real ability to affect the outcome of negotiations for a QWA. In reality, it does not happen.

Then there is the issue of existing employees being confronted with QWAs. Again, the employer can drop a QWA into the hands of an employee without prior consultation. The employer can expect the employee to sign it with just 14 days' consideration, even though this QWA might totally replace the award and be binding on the employee for three long years. One must bear in mind that some employees have a very limited understanding of their existing entitlements under an award and are often employed in workplaces where the employer, too, has a limited understanding of the award.

The coalition Government structured its policies in such a way that employees were discouraged from seeking, if not afraid to seek, assistance from an appropriate union. These employees were left to turn to family, friends or the then Department of Training and Industrial Relations for advice.

Where in the department were employees to find assistance if the content of the QWA concerned them? It was the Office of the Employment Advocate, which was answerable to the chief executive officer of the department. This office was set up to also assist the employers and assist the Enterprise Commissioner in the performance of her functions. So here we have this Office of the Employment Advocate set up to tell employers what they can get away with, tell employees that if they do not sign up and are sacked they can go through the unfair dismissal process and recommend to the Enterprise Commissioner what QWAs might be approved. It is little wonder that employees were left in a situation where they had little choice but to sign a QWA and hope for the best.

I will now address the issue of awards and the attack by the member for Clayfield on the alleged one-size-fits-all system. Awards are not and were never designed to be a mere drop sheet for those employees who fell through the enterprise bargaining net. There has been several years of restructuring of awards, and employers have had the opportunity during this time to remedy any problems that may have existed. The vast majority of awards are relevant and acceptable to employers and employees in this State. If this was not so, why was there not an avalanche of employers and employees entering into the Borbidge Government's QWAs? The reality is that the vast majority of employers and employees who have identified a need to alter their awards have turned to collective agreements with union assistance.

Another part of the QWA joke is the so-called no disadvantage test. One would reasonably assume that "no disadvantage" would in fact mean just that—that employees would be no worse off under a QWA when compared with the parent award. If it were the case that employees were not worse off under a Queensland workplace agreement when compared with the appropriate award, then why would we need them?

Under the terms of the coalition's Workplace Relations Act 1997, employers and employees are free to negotiate terms that are not less favourable than those contained in an award. This was not the case, and the honourable member for Clayfield clouded the concept by using the terms "no overall disadvantage" or "no global disadvantage". This meant that what the employer gave with

the left hand it could take away with the right. Honourable members should think of the no disadvantage test of the member for Clayfield as a seesaw. Awards were being left to rot away and the seesaw was already tilting well in the employers' favour.

Supposedly, what was subtracted from the employees' side was to be replaced with something of equal weight or value. So employees were losing overtime payments, expected to work longer hours and weekends, or even losing leave entitlements and in return provided with token additional payments or time off arrangements which showed scant regard to their health, safety or quality of life.

As a further insult, the member for Clayfield held QWAs up as an avenue for employees to strike a balance between work and family life. There are examples of QWAs in which employees were expected to work extended ordinary hours each week, on any day of that week. Obviously, these examples show no regard for employees' quality of life—least of all that of employees' spouses or children.

The QWA concept was not designed to encourage flexibility, job security or even productivity but left the door open for some employers to sweep the inadequacies of their businesses under the carpet and offset them against employees' entitlements and conditions.

What of the QWAs that were approved? Many QWAs made only minor changes to the parent award. I cite the high percentage of QWAs under the Child Care Industry Award which only increased casual engagement. This outcome could have been achieved just as easily by a variation to the parent award or by a certified agreement but, importantly, it would have been vetted through a public scrutiny process by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission in an open forum, open to debate—unlike the processes relating to QWAs. Other QWAs only tinkered with minor provisions relating to hours and breaks, issues which could have been addressed through facilitative provisions under the parent award.

A fair collective bargaining process is the only way agreements covering individual workplaces can fairly address the needs of both employers and employees. Collective agreements allow employees to openly discuss concerns and issues with one another or with their union. QWAs, like VEAs before them, are shrouded in secrecy. The truth is that if one wanted to see a QWA one could not—unless the employer or employee chose to show it. In essence, this shut out ordinary people from viewing what are allegedly fair and just documents. Anyone can view an award, industrial agreement or certified agreement, so why not a Queensland workplace agreement? What have they got to hide?

What of the employers who entered into the QWA process for the right reasons, expecting to find a simple method to formalise above-award arrangements? Many of these employers aborted the idea when confronted with a tiresome process, a process greeted with suspicion by their employees.

QWAs were touted by the member for Clayfield as being the way of the future. Truth be known, the coalition had its own concerns. This was plainly obvious by the Borbidge Government not allowing even its own employees, employees of local authorities and the like, to be bound by QWAs.

I congratulate the Minister on having the decency to move quickly to protect the rights of individual employees by ridding the State of the farcical QWA system. In the interim, employers and employees are free to negotiate collective agreements, either directly or with union involvement. I commend this Bill to the House as being a fair and just alternative to the legacy left by the honourable member for Clayfield.

Mr RAPPOLT (Mulgrave—ONP) (4.50 p.m.): Before I came into this House today I looked at the paperwork and I have a feeling that we in this place happen to be working under a workplace agreement. I think we are all pretty happy about that.

Mr Fouras: How did you negotiate it?

Mr RAPPOLT: I did not negotiate it; somebody put me here.

Mr Reeves: It's not secret.

Mr RAPPOLT: I thought it was.

Speaking from experience as an employer of hundreds of employees over the past 39 years in the transport, aviation, building and mining industries, and having met with a lot of representatives in those industries, I feel that I have a pretty hands-on approach to dealing with this issue. Workplace agreements have been around for a long time in the mining and building industries. Those businesses are pretty diverse. For example, a boilermaker would be covered by his relevant union. He could then drive a truck——

Mr Fouras: How long is a long time? How long is a piece of string?

Mr RAPPOLT: That is exactly right.

A boilermaker who drove a truck for a couple of hours would be covered by the

relevant transport union. He might then drive a loader and, as such, would be covered by another union. He might then work on a piece of plant and, as such, would again be covered by a different union. Then he might cook a meal as part of his employment and, as such, he would have to be in another union. An employee may work under four or five different unions or awards in one working day. The administration that has to be undertaken by the employer in these cases is an impost, and that has a marked effect on the profitability of businesses. That impost restricts the employment of extra staff by small business. Therefore, growth and job creation are also restricted.

As small business is the major employer in this State and as the Premier is committed to lowering unemployment, we must listen to small business and give it a fair go. Preserving QWAs is a major step in assisting small business. Furthermore, through QWAs workers understand and are part of the running of the business. The workers are in control of their own destiny.

The Minister told this House that Queensland workplace agreements do not recognise the unequal bargaining power that exists in the workplace. The Minister must be stuck in reverse gear somewhere back before the Second World War to make such an incredible statement. Everything has been done to redress the balance of power between employees and employers in Queensland's legislation. A workplace agreement must be entered into freely. Indeed, before giving approval to the agreement the Enterprise Commissioner must be totally satisfied that an employee has given genuine consent to its terms and conditions. What could be fairer than that?

Both the employee and the employer are able to negotiate QWAs, and each has the right to a bargaining agent. Perhaps the Minister has overlooked that protection. However, it exists in the present legislation. It is even an offence for a party to refuse to negotiate with the other party's bargaining agent. Perhaps the Minister has overlooked that, too. The big and powerful union can help its members in the important negotiating processes. What could be fairer than that? When negotiating a QWA, the existing legislation even provides that the parties to the negotiations may take authorised industrial action by giving at least three days' notice to the other party. The present law also gives blanket protection to an employee to prevent him from being dismissed for engaging in industrial action. Indeed, for the Minister even to suggest that there is an imbalance of power in the negotiation process clearly indicates that he has either never read the legislation or is intent on subverting it. He wants to get his union mates in Labor back into the industrial scheme of things.

The proven and existing safeguards in the current legislation, and the protection they afford, make a mockery of the comments by the Minister in his second-reading speech concerning the urgency to remove these provisions from the Act and the necessity to restore some sense of balance to our industrial system. The Minister also referred to the number of QWAs operating in the State compared with the number of certified agreements. But what he fails to consider is that QWAs have been available only for the past 18 months. With time and with the right encouragement, One Nation is confident that QWAs will increase in popularity in Queensland. That is particularly so when small businesses and their employees realise the advantages that they offer to both employers and employees in terms of providing greater workplace flexibility and security.

One Nation vigorously opposes the amendment relating to the proposal to vary the Act to delete reference to the allowable award matters. The logical intention of stripping back awards to 20 allowable matters was originally to ensure that the awards were simplified so that they do not impair flexibility in the workplace. What could be more sensible than that? Obviously, this amendment to the Act is the direct result of pressure being applied to the Labor Party by its union mates, who see the existing legislative arrangements as prejudicial to their redundant power base in the workplace.

Labor's union mates are trying to make a job for themselves at the expense of employees and industry alike. The workers are carrying the union dead weight on their backs and the unions want the employers to foot the bill. Labor's type of industrial union is fast losing its relevance in Queensland as workers increasingly vote with their feet to reject the union movement and the confrontationist policies that it has increasingly been seen to promote.

It is time this minority Labor Government—a Government which enjoys the exercise of power because of a massive gerrymander, a Government which was opposed and rejected by more than 60% of Queensland voters—began to realise that it has a responsibility to represent the interests of all Queenslanders, not simply the lust and

wants of a few power-hungry union bosses. These same union bosses are frightened that they are about to lose the little control they now have over workers in Queensland. The workers are progressively throwing off the meddling and dominance of union bureaucrats in their industrial affairs—throwing off the yoke of university educated union meddlers intent on interfering in their working lives. This Bill is a throwback to the past—a reversal of progress.

Mr Sullivan: You didn't write that.

Mr RAPPOLT: No, I did not write that word.

This is a Bill directed at featherbedding the industrial scene so that a few union bureaucrats can push Labor's politics of division in the workplace and pass the costs on to workers and employers. This Bill must be seen for what it is: Labor's Trojan horse sent through our industrial gates to cause hatred, stress and division. I reject this Bill in its entirety.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (5.07 p.m.): This debate provides us with the opportunity to revisit a Bill passed in the last Parliament. It is one of a number of pieces of legislation that significantly affect people in this State. Some of the impacts were difficult to project. Therefore, this debate provides us with a wonderful opportunity to revisit this legislation to see how it worked in its implementation.

I wish to speak about two major issues today. Yesterday the member for Ferny Grove raised a number of my comments in the original debate on the Workplace Relations Bill. I thank him for raising those concerns. They are as valid now as they were then. I spoke on a number of issues in the original debate. That Bill was complex and proposed significant and sweeping changes for industrial relations. At that time, after reading, holding meetings and gathering a significant amount of information, I supported the two matters that I will raise today, that is, QWAs and the 20 allowable matters, or the award simplification.

My support for QWAs was based on a number of important facets. One was the fact that there was a no disadvantage test. Another was that there was access by participants to the QWA, particularly the employee, to a bargaining agent. That could be a union representative. Another was that that union representative could be invited in, and there was no right on the part of the employer to preclude that person from working with the prospective signatory to the agreement.

As the Bill was passed, that is exactly what occurred. A new employee entering into a QWA has to be given five days to review the contents of the QWA; an existing employee, 14 days. The employer must hand them a sheet of paper that outlines their rights in the process, and that sheet of paper is created by the Employment Advocate. As an independent arbiter, the Employment Advocate sets out the role of the various parties in the QWA agreement. So the parties to the agreement are advised of what is available to them; they do not do it in isolation.

I understand, and in part I agree, that situations would arise in which a party to a QWA could be disadvantaged. That is human nature, unfortunately. Incidents of disadvantage under the pre-existing regime were raised with me before the Bill was passed. People were being disadvantaged under the award system—under enterprise bargaining. We are never going to be able to legislate to stop that disadvantaging because a person who wants to do the wrong thing will find a way of doing it.

One of the documents that was used by the Government to support the removal of QWAs from the Industrial Relations Act was the report on Queensland workplace agreements. I valued the opportunity to be able to read through that document. I noted that there were 1,516 employees currently covered by QWAs, with a further 601 lodged but not yet approved. I know that a number of other QWAs have not been lodged simply because people were told prior to the election that there was no point; it was a waste of time, because if there was a change of Government QWAs were going to be abolished. So a number still have to be lodged.

I also note that, in the 17 months since the introduction of QWAs, only 0.2% of the total workers covered by Queensland awards and agreements have been covered by QWAs. This fact is being used in great measure in this debate to say that, because there is such a low take-up, QWAs are not necessary in enterprise bargaining or the industrial relations program for this State. When I read that I thought, "If only 0.2% of Queensland workers are on QWAs, what is all the grief? Why is there so much concern that QWAs should remain?" It is obvious that those who were taking them up were those in niche employment areas in which QWAs particularly suited their type of employment.

Another issue was raised in the report summarising the issues that are covered by QWAs. It is on the bottom of the first page of

the executive summary. It talks about the percentages of QWAs that increased ordinary weekly hours, increased the span of hours, removed or decreased penalty rate entitlements, removed overtime, removed annual leave loading, removed allowances and removed or decreased sick leave entitlements. I was looking in the report for some acknowledgment that some of those allowances or payments were incorporated into annualised salaries. That was not in the report. I am not convinced that it is not an issue that should be incorporated because I know that, in some of the workplace agreements in which I have been involved, a number of those allowances were bundled together and then placed into an annualised salary. I could not find that information in the report.

There has been a lot of support for QWAs, and from some fairly unlikely quarters. There was an article in the Courier-Mail on Thursday, 28 August 1996 which talked about flexible agreements to create real jobs. I note that right from the time that this Bill was tabled, the Courier-Mail has been supportive of the QWA process—the options that would be made available to workers and employers with appropriate protections. The Courier-Mail continues to hold the line that it held in April 1996. In 1996 it said that there is a need to streamline work practices and unwanted union interference in non-union workplaces and for employees and bosses to have greater freedom to negotiate agreements with each other. In August this year, it said—

> "QWAs are also subject to a 'no disadvantage test' which ensures that employers can not use the agreements to reduce conditions—a test that is backed by Industrial Relations Commission scrutiny."

Generally the Courier-Mail, which is usually fairly quick to condemn anything that comes out of this House, was very supportive of the QWA process.

A number of people wrote to me about the issue, particularly targeting the QWAs. Clubs Queensland objected to the abolition of QWAs. Mount St Michael's College wrote to me about the abolition of workplace agreements. Its major concern stated in the body of its letter was about the actual fundamental bargaining which was introduced by the Labor Party when it was previously in Government. Perhaps somebody in the Government who is an expert in enterprise bargaining could give this group some assistance to reduce the amount of trauma that this is creating at that school.

R. D. Williams wrote saying—

> "All we ask is the freedom of choice and we would appreciate your help in maintaining our freedom of choice ..."

regarding the abandonment of the previous Government's QWAs.

I received one or two letters from people who were concerned about the retention of QWAs because of their own political position. I also received a letter from the Queensland branch of the Transport Workers Union seeking the abolition of QWAs for a number of reasons. The first reason was a Federal issue. It said that QWAs had been used by employers to blatantly break taxation laws, and the second reason was that the agreements, which were supposed to be subject to a no disadvantage clause, are often finalised in the State in a non-ratified form in which workers are shockingly disadvantaged. When I checked, I found that there is no way that a QWA can formally be achieved unless it is, firstly, agreed to by both parties and it is forwarded to the Enterprise Commissioner for its testing as far as the no disadvantage test is concerned. So non-ratified QWAs are illegal documents; they are not recognised in the State.

The branch secretary also raised with me the fact that employers abuse workers through facilitation clauses. That was not a term that I was familiar with. In particular, I could not remember it from the Industrial Relations Act. Upon checking, I found that the facilitation clause is not in the legislation or the regulations; it is in the awards as part of the wage case decision and applies only to collective approvals, not individual agreements. So the primary concerns of the secretary with whom I spoke appear to be slightly unfounded.

An individual also faxed through his QWA agreement to me. One point of that agreement says that it is an understanding between the contractor and the driver and does not include industrial relations or unions. One of the previous speakers talked about QWAs being drafted, signed and agreed to without the proper scrutiny. Somebody from the Opposition side of the Chamber said that they are now illegal and that the employers should be reported. I will be contacting the person who sent me that QWA because, if it is an illegal document and they are being disadvantaged, it should be reviewed and the employer should be brought to task because it is inappropriate.

Mr Sullivan: It is happening all the time; the individual employee feels powerless to do anything about it.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Maybe there needs to be a campaign to advise them of their rights—to be able to have those QWAs reviewed. A number of other people wrote to me particularly about training. I had meetings in my electorate at which people said that they wanted QWAs to be retained to allow training opportunities to continue. The individuals could still receive the training as casual employees, but they would not be able to get the same training certificate unless they were in a full-time employment situation. Under the QWA, that situation could be achieved.

On balance, I will be supporting the retention of the QWAs for a number of reasons. All the protections that were in the Bill were placed there in good faith a year or so ago. I was concerned that there was an inappropriate, inadequate protective regime for the two parties involved in a QWA. However, all the areas of concern that were raised were already covered. A QWA cannot be formulated without being properly scrutinised. An employee cannot sign the document and have it ratified by the Enterprise Commissioner unless it passes the no disadvantage test. Employees have the opportunity to obtain advice from the Employment Advocate.

I looked at the possibility of the Employment Advocate coming from outside the departmental structure so that he could honestly operate with no conflict of interest. However, to do that we would have to set up a separate bureaucracy, which I was loath to do. I have not received any complaints that the Employment Advocate was acting in a partial or biased manner. I have received no complaint at all about the Employment Advocate. Indeed, I have received no complaints about the work of the Enterprise Commissioner.

When I went through all the issues that had been raised with me on a formal level, I found that the opposition to QWAs is ideological. It is a philosophical difference between those who are soundly in favour of QWAs and those who are opposed because of their political position.

The other matter on which I wanted to comment relates to the issue of allowable awards. I am less supportive of retention of this aspect. When the allowable matters were raised in the previous Bill I gave them a great deal of consideration. I have not been directly involved in a lot of union negotiations. I do not even understand the intricacies of the 320 awards in this State. I do not work in that field. Perhaps the member for Nudgee knows more about those sorts of issues. As a result, I took advice and listened to a lot of people.

The purpose of the 20 allowable matters is to simplify the process of recognising what matters had to be taken into account when a person's wage structure was being determined. The comments that were being made to me by the then Opposition, the Labor Party, were that people currently employed would be disadvantaged because matters that had to be considered in their wage structure would disappear into a vapour, and therefore the amount of money that they were receiving for that issue would also vaporise. That was something that concerned me a great deal. Everyone I know who has been working in a position for some time budgets according to their wage. None of us can afford to have a significant drop in our take-home pay. It is a matter of reality.

In the period of time since the 20 allowable matters were put into place—albeit the existing awards remain at this time—nothing has happened in this State. There have been a small number of award changes federally—63 out of approximately 3,200. There is a drop in the bucket! In Queensland we have 320 awards and not one of them has been formally simplified.

I did have a discussion with a member of this Chamber, for whom I have the greatest regard, who advised—and this is more to do with QWAs—that there has been simplification of awards which have already been put in place. We were talking particularly about QWAs, but the conversation crossed over a little bit. There has been work done by the unions to simplify the award system in order to make it a little easier for people to deal with it. In spite of the work that has been done, nothing has progressed.

The proposal that the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations has put forward is to extend the period of negotiation for a further 12 months. I have indicated to him that there is one more piece of information that I want to receive tonight before I decide my final position on the matter. The concerns that I had 18 months ago about the disadvantage to workers in award simplification have not gone. They remain. If there is no risk that simplification will disadvantage workers in areas that should be considered in fixing their wage structure, I would certainly be most supportive in seeing it retained. There was an 18-month trial period to see if the simplifications worked. That has not occurred.

This is the opportunity to revisit it. I am certainly inclined to support the abolition of award simplification pending the receipt of that last piece of information.

The Workplace Relations Act was a difficult one for me to work my way through. It directly impacts on how people work, how they enjoy their work and how secure their work is. QWAs present an opportunity for flexibility. Certain streams have come to me with strong arguments for the retention of QWAs—hence my position. Equally, the award system is intrinsic to a worker's security. As I said, I am inclined at this stage to support the removal of the simplification.

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (5.26 p.m.): The changes to Queensland's workplace laws proposed by the Government are very far reaching. They are designed to re-install big unionism as the central plank of industrial relations policy in this State. It is vital that every Queenslander understands this to be the intent—and the outcome if these laws are passed, which they should not be—of the Bill presented to the House by the member for Kedron.

Mr Fouras: So you are saying you are out to destroy unions?

Mrs SHELDON: I will take that interjection because our Bill was not about destroying unions, as the honourable member would be well aware if he was being honest. Our Bill was giving people the choice to either work through the union basis that is already there or make their own decisions in their own agreements. To refuse the option of choice leads to a situation in which unions are often used by the Labor Party, and that is to establish an entrenched basis of power for themselves. It is not a situation of looking after the worker. That shows the total hypocrisy of this whole exercise here tonight.

The Opposition will fight this craven retreat to the past because that is exactly what it is. The Opposition will fight for Queensland's future and not for Queensland's past. We should be progressive. We should be looking for the future and we should be looking at agreements that will enhance the workplace, enhance jobs and enhance a person's individual right. Our goal as a people, as a State of this great Federation, is surely to enter the 21st century with the best possible set of circumstances for what is really a very exciting era of new technology and personal freedom that is the promise of our century and the century to come.

I want to talk about the great advances for women that have been made possible by the coalition's unique and progressive workplace relations laws. I want to talk about the fate of these advances—the dreadful fate of these advances put in place by the coalition—if this back-to-the-future Labor legislation passes through this House. Queensland needs great levels of employment creation if we are to fully match the genuine and deserved expectations of Queenslanders of today and tomorrow, and particularly our young Queenslanders.

It is also the case that those opposite need great levels of employment creation if their leader, Mr Five Per Cent, is to escape severe embarrassment by non-delivery of his core election promise of 5% unemployment.

Mr Sullivan: No, he didn't. He said that he was hoping to do that.

Mrs SHELDON: He had so many positions that it is very difficult to know what he said. The original promise, my friend, was 5% unemployment and then he decided that he would shift on that, and I think it is now a target. He has realised himself that it was absolutely unachievable and he was out hoodwinking the electorate that he could do it. This is, of course, largely a matter for the member for Brisbane Central to come to terms with. His embarrassment, current or future, is not the concern of this House; the concern is the significant drag on private sector employment growth. That is what the Government's Workplace Relations Amendment Bill represents, particularly for women.

Queenslanders are energetic and innovative people. The great majority of them are not members of trade unions. In the private sector, union membership is less than one third of the work force. Union membership—and even the member for Kedron might, in a moment of unusual clarity, recognise this—is very rarely either productive or appropriate for people who work in very small businesses or in family concerns. Yet people in both of those situations manage very well without the protective hand of Big Brother union. A great many of the people in small businesses and family businesses are women. They need great flexibility in their working arrangements. Very often they need, by virtue of their family commitments, flexibility in working hours. They need flexibility in working days, and they certainly need flexibility in working arrangements. They are the people for whom the benefits of Queensland workplace agreements are blindingly obvious to anyone, apart from the Braddy bunch opposite.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member will refer to other members by their correct titles.

Mrs SHELDON: I used the term collectively, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Women form a great part of the Queensland work force. They form a resource that is of huge benefit to the Queensland economy. They are the leading edge of our progress into the future. Let me make it plain that the coalition parties see a very real role—a continuing role—for unions in Queensland's workplace environment. That is what I said to the member for Ashgrove. That was enshrined in the coalition's historic workplace relations reforms, which were put in place only 18 months ago. It was our policy then. It is our policy now.

Members on this side of the House stand for personal freedom that extends to the workplace. We do that in part because of the impact on women of the restrictive labour practices of the past—the practices that benefit only the big unions and the members of the industrial relations club, most of whom, of course, are male. Many working women need the sort of flexibility that is entrenched in the principle of the Queensland workplace agreement, which is the prime target—the first target—of the forces which are driving the member for Kedron on his precipitate road to the past.

All members in this House are passionate about the business of building the economy and building the jobs that must go with that greater and broader economy. The coalition's record in private sector job creation in Queensland during our term in office was the best in the country. That is a matter of pride to members on this side of the House, and it should be a matter of pride to everyone, because surely that is our mutual target: to have good employment, and good employment for all Queenslanders regardless of their age. It is certainly a record that has been of immense benefit to the great many women who have their place in the new economy that is developing around Queensland's growth as a service-oriented and highly technological sector.

We are entitled to ask: how does a retreat to the one-size-fits-all, union-dominated and bureaucratically controlled industrial environment square with the real needs—the genuine needs—of the new economy and the new operators within it? We are entitled to suggest that the answer is: it does not. We are entitled to suggest that the Government's Workplace Relations Amendment Bill in fact does nothing much about anything, other than restore protection to the big union minders of the Labor Party and, of course, the funding that goes with that. This is a partisan Bill. It is a Bill that fails the basic test of public interest. What is most shocking of all about that is that the author of the Bill, the member for Kedron, who must know this to be the case, is still prepared to return Queensland to a past that has gone in a way that will deny it and its people the full potential of the future.

The key issues in the battle to make sure that Queensland has the best possible start to the 21st century are—

> higher productivity: the existing workplace laws, introduced by the coalition, provide this;
>
> employment growth: freer employment practices and employee/employer agreed wages, introduced by the coalition, encourage this; and
>
> better pay and living conditions for all Queenslanders: sustainable high growth rates, most achievable via freedom of choice in the workplace, stimulate this drive.

Our reforms, which the Braddy bunch want to kill off because they disadvantage big unions and their leaderships, are built on the following principles—

> a commitment to freedom of choice, allowing employers, employees and unions to enter into workplace arrangements best suited to their needs—not to the one-size-fits-all requirements of the 1950s;
>
> an emphasis on collective and individual agreements without uninvited third party intervention;
>
> a simplified but sufficient award safety net underpinning the enterprise bargaining process and ensuring that those who remain under the award system have the protection of enforceable minimum entitlements, and this is not the blighted landscape that the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations is trying to paint;
>
> genuine freedom of association, including the right to belong or not to belong to an industrial organisation;
>
> an unfair dismissal regime that ensures a fair go for all and maintains and builds business confidence in engaging employees;
>
> a system harmonised with Commonwealth legislation but which

> emphasises and protects the unique Queensland history of workplace relations; and
>
> industrial disputes fell by a massive amount, because unions were unable to mount credible industrial action against coalition workplace laws that worked and that were popular.

I believe that that is one of the real concerns of members opposite: they were popular, so they want to change them and make sure that they do not become entrenched. QWAs are supported by a monitoring system controlled by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission that is self-evidently working. The Braddy bunch know that, but it does not suit the union commissars to admit it.

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

Mrs SHELDON: Labor's amendments are anti-jobs. They will discourage job creation, particularly for women who need flexible work arrangements, and pose a threat to existing jobs because they are anti-business. They will encourage jurisdiction hopping and, therefore, make IR more expensive and bureaucratic for Queensland business.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: Government members do not like the truth. They have never been able to stand the truth. Unless they have the protection of the big union bosses behind them, they are nothing, and they know it. They are not game to give the individual a bit of freedom.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mrs SHELDON: I thought that Mr Purcell would want the individual to have a bit of freedom, but the BLF would not. It has never looked after the individual. It has been a union power base for industrial thugs.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bulimba!

Mrs SHELDON: These amendments certainly represent a back-to-the-future approach, because they return Queensland's IR system back to an emphasis on awards—the system of the past—instead of enterprise and workplace-based agreements, which are the way of the future. I suggest that this House has absolutely no alternative but to reject this very backward looking Bill.

When speaking of how important jobs are—and that is part of this whole workplace arrangement and legislation—I believe that it is a vital economic necessity for job creation that the State of Queensland and every other State of Australia reach agreement on the fundamental reform of Federal/State financial relationships. In Government, our coalition campaigned strongly for such reform. I personally was very involved in trying to reach a formula which would provide a form of greater revenue to the States so that they could meet their growing and increasing demand for services, particularly in a growing State like Queensland. We also wished not to be constantly tied to the Commonwealth's apron strings and not to be constantly going down to Premiers Conferences with our begging bowl and coming back with it half full. I think that everyone recognised the farce that Premiers Conferences had become, regardless of the political persuasion of whatever Government was in power in Canberra.

It is refreshing that the current offer that is on the table by the Federal coalition Government goes a long way towards remedying that situation and to meeting the States' requests. The tax reform package that the Commonwealth Government is now offering the people of our State and nation goes a long way towards remedying the imbalance in Federal/State tax arrangements. If it can be remedied, and if the States become more economically viable, then job growth will result.

The offer involves State and Territory Governments receiving all the revenue from a goods and services tax that would be rendered. We were certainly after a growth tax. A number of the States were seeking inclusion in income tax collection, but it is better to have a central collection agency. By collecting a tax such as a GST—an indirect tax base that covers all and catches all in its net, so the black marketeers cannot get out of paying tax as they have been up to now—that revenue base provided enables the State to be more certain in its planning, because it will have the revenue to carry out its plans. The basis of Federal/State tax reform that the Federal coalition Government is putting forth should be applauded and accepted open-handedly by any State Government, because it allows State and Territory Governments to abolish many of their business taxes that are regressive taxes. There is no doubt about that. Any overhead and tax on business causes a business to be able to afford fewer employees. The GST also ensures that State and Territory

Governments are no longer dependent on financial assistance grants—FAGs—from the Commonwealth. The GST would give the States and Territories more revenue than they receive currently under FAGs and a constant form of revenue and growth. The most obvious symptom of unhealthy Commonwealth/State relations is the Premiers Conference. By not having to rely on FAGs in the future, that would not be necessary. The new arrangements will mean the end of FAGs. Instead of FAGs, the States and Territories will receive all of the revenue from the GST. That will enable them to rely on a broad-based, indirect tax that will grow as State-based populations grow. Queensland has the highest population growth of any State. That is continuing to grow.

The GST will also ensure that there is no increase in the overall tax burden. Much has been said about the position in which Queensland would find itself. Members opposite have described that position as a position of disadvantage. The Prime Minister has clearly said that no State would be disadvantaged. The fact that we do not have a FID tax in Queensland—and that has been very important to us as a State—will continue to be the case.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am wondering about the relevance to the Bill of the member's contribution.

Mrs SHELDON: There is a lot of relevance, because the fundamental problem with the existing tax system and the resulting State imposts on businesses has resulted in a decrease in jobs. One of the stated fundamental principles of this workplace legislation is to make workplaces freer and more able for employers to employ people. I have always had the focus that tax and jobs are combined. One cannot consider only one aspect. It is important to consider the positives of this tax package in relation to the creation of jobs in our State.

When we have income coming in from the GST, Queensland will be able to abolish indirect taxes. Queensland has a debits tax, which is a tax on the financial transactions of businesses. The abolition of indirect taxes will produce a system that is healthier and easier to manage. Doing the books and the Budget will be much easier once there is a constant, growth income stream. The GST will also allow the abolition of stamp duty on marketable securities. That is a very important issue. As every State in the nation imposes stamp duty on its marketable securities, people often invest in companies that trade offshore. That is a disadvantage to us and towards job creation. Removing stamp duties on business transactions and bank transactions and having a fundamentally assured growth tax and increased revenue base as our State grows will give a real fillip to our future.

Mr MUSGROVE: I rise to a point of order under Standing Order 120. The member is digressing and not addressing the Bill in any remote sense.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think the member has finished. I call the member for Maroochydore.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (5.44 p.m.): I have been listening to Labor members opposite and their repetitive, tedious misrepresentation. They seek to destroy the reputation of a good Workplace Relations Act that was introduced and successfully steered through——

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! If members are going to interject, they will do so from their correct seat.

Miss SIMPSON: That Act was introduced and successfully steered through this Parliament in early 1998 by the member for Clayfield and the then Minister for Training and Industrial Relations. I thought that the member for Clayfield clearly illustrated the absolute rubbish that was spoken by the Honourable the Minister in the second-reading speech that he delivered when he introduced into this place the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill 1998. I am absolutely tired of hearing Labor members opposite mouthing in a senseless way complete mistruths about the benefits of the legislation that the coalition had introduced. They are intent on perpetrating that misinformation and what are downright untruths to confuse the public and to take away the rights that the people have been given. They have been given a choice that they did not have previously.

For example, how many times do we on this side of the Chamber have to repeat that Queensland workplace agreements are not secret documents? They are confidential documents underpinned by protections for employees, protections which are fair dinkum and which can be activated by employees or other parties including the Employment Advocate and the Enterprise Commissioner should an injustice be inflicted by an employer on an employee. Why honourable members opposite fail to distinguish between the word "secret" and the word "confidential" is beyond me. Either they have not read the Act, have a

poor understanding of the Queen's English or simply are collaborators with the Minister's attempts to distort the truth about the justice and fairness within the Workplace Relations Act.

I have also heard them quote in a tedious and repetitive manner the so-called discoveries of the report on the effect of the introduction of Queensland workplace agreements, which was commissioned by the Minister and altered by the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. The shadow Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and other speakers on this side of the House have continually pointed to the most significant deficiency in the report: its lack of balance given that it fails to outline the benefits that accrue to employees as a result of the making of a QWA with an employer. It is a shameful attempt to distort the debate that is taking place in this Parliament and the broader community. The member for Clayfield suggested that the Minister should do the decent thing and commission a genuinely independent report that can be achieved only by having not an anonymous author from the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations but a highly respected and well recognised individual within the Queensland community, the integrity of whose research and results we can all have confidence in—in other words, an independent review.

I am also tired of listening to members opposite knocking the very considerable achievements of the Queensland coalition Government and blaming the industrial relations system that we put in place for alleged failings in the area of employment. As honourable members on this side of the House have clearly demonstrated, under the coalition Government Queensland boasted record employment creation and an eight-year record low in the rate of unemployment; yet, despite those undeniable facts and figures, members opposite continue in their attempts to rewrite history and to convince other people—and more particularly themselves—that it was doom and gloom in terms of employment creation under a coalition Government.

Honourable members in this place should realise that every time they seek to rewrite history, every time they ignore the facts that are well and truly on the public record, they are doing so to the disadvantage of the broader Queensland community. Queensland experienced a record rate of growth, record employment growth, a decline in the unemployment rate, a massive and record capital works program and so much more under the coalition Government, including a massive reduction in hospital waiting lists and times, lower class sizes, more police and generally better service delivery right across the range of Government departments.

I implore members opposite to stop knocking and be positive where there is a need to be positive and to be constructively critical where this can indeed be justified. Let us argue in a fair dinkum manner the impact that this amendment Bill will have on the viability of small businesses in Queensland and, more particularly, on their willingness to make positive employment decisions.

As the member for Clayfield, the Leader of the Opposition and other Opposition members who have already spoken to this Bill have stated, this legislation will do nothing but create disincentives within Queensland workplaces for employers to the point at which we predict that their intention to employ people will be greatly compromised. This legislation seeks to eliminate choice from the agreement-making processes within Queensland workplaces. It puts the union right back into the agreement-making processes irrespective of whether employers and employees want the union to be involved in such agreement-making processes. It reintroduces a system of industrial relations that is centralised, collective, cumbersome, bureaucratic and one in which participation by small businesses will be minimal.

This side of the House does not condemn a collective approach to workplace bargaining and agreement making; quite the contrary, we support it and we support the provision for such agreement making to exist within the legislation that the Labor Party Government is attempting to amend. However, at the same time the coalition parties support choice and an essential part of that choice within the coalition's industrial relations legislation is the capacity for individual employers and employees to enter into individual agreements, referred to as Queensland workplace agreements.

That the Beattie Labor Party Government and Minister Braddy are attempting to deprive Queensland workers of their choice is a clear demonstration of their ideologically blinkered bias in favour of an industrial relations system that should have died out with the dinosaurs. They want to take this State and the Queensland economy backwards. For the sake of Queensland small businesses and employment growth in this State, I urge all non-Labor members within this Parliament to

reject the amendments that are being put forward by the Minister and his Government.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (5.52 p.m.): I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to this debate. Over the past two days, I have listened with interest to the debate. At the outset, I have to say that the repetitive speeches delivered by the members opposite can be summed up in four words: sanctimonious, condescending, patronising rubbish. We have been treated to repetition after repetition of sanctimonious, condescending, patronising rubbish. We have been told over and over that Queensland workers are incapable of determining their own destiny. We have been told over and over that Queensland workers have no right to bargain for themselves. We have been told over and over and over that Queensland workers have no right to determine their own working conditions. What sanctimonious, condescending, patronising rubbish! What absolute arrogance!

What right do the members opposite have to tell workers that they cannot negotiate with their employer to arrive at an agreement that suits both parties—an agreement that is flexible enough to accommodate the particular circumstances in which they work? What right do the used-up union hacks opposite have to tell us that we do not have the ability or the judgment to determine our own employment conditions? I say "we" very deliberately, because I have worked out there in those concreting gangs and I have worked out there in those stock camps and I have an affinity with and an understanding of the people who are still out there working today. It is a background different from that of the union hacks who sit on that side opposite.

Mr Purcell: How much did you work for?

Mr SEENEY: The member should just wait a while. I will get to that. I have an affinity with the people whom those silvertail socialists opposite are trying to tell this House do not have the ability to negotiate their own workplace agreements. Let me say to this House that I reject totally this patronising, sanctimonious, condescending rubbish. I reject totally the suggestion that unless a union is involved, I and my contemporaries are going to be exploited by employers who, without exception, are going to rip us off. What arrogant nonsense! Let me tell those silvertail socialists who sit opposite that we have been standing up for ourselves for 20 years.

Members opposite should prepare themselves for a shock. Twenty years ago, my contemporaries and I negotiated our own work conditions when working for a multinational company. That was 20 years before QWAs were heard of. We were working in isolated situations that union reps never visited because it was too far from the end of the bitumen, and the knowledge of industrial awards was pretty sketchy. We came to our own arrangements through mutual agreements. Today, that trend continues and it is now formalised in legislation.

More and more workers are deciding that the union bureaucrats have nothing to offer. They are voting with their feet and opting to look after themselves. That is what this legislation is all about. Despite the sanctimonious, patronising, condescending rubbish that we have heard from the ex-union officials opposite, this legislation has nothing to do with any real concern for the workers out there in the road gangs, the factories and the stock camps; this legislation is designed to protect and guarantee the future of the union movement. This legislation is about trying to reverse the decline of an organisation that for years has been losing relevance and losing members. That is what this legislation is about. It is about trying to entrench the role of an organisation that is a major financial contributor to the Labor Party. It is about trying to ensure the survival of the union movement that is the prep school for the Labor Party members of Parliament.

This legislation is about guaranteeing the survival and the relevance of a prep school from where most of the members of the Government have graduated. The union movement is the prep school for Labor politicians. For most of the members who made those sanctimonious, patronising, condescending speeches in favour of this legislation, it is a matter of protecting the old school. It is a matter of paying the piper. It is a matter of paying back the organisation that groomed them and provided them with the career path that has brought them to this place.

For the workers out there in the real world, this legislation is an insult. It is an insult for this Labor Government to suggest that we have no right and that we have no ability to negotiate our own destinies. It is an insult to tell us that without the dubious services of the union mates of the members opposite, without their unwanted intervention, we will inevitably be exploited. It is insulting for this Labor Government to suggest that only its union mates can negotiate a reasonable agreement for our workplaces.

How dare these unions insist that they have some sort of statutory right to have their hands in our pockets and live off the rewards of our labour! How dare they! We have the right to choose. We have the right to decide whether we negotiate ourselves or appoint a union or somebody else as our bargaining agent. That is the great strength of the coalition's legislation. It gives workers a choice. It allows those of us who want to bargain for ourselves the right to do so and it allows those who do not feel comfortable about doing that the right to appoint a bargaining agent.

Today, Queensland workers have a choice. They can choose to enter into a collective agreement or an individual agreement, or choose to remain with the award system—an award system that is the true safety net covering 20 core entitlements rather than a document prescribing all aspects of job regulation, an award system that allows flexibility in the workplace and encourages fair agreement making between the parties directly involved in the workplace. The Labor Government is seeking to take away that choice. It is seeking to deny Queensland workers the choice.

This collection of union prep school graduates is seeking to entrench forever the role of the unions and reverse the decline they have suffered in recent years as more and more workers have empowered themselves and taken control of their own destinies. They have broken the shackles of the union movement. This legislation is a purely selfish attempt by the Labor Party to protect its power base. That is what it is all about. It is a purely selfish attempt to guarantee the survival of the old prep school that prepared most of the members opposite for their roles in this Parliament. It is a cynical insult to the workers out there who have chosen to negotiate for themselves. It is a cynical exploitation of the workers out there who have decided that they do not want the unions' hand in their pockets any more. They do not want the unions' hands in their pockets every payday.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

FORDE INQUIRY; MR H. HEILPERN

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (6 p.m.): I move—

> "That this House, whilst affirming its confidence in Mrs Leneen Forde as Commissioner of the Inquiry into Government and Non-Government Institutions and Detention Centres, expresses its lack of confidence in the appointment of Hans Heilpern as Assistant Commissioner and calls on the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care to recommend to the Governor-in-Council that his commission be revoked immediately."

The Forde inquiry is a very important inquiry. It will give the victims of child abuse an opportunity to tell their stories. It is an inquiry in which the public must have the utmost confidence. It is a very sensitive inquiry and it is of great importance to the victims and to their families. The Opposition supports this inquiry and has done so from the outset. Unfortunately, the Government has already let the victims down.

The appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern as an assistant commissioner to this inquiry is of great concern to those who want to see justice done and to those who subscribe to the principle of good government. When it comes to his suitability to serve on this inquiry, Mr Heilpern has three major failings. First, he is a former director-general of a department criticised by the Wood royal commission for failing to deal with the things he is now being paid by the Queensland Government to investigate. Secondly, he was sacked as director-general of this department for a lack of leadership and for implementing what have been described as bizarre policies. It just became too hot. Thirdly, he has a history of political activity and mismanagement during the term of his employment by a Queensland Government authority.

The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care has stated that she wanted to ensure the integrity of the Forde inquiry. The Minister has also claimed that a rigorous approach to finding Mr Heilpern was taken. Give us a break! How could a rigorous approach have unearthed someone of the calibre of Mr Heilpern? How could a rigorous approach ignore the damning evidence of the Wood royal commission? How could a rigorous approach ignore the damning nature of Mr Heilpern's very public dismissal from the position of Director-General of the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services? It is quite clear that no rigorous approach was taken.

The Minister comes into the Chamber and tries to pretend to members of this House that she has undertaken a lengthy search and has carefully checked out Mr Heilpern's background. Neither the CV distributed with the commission of inquiry terms of reference nor the Minister's media release, which set out

other information, contained any reference to the fact that Mr Heilpern had previously been employed in this State by the Government. No reference was made to his term in the Building Services Authority. What a shameful cover-up! What was the Minister out to hide? There is no use shaking your head, because you are guilty—guilty of neglect and guilty of having failed dismally.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will address the Minister by her correct title.

Mr BEANLAND: The Minister is guilty of neglect and guilty of failing to undertake proper research in this matter. As for a rigorous approach—what a joke that is on the people of this great State of ours! There was no rigorous approach adopted whatsoever. Far from it! Every attempt has been made to hide the fact that Mr Heilpern was previously employed in this State. No mention was made of a connection with the Queensland Building Services Authority. Nor did the Minister mention his role as political adviser to a former New South Wales Minister. I thought she would have had pride in that, but she conveniently did not mention it. It is marvellous what you left off.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! "What the Minister left off".

Mr BEANLAND: Yes, it is marvellous what the Minister left off. In comparison with others, the CV of Mr Heilpern was very short. It is quite clear that that CV was cut down to show only the points the Minister wanted shown. That suits the Minister fine, but it does not suit other people.

Yesterday on radio the Minister indicated that she had written to Mr Heilpern asking for a response to the allegations raised by the Opposition. Today in Parliament she asked the Opposition to provide any further information it had relating to Mr Heilpern. Over the last couple of days there seems to have been developing a lack of confidence in Mr Heilpern, although the Minister stood in this place two days ago and said that she had every confidence in him. I would have thought that any rigorous approach would have enabled the Minister to state quite emphatically today and yesterday that she had confidence in her appointee, but suddenly she has gone to water.

The Minister has also tried to cover up Mr Heilpern's previous employment with the Queensland Building Services Authority. Surely it is not unreasonable to expect that the Minister's press release detailing the qualifications of the commissioners would contain at least a reference to Mr Heilpern's prior relationship to this Government. It is clear why the Minister would want to cover up Mr Heilpern's past.

It is not quite bad enough that Mr Heilpern was sacked as director-general of his department in New South Wales! It is not quite bad enough that Mr Heilpern is on the record as saying that it is damaging when people get the impression that people who assault their children are some sort of monsters! What sort of rigorous approach was taken in relation to this matter? It is not quite bad enough that Mr Heilpern managed the department vigorously criticised by the Wood royal commission! Any cursory glance through the royal commission report would have brought that to light. Clearly the Minister did not go through that report to see the repeated attacks made on the department for its approach. So much for this rigorous approach taken by the Minister in searching out this person!

Mr Heilpern's association with the QBSA would have to be the last straw. Let us take a close look at the QBSA. Mr Heilpern was appointed under questionable circumstances and he was a complete and utter failure as a manager. He was apparently appointed to the QBSA after interview questions were faxed to him by no less than a person closely associated with the former Goss Labor Government. There is also a suggestion Mr Heilpern was very close to allegations of harassment of QBSA board members.

Mr Heilpern's service with the QBSA has drawn mention in this House on previous occasions. A quick search of Hansard would have provided the Government with all the information it needed about the suitability of Mr Heilpern for this inquiry, yet the Minister's rigorous approach did not extend even this far. In her haste to appoint a mate of the Labor Party, the Minister left many stones unturned. The appointment of Mr Heilpern, a former Labor ministerial adviser, to this position is a disgrace and a great disappointment. I think it is a great disappointment to the people of this State. The victims of abuse in Government and non-Government institutions and detention centres deserve better.

We now have an undermining of the inquiry. Labor is undermining the good work of this inquiry before it even gets started. There will be a lack of public confidence in this inquiry as a result of the actions of this Minister. This is a very sensitive inquiry in which the public needs to have the utmost confidence. How can anyone have confidence in that inquiry after referring to the Wood royal commission?

Right from the outset this side of the Chamber has rigorously supported the following up of child abuse claims. The former Government established the office of the Children's Commissioner. This inquiry is the next step. A large number of complaints were phoned in to the office of the Children's Commissioner following the establishment of a hotline. We now see the next step, which is a fully fledged royal commission. It is important that there be every confidence in that royal commission. The Minister is undermining that commission and the good work that will be undertaken by it and its chairman. The victims deserve better.

Time expired.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.10 p.m.): I second the motion moved by the honourable member for Indooroopilly. Let us be very clear about two points. Firstly, this is an important inquiry and one that the Opposition supports. We have the utmost faith in the integrity of the inquiry. Secondly, we do not support Mr Heilpern, because we believe he is clearly not a suitable person for this important inquiry.

The victims of alleged abuse in children's homes need to be heard. Justice needs to be done. We have no intention of protecting the guilty. We want the truth as much as members opposite do. We want the wrongs of the past to be righted. However, we believe that Mr Heilpern is not the right man to do that. This morning, when I asked the Premier whether the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care had informed him of any potential problems with the appointment of Mr Heilpern, he made absolutely no attempt to answer my question. Earlier today, I was looking at the Hansard——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member cannot quote from today's Hansard.

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker, I said I was looking at the Hansard. I did not quote it. When I looked at it, it reminded me of two things. Firstly, I asked a question and the Premier failed to answer it. During the ensuing commotion, I interjected and asked a second time whether he knew anything about the allegations. He said that, yes, he was going to get to it. However, at no stage did he answer the question. Yesterday, when I asked the Minister for Fair Trading, the Minister responsible for the statutory authority which had previously employed Mr Heilpern in Queensland, whether she had any knowledge of his background, the Minister said——

> "I have little relevance as a Minister in the appointment of the commissioner to this particular inquiry."

Again, yesterday when the member for Merrimac asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice whether he knew anything about Mr Heilpern, he said—

> "I am unaware of the allegations against that gentleman."

I believe him, because I believe that the Attorney-General is an honest man and would not in any way mislead this Parliament.

Ms Spence: What about me?

Dr WATSON: I believe the member is honest, too.

Ms Bligh: What about me?

Dr WATSON: I did not ask the member those questions.

What sort of shoddy selection process did the Minister apply to this appointment? Surely the Minister would have known that this inquiry was about a sensitive issue and that anyone appointed to it would come under intense scrutiny. Earlier today during question time the Minister said that we had to expect this inquiry to come under scrutiny because of the issues with which it would be dealing. During question time yesterday we heard the ridiculous assertion by the Minister that a rigorous approach to locating suitably qualified people had been undertaken. "Ridiculous" would have been a more suitable word than "rigorous". If we had applied any sorts of standards to the selection process, alarm bells would have been ringing immediately.

What input did the Attorney-General have into this Cabinet decision? Obviously none! What input did the office of the Minister for Fair Trading have into the Cabinet decision? Obviously none! Was the Premier asleep at the wheel when this appointment was made? Did he not recall that previously he had to rise to his feet and defend Mr Heilpern in this House against the serious allegations about him when he was running the QBSA? That should have set alarm bells ringing. The Premier should have recalled that. Perhaps the Premier likes rising to his feet to defend Mr Heilpern. Perhaps that is why the Government is appointing him. We cannot see any other reason for it.

A serious question has been raised in this whole affair. What sort of process does the Government have in place to make appointments such as this? Appointments to inquiries are very important. We welcome the appointment of Commissioner Forde and

Assistant Commissioner Thomason. They are people of the highest repute. They can survive rigorous scrutiny. People appointed to important positions such as this have to be seen to be squeaky clean. A man who was director-general of a department—a department accused of the very things that he would be investigating in this inquiry—will not be seen to be squeaky clean. A man who presided over a department racked by controversy will not be seen to be squeaky clean. A man who has had serious allegations made against him in Parliament over the way in which he handled his last job in Queensland will not be seen to be squeaky clean.

The Minister has said that no serious allegations have been raised. If Labor does not think that what we have raised is serious, this State is in serious trouble. The Minister should move immediately to replace Mr Heilpern on this inquiry.

Time expired.

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (6.15 p.m.): As I said earlier today, the allegations that have been raised thus far are serious. My response to them has been to examine them as thoroughly as possible. I have in each case found them to be baseless and without foundation. I have invited the entire House to provide any additional evidence or any other concerns. I extended that invitation to the whole of the Parliament yesterday and received nothing from any member of the House. This morning I invited the Leader of the Opposition to provide to me in writing by early this afternoon any material that he thought I should consider prior to this evening's motion. I received no further material, but he did respond and say that he would be raising matters this evening. I look forward to hearing them and I can assure him that I will examine them in due course.

The only new matter that has been brought forward for our consideration is that raised this morning about so-called "attributed comments" to Mr Heilpern. The Leader of the Opposition would not reveal the source for his comments this morning. That is little wonder, for once again we find that it is none other than the Sunday Telegraph. As usual, we heard a half-truth from the Leader of the Opposition in that he quoted the comments out of context. I am happy now to put the comments into their full context, which is as follows—

> "Welfare has changed dramatically as society has changed—10 years ago YACS officers didn't need to exercise that sort of discretion and make the hard decisions they do today.
>
> 'I can't tell my officers exactly when to intervene; they've got to use their discretion.
>
> 'We've got to make sure that intervention is not more harmful than the situation that we're saving that person from. We've got to look for the unintended consequences.
>
> 'I think it's damaging when people get the image that people who assault their children are some sort of monsters.' "

That comment bears remarkable and striking similarities to comments in a letter to today's Courier-Mail from Dr Richard Roylance, the president of the Protect All Children Society Today and a very well respected paediatrician in this State. He states—

> "In short, do children require guidance and discipline? Absolutely. Do parents sometimes run out of options and hit their children? Yes.
>
> Do parents feel good about those moments when they hit? No ...
>
> Does the community have an obligation to provide parents who are at the end of their tether with appropriate support, from the simple gift of neighbourly help ... to government-funded formal programmes ... Yes.
>
> Should all lapses by parents in this area be dealt with criminally? No, of course, not."

Will the Opposition now embark on a campaign to smear the good name and reputation of this highly reputable man, who is well known and highly regarded for his skill and commitment to fighting child abuse?

The member for Indooroopilly said that the previous Government had a rigorous record in relation to combating child abuse. The member for Moggill claimed that victims needed to be heard. Why did he not give them the opportunity to be heard in the two and a half years when he was in Government? What is the record of the Opposition on this matter?

When shocking revelations at the Wood inquiry became public in 1996, what was the response of the Labor Party? The member for Capalaba, now Deputy Premier, moved to immediately establish an independent authority to fully investigate accusations of paedophilia in this State. The motion was seconded by the member for Mount Gravatt.

The coalition opposed the motion. At the time, the member for Indooroopilly argued against the inquiry on the basis that the CJC might get its nose out of joint. The motion was successful due only to the support of the member for Gladstone. However, it was opposed by every member of the then Liberal/National Party Government.

On 21 August 1997, the Leader of the Opposition and now Premier moved to, among other things, establish a commission of inquiry to investigate thoroughly the incidence of paedophilia and report to the Parliament. Again, the Liberal/National coalition opposed the motion. The member for Indooroopilly said that these victims deserve better. I say to him that they are getting better. They are getting from this Government the fully and properly constituted commission of inquiry that he never gave them.

In conclusion, let me say that, in relation to the serious matters that I brought to the Parliament this morning in relation to the possible misconduct of an officer of the Children's Commission, I have received a response from the Children's Commission, and I table the documents in that regard. The response confirms that the officer concerned did, in fact, contact a member of the Neerkol action group in relation to a demonstration. I have sought Crown law advice as to my further actions in this regard.

Let me conclude by saying that nothing will stand in the way of this inquiry—not the grubby and dirty attacks of the member for Indooroopilly or the member for Surfers Paradise; not the demonstrations by One Nation candidates outside the Children's Commission; and not the actions of those with base, vested interests to protect anybody either in my department, the Children's Commission or any other public or private body in this State.

Time expired.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.20 p.m.): The simple fact is that the primary concern of the Opposition remains that this Minister and this Government have appointed to the sensitive role of an assistant commissioner into an inquiry into child abuse someone who, for a large part of the time, was the director-general of the New South Wales department that was heavily criticised in the Wood inquiry. That by itself is sufficient grounds to ensure that this commission of inquiry is not beyond question and beyond reproach.

We have a Minister who is not up to the job, a Minister who did not check her facts and a Government that did not check her facts. Now they have not got the common decency to admit that they got it wrong. I will just give an example, which was used by both the Premier and the Minister today to defend their decision. It related to the allegations in respect of the New South Wales department and the director-general in regard to a couple who were unable to adopt a child because they were too fat. Let me share the full story of what I am advised are the details of this case of which the Premier told only half the story—and he knows it. These are the comments as told by the people concerned to a member of the New South Wales Parliament.

A married couple, who had no children, had applied 12 months previously to adopt a Korean child. The husband was 32 and the wife, 29. They filled in all the forms, had medical examinations which gave them a clean bill of health and even attended a seminar to learn about adoption. They were approved as parents. Obviously, they were excited. Their life was going to be enriched by a child and they were going to give an orphan a chance to live a better life. They waited and waited.

Finally, after almost a year of waiting, they received a phone call from Mr Heilpern's Department of Youth and Community Services. The phone call informed the couple that they were too fat to adopt a child. The mother was 92 kilos—14 stone. The father, a six footer, was also 14 stone. Can honourable members imagine the shock that this couple endured, especially as this was the first time that the matter of weight had been mentioned? It was not discussed at the seminar; it was not mentioned by departmental officers; it was not mentioned in any pamphlets on adoption that they had.

As the Minister and the Premier said, the couple was told that it was a requirement of the Korean Government that, for health reasons, adoptive parents be no more than 30% above average weight. The couple, after recovering from the initial shock, discussed their dilemma and rang the department and asked to transfer to the list seeking a Sri Lankan child. They were told that they were still too fat and that now they needed to get new health certificates.

Putting aside the question of since when does one's weight determine whether one will make a good parent or not, this couple were never told about the weight rule. They were not even given a chance to lose weight. The

department then decided to follow the weight rules of the overseas countries and it made an arbitrary decision to rule this innocent couple ineligible for any adoption. That is what the Premier and the Minister did not tell the House today when they sought to discredit this couple.

I am not saying that Mr Heilpern himself personally shattered this couple's dream. However, I am saying that he was the director-general of a department in which bungles and bizarre rulings were the order of the day. To quote one commentary at the time—

> "It has become apparent people in the department were either making up their own rules as they went along or putting their own interpretations to procedure."

Queensland deserves better. This commission of inquiry deserves better. This Government has made sound appointments in respect of the commissioner and one of the assistant commissioners. However, it is absolutely irresponsible for the Government to continue to defend an inappropriate appointment to a sensitive inquiry such as this when the fact is that the Wood royal commission itself criticised the director-general of the department. Who was the director-general of the department? The assistant commissioner! Yet the Minister says that he was not mentioned. The director-general was mentioned. The department was heavily criticised by the Wood royal commission. The Minister's performance is shonky, shabby and pathetic.

Time expired.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (6.25 p.m.): Has the Leader of the Opposition been caught out again? Do honourable members know what he just read from? He read from a statement delivered in the New South Wales Upper House. Do honourable members know what the source of that information was? The Leader of the Liberal Party in the Upper House in New South Wales! That is where it came from.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The sources of the information given to the Leader of the Liberal Party in the Upper House were the people concerned.

Mr BEATTIE: He read word for word from the speech of a Liberal Party politician in New South Wales, and I table the record for the information of the House. We have here a political assassination. Your Liberal Party mate in New South Wales——

Mr SPEAKER: The Premier will address the member as the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition simply came in and read from a document of one of his Liberal mates in New South Wales. That is what he did. He tabled no source of information, but here it is. Do honourable members know what this is?

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Listen to him squeal. He has been exposed again for another half-truth. This has all been about half-truths. Let us look at what happened. He came in here and he has made allegation after allegation after allegation. Has one of them been substantiated? The answer is: no—not one. Who was the man who said that Mr Heilpern is highly regarded in the social welfare area? The Leader of the Liberal Party in New South Wales, Peter Collins! Do honourable members want another Liberal view? There is another Liberal view.

What did Mr Beanland, the honourable member for Indooroopilly, say? He came in here and said that there were three reasons for objecting to Mr Heilpern serving on this inquiry. He said that the first reason was that he was a former director-general of a department criticised by the Wood commission. The review of that department covered a period of six years; the person about whom the member opposite was speaking was not the director-general for all of that time. The member for Indooroopilly has come in here and said——

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, he did. Let us be very clear; the Wood report does not mention him by name anywhere.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, it does. He was not required nor was he asked to appear at any time, nor was he named. So the member opposite has come in here and delivered another one of these great half-truths. Mr Heilpern was not named.

Let us look at this. Allegation one: the Wood royal commission criticised Mr Heilpern for failing to appropriately investigate complaints. That is what the member opposite said. The truth is that the Wood commission did not name Mr Heilpern in any of its six volumes published after three years of inquiry—end of story. Mr Heilpern was never called before the inquiry. Mr Heilpern made no submission and was not required to give evidence. The member opposite well knows how that inquiry worked. If one was the subject

of an investigation, one was called and asked to appear before the inquiry. The inquiry was not interested in him because he was not the subject of the inquiry.

The member opposite has not produced one shred of evidence. I say to all members that this is the most disgraceful performance by the Opposition. For two days it has set out to destroy this inquiry. It has no basis for doing so. The Leader of the Opposition came in here this morning and quoted some comments and then would not tender any evidence of them. There is no substance to anything that the Leader of the Opposition has said that would warrant any reconsideration of this matter. The Minister has behaved appropriately. There has been no shred of evidence produced. The only quotes we have had from the Opposition are either from some sensationalist newspaper or from one of its Liberal Party mates. If this is the way the Opposition is going to perform in the Parliament, let me tell those opposite that not only will the member for Surfers Paradise not be the Leader of the Opposition in six months' time—he will be replaced by someone else—but the rest of them will be there for a long time.

Those opposite have no standards and no decency and they are prepared to destroy a person for political purposes. That says it all. I ask those opposite: where is your evidence? It is nowhere! Those opposite are in the gutter, simply seeking to destroy an honest man. That is what those opposite have sought to do and their credibility is in tatters. There is nothing that the Opposition has put before this Parliament that would warrant a review.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (Leader of the One Nation Party) (6.31 p.m.): Let us not mistake One Nation's intentions in the Forde child abuse inquiry: we wholeheartedly support and commend the inquiry into child abuse and the sickness that pervades this abomination. But let me make this clear: we support such an inquiry only as long as it is a truly independent inquiry, a clean inquiry, an open inquiry, an up-front inquiry and an honest inquiry. The people of Queensland ask for nothing less. The Honourable the Premier promised—pledged—to One Nation, this Parliament and the people of Queensland that the Forde child abuse inquiry would be an independent inquiry. The Premier will recall that he made a pledge when answering a question without notice from me.

Mr Premier, let us be blunt: did you mislead this House when you made this pledge and when you said—

> "In terms of staff ... that is entirely a matter for the inquiry itself. It is a matter for Leneen Forde. We will not interfere in that as a Government and that means the Minister will not either. Under the Act it is impossible for us to interfere."

But, Mr Premier, I have here in my hand a copy of a press release issued by your Families, Youth and Community Care Minister on 13 August this year which may have caused you some angst. The Minister announced the appointment of Hans Heilpern and Dr Jane Thomason. She said Mr Heilpern holds a number of judicial appointments on review tribunals and was in charge of community services in New South Wales in the early 1980s. She goes on further to say that she is confident in the ability of this team to get the job done.

Mr Premier, there appears to be a very serious conflict of interest here. You declared that Leneen Forde will select her own staff but your Minister does not agree. Obviously she has already selected her staff, which you claim is the responsibility of Leneen Forde.

Ms BLIGH: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. The Governor appointed Mrs Forde, Mr Heilpern and Ms Thomason. I did not. Mrs Forde does not have the power to appoint commissioners.

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

Mr FELDMAN: Mr Premier, you have led us to believe that by allowing Mrs Forde to select her staff the inquiry will be independent. However, your Minister, by selecting the staff, has guaranteed that Leneen Forde will be a captive of that staff. This means that we do not have an independent inquiry. I would like to hear your thoughts on this matter. Your Minister is obviously operating on a different wavelength from you.

You promised the public of Queensland that this inquiry would be independent and impartial, but the sum total of the debate today has been around the incompatibility of the Minister's selected team and your professed high standards and testimony to independence. This whole affair is of grave concern to us, the only true independents in this House. Why is this so grave? Because it is tainted with doubt and suspicion! It is tainted with suspected political interference and party political complicity and duplicity. Mr Premier, you talk of a high game but you are getting a very low score. It appears that you do not want this inquiry and you are prepared to scuttle your own ship with unwanted baggage, with

suspect appointments and pledges that you are not prepared to keep.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. They are untrue. I seek for them to be withdrawn.

Mr FELDMAN: I withdraw them. One Nation has no confidence in Hans Heilpern as assistant commissioner and the Premier now knows why. Only the Premier can clear up this confusion. Mr Premier, with all the human resources you have in Queensland, and with a desire to lower Queensland's unemployment rate to 5%, why do you employ Hans Heilpern from New South Wales? Are you going to lower New South Wales's unemployment rate also? The Wood royal commission associated your appointee, the former director-general of Youth and Community Services—YACS—New South Wales with these public sins: a disbelieving and disparaging attitude towards complainants; disinclination to accept that any officer would engage in wrongful conduct; a concern as to the possible scandal that could arise from the police or any external agency being brought in to investigate the matter; and a readiness to penalise any officer or employee who reported possible misconduct by a fellow worker.

Is this culture all-inclusive to the Labor Party both here and in New South Wales or is this culture endemic in the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care? We leave it to the Premier to come forth with an explanation—a rational explanation, an explanation devoid of rhetoric and grandstanding, and an explanation that is believable in our present environment.

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) (6.37 p.m.): Yesterday the Leader of the Liberal Party raised damaging allegations concerning the appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern to the position of general manager of the Building Services Authority. Today those allegations were repeated by the member for Indooroopilly. I would like to place on record that I have had no personal dealings with Mr Heilpern.

Let us look at the allegations. The honourable member for Moggill stated that Mr Heilpern managed the BSA at a time when it was wracked with claims of harassment, physical assault and the suggestion that Mr Heilpern obtained his job only because he was faxed the questions for the interview. The implication was that Mr Heilpern was responsible for or involved in criminal activity. Let us face it: physical assault and harassment are crimes in this State.

After having my office conduct some investigations in this regard, I can inform the Parliament that this was not the case. Mr Heilpern was appointed to act as general manager of the BSA in late 1992. I am aware that there were a number of allegations of scurrilous activity occurring within the BSA in the early 1990s. These allegations relate to a period prior to the appointment of Mr Heilpern to the BSA and, I understand, relate largely to a previous general manager.

In regard to Mr Heilpern's appointment and the grounds on which this occurred, I have been advised that no questions asked during an interview for his position were supplied to Mr Heilpern prior to his interview. I can say that with absolute confidence because, from what I have been advised, Mr Heilpern was not interviewed for this position. He was selected to immediately go into the BSA in a caretaker capacity for a limited period in order to rectify some of the problems that occurred under the previous general manager and because of the sudden departure of the previous general manager. The Opposition has got the wrong man.

Former Deputy Premier Tom Burns was the relevant Minister and he approved the short-term appointment of Mr Heilpern. Mr Heilpern simply acted in the position at the BSA for a period of six months and was asked to continue for another period of six months whilst the position of general manager was publicly advertised for filling. It is my understanding that Mr Heilpern did not apply for this position and, instead, having done his job in rectifying some of the problems, went on to pursue his career in an area outside the BSA.

As I said yesterday, the accusation made by the Leader of the Liberal Party was a disgraceful smear on the character of Mr Heilpern. As a former Minister with responsibility for the BSA, the member for Moggill should have known better. I suspect that he knows as little about the history of the BSA as he does about the financial viability of the BSA.

If the Leader of the Liberal Party thinks that Mr Heilpern is unfit to assist the inquiry because of his BSA performance, then he should withdraw his concerns. To continue them in the face of the evidence presented to him today is truly disgraceful. Opposition members are looking increasingly as desperate people, attempting to gain political points on the back of the reputation of a

decent man. For two days now they have used this House as a cowards' castle to attack the reputation of a respected public servant in order to destroy the inquiry. From all my reports, Mr Heilpern served admirably as the general manager of the BSA, and members opposite should not be saying otherwise.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.41 p.m.): The Forde inquiry into child sexual abuse and the abuse of children is one of the most important inquiries we have ever had in this State. Tonight members have a responsibility to make sure that everything about the inquiry is absolutely impeccable. We have a responsibility to the children of yesteryear, the children of now and the children of the future. We fully support this inquiry. One could say that the qualities of the commissioner and the assistant commissioner, Dr Jane Thomason, are absolutely impeccable.

This Labor Government has put forward a name that no-one else in Australia who had been involved with the YACS department of New South Wales during the 1980s would touch with a 40-foot pole. Anyone who read media reports at that time would know that that department was racked with controversy throughout the eighties. It was renowned throughout Australia for its mismanagement and controversy. Why on earth would this Government pick anybody—regardless of anything else—who was associated with the YACS department of New South Wales in the 1980s? Then we had the final icing on the cake with the Wood inquiry, which was damning in its report of that particular department.

No other State in Australia, no other Cabinet and no other Government would have done this. We already have impeccable people on the inquiry: the former Governor and Dr Jane Thomason. It is absolutely essential that public confidence in this inquiry is 100%. Further down the track this is going to be one of the most sensitive inquiries that this State has ever seen. It is likely to be a lengthy and prolonged inquiry. Let us hope that it is all for the good of the children. But why on earth would that particular commissioner have been put forward? Did those Cabinet members know that man's full background? I am sure that they should have. Mr Mackenroth and Mr Beattie would have known, because they were part of the debate that was held here on, I think, 28 April 1994, when the member for Aspley was raising matters in relation to the Building Services Authority. Those members would have known that there was some controversy in the background. Surely the Minister would have put forward in the Cabinet documents the man's full background. Surely she would have said to her colleagues, "Look, this is likely to be controversial. This may lack public support, because the particular department in New South Wales that he managed during the 1980s was notorious for its controversy and the public criticism of it." Surely that would have been the first decision to make: to put aside anyone who had been associated with that particular department.

There has been a fishy smell about some of the operations of the Labor Party going right back to the Heiner documents. Many people in Queensland wonder why those documents were shredded.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HORAN: The matter related to possible defamation action against witnesses. It could have been dealt with quite easily by validating legislation. Many people wonder why there was not simply validating legislation to put that particular worry aside so that the Heiner inquiry could continue. But the Labor Government shredded those documents. Now the Labor Government wants to put a Labor mate right up there in that inquiry as a tunnel of information so that it can manage it.

Proper consideration has not been given to this appointment. I do not believe that the Minister has adequately and properly informed her Cabinet colleagues in the documentation and the advice she gave them in order to make this appointment. If she had mentioned all the things that have been mentioned in this Parliament this week, there is no way that the Attorney-General would have supported this appointment. Did the Attorney-General or his department scrutinise this particular selection? If he did, he did not do a very good job, because none of this would have happened and that man would not have been selected.

This appointment will be on everybody's conscience. If it is to be an impeccable inquiry, everybody here—members of all parties and the Independents—will have to make a decision tonight to make sure that Queenslanders have absolute faith in this inquiry—absolute, total, 100% faith—for the benefit of our children, the children of yesteryear and the children of the future. The way in which this has been handled by the Minister has been incompetent from the start. All that is happening tonight is that her colleagues are trying to support her because of the mismanagement that has occurred. There is no way in the wide world that they could have supported this decision if they

knew what we have been able to tell them this week.

Time expired.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (6.45 p.m.): This motion argues that the House should express a lack of confidence in this appointment. It urges the Minister to make a recommendation to the Governor in Council to revoke the appointment. What is the case brought by the proponents of this motion? It originally rested on four allegations, but the ground has shifted.

Initially, it was alleged that the appointee was criticised by the Wood royal commission for failing to investigate a complaint adequately. This morning, the Minister took the Parliament to the relevant passage and rebutted that allegation. Strangely enough, it was not repeated here tonight. Even the Opposition Leader or the member for Indooroopilly could not purport to argue that black was white, having been confronted with the evidence.

The second allegation was that this man was publicly sacked. This allegation was comprehensively refuted by the Minister in her ministerial statement, because he in fact accepted appointment as chair of the New South Wales Commercial Tribunal. Again, that has been slid away from in the debate tonight.

Thirdly, it was suggested—it was asserted originally—that this man presided over a department encouraging family break-up. When the relevant copy of the New South Wales Hansard was produced, how did that allegation slide away? Members opposite shifted their ground.

The other allegation was that this man was an alleged Labor Party hack, yet when confronted with the evidence of the Liberal Minister expressing confidence—the current Liberal Leader of the Opposition—members opposite find the argument totally unsustainable. So they move to two new arguments—firstly, the cowardly tactic adopted by the Leader of the Opposition of quoting the man out of context and refusing to give the source. Under repeated questioning and repeated interjection, the Leader of the Opposition did not have the courage to put the facts before the Parliament. It was left to the Minister to give the facts. Members opposite are shifting their ground.

Now yet another vile, baseless allegation has been raised by the member for Toowoomba South. In his contribution, he asserted that this gentleman would be a "tunnel of information" for the Labor Party to manage the commission. What a baseless, groundless allegation. It was raised at the last minute because members opposite have to shift their ground; they know that they cannot sustain this spray of mustard gas which is choking and blistering this Chamber.

I turn to the contribution of One Nation. They say two things. They say the fact that this person was appointed on the recommendation of the Minister amounts to a lack of independence. I inform the member for Caboolture that this is an appointment under the Commissions of Inquiry Act. Assistant commissioners are appointed by the Governor in Council under the Act; they are not staff. The honourable member asks: why New South Wales and not Queensland? The obvious reason is that people who work for the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care would be subject to complaints of bias.

I invite honourable members to consider one proposition. Just imagine that we had a responsible Opposition. Just imagine that they had raised their concerns properly, out of concern for the propriety of this inquiry. Just imagine that they had done the decent thing and taken the allegations to the responsible Minister. Then they would have shown some decency.

Time expired.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (6.50 p.m.): I join in this debate tonight to support the Opposition's motion. The Forde inquiry is probably one of the most important inquiries that this State is ever going to witness. We have to do it precisely right from day one. Nobody on this side of the House opposes Mrs Leneen Forde as the chief commissioner or Jane Thomason as a commissioner, but we do oppose the appointment of Hans Heilpern as a commissioner. The conduct of this inquiry must be impeccable for one reason only. We know the torture that some of the kids in institutions have gone through in the past. None of us in this House or anyone else in Queensland condones that type of the behaviour. The people who are carrying out this inquiry under the stewardship of Mrs Leneen Forde—and she certainly wants people of impeccable character to work with her as commissioners—cannot afford to have anyone with a shady past. That is precisely what we are talking about here this evening: somebody with a shady past.

I say to the Premier and the Minister responsible: replace this person with a person

with impeccable character who does not have a shady past, so we can once again put the kids in this State in a position where they will not be sexually interfered with or abused by some other means. On the eve of this inquiry, I point out that it is absolutely paramount that the inquiry goes ahead with commissioners who have the full support of the House and the people of Queensland. Although the Minister is sincere, we are sincere about this inquiry, too. I ask her to please replace this commissioner.

Time expired.

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

AYES, 43—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, 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, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 43—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. I. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Pair: McGrady, Stephan

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

Sitting suspended from 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

WORKPLACE RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 2059.

Mr SEENEY: Before the dinner adjournment I was saying that this legislation is a purely selfish attempt by the Labor Party to protect its power base.

Government members interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Members should keep listening; it gets better. It is a purely selfish attempt to guarantee the survival of the Labor prep school that prepares most of the members opposite for their roles in Parliament.

This legislation is a cynical insult to the workers out there who have chosen to negotiate for themselves. It is a cynical exploitation of the workers out there who have decided that they do not want to have the unions' hand in their pockets every payday. They do not want to fund the silvertail socialists who make up today's Labor Party. They do not want to fund the silvertail socialists who have hijacked what was once the workers' party.

This legislation is about removing workers' rights to make a choice. At the moment, we can choose. We cannot be forced or coerced; we can choose to enter into an agreement either individually or as a group to vary our conditions of employment in our workplaces to take into account local situations and personal needs. So what is so bad about these agreements that workers now choose to enter into? QWAs have to be approved by the Enterprise Commissioner. QWAs are approved only if the Enterprise Commissioner is satisfied that the employee is not disadvantaged by the agreement in comparison to conditions in a relevant or designated award taken as a whole. For QWAs that operate where there is an existing certified agreement, the no disadvantage test is applied to the overall entitlements in the certified agreement. QWAs may be made between an employer and an individual employee or a group. They must be entered into freely. They are binding only on the individuals who sign them. They cannot contain discriminatory provisions and, as I said, they will be approved by the Enterprise Commissioner only if he is satisfied that employees understand the agreements and are not disadvantaged. Unions may still have a role if employees wish it to be so. They can assist their members to negotiate agreements but they cannot intervene in the approval of the QWAs.

It is interesting to note that the continually repetitive speeches from the members opposite made little mention of the Employment Advocate. The Employment Advocate provides advice and assistance to employers and employees wishing to enter into Queensland workplace agreements. This includes the production of an information sheet on QWAs which outlines what agreements must contain and how to enter into them. The Employment Advocate assists the parties in enforcing their rights under a QWA. This also includes advising employees on how to recover outstanding entitlements—and they do that better than the unions—and the investigation of complaints of duress in relation to making workplace agreements. The Employment Advocate also enforces relevant provisions concerning QWAs.

Mr Reeves: After the horse has bolted.

Mr SEENEY: I would love to take the member's interjection, but I do not have much time.

Mr Purcell: You've got nine minutes.

Mr SEENEY: I have a lot to say.

The Employment Advocate also has the power to investigate breaches of the freedom of association provisions of the Industrial Organisations Act. Breaches can include actions such as coercing employees or independent contractors to join or not to join a union, refusing to employ people because they are members or they are not members of a union and discriminating against a person because he or she is a union delegate. The Employment Advocate is also able to prosecute breaches if appropriate and is also able to provide employers or employees with the relevant advice.

As I said at the outset, I have worked out there in the concreting gangs and in the work gangs. I have worked as a labourer and I have an affinity with the people who do that type of work today. I have also been on the other side of the equation. I have served as a deputy mayor in the Monto Shire Council and I was responsible for negotiating an enterprise bargaining agreement for that council with the work force employed by it at a time when we were all under extreme pressure to compete with private enterprise. We negotiated a certified agreement without union involvement with a largely non-union work force that suited everyone and exploited no-one. It exploited no-one. That is a fairly common practice among local governments throughout the State.

I refer to a letter from the executive director of the Local Government Association. This is not some sort of multinational company hell-bent on making profits at the expense of workers; this is the Local Government Association that represents councils throughout the State—councils that are made up of people who in many cases give their time in a semi-voluntary capacity. In that letter Mr Hallam states—

> "The Association, in carrying out its role of providing human resources and industrial relations services to Councils and representing their interests in the Industrial Relations Tribunals, needs to ensure that there is maximum flexibility available to them in the development of appropriate conditions of employment for their employees.
>
> Whilst Councils have access to certified agreements with employees, the Workplace Relations Act introduced in 1997 did not provide scope to Local Government to utilise Queensland Workplace Agreements."

At the time I was involved with the Monto Shire Council and, along with many other shire councils, we wished that we had access to those QWAs. This Government should be looking at extending QWAs.

Mr Purcell: What about the workers?

Mr SEENEY: The workers wanted access to them, too. The workers wanted to enter into this type of agreement because it suited them. At that time they wanted access to these QWAs. The workers in the shire councils across the State would welcome access to these QWAs. The letter states further—

> "The non-availability of the latter"—

referring to QWAs—

> "... placed Councils at a distinct disadvantage, particularly as the Association had established through its various programs throughout the State that there was a strong view in the industry as to the benefits to be derived from the usage of that type of agreement.
>
> ...
>
> The scope to access all the options ... is of the utmost importance to Local Government if it is to compete with the private sector in operations such as road reform and the National Competition Policy and if this is not possible, there is a likelihood of reduced works programs. The flow on effect of this will be the loss of employment prospects and more seriously, the damage this will do to the economy and the programs especially in rural communities."

The path that the members opposite are pursuing will threaten the jobs of those people whom they purport to represent. The people who pay the way of the members opposite more often than not are being threatened by the legislation that they are pursuing. If the members of the Labor Party opposite were fair dinkum they would let Queensland workers make a choice—a choice that the coalition's legislation guaranteed them, a choice without coercion, a choice as to whether they want to bargain themselves or to appoint a bargaining agent or bargain collectively.

I believe that it would be very wrong to take away that choice. It would be very wrong to insist that QWAs be compulsory. It would be very wrong to insist that workers have no choice and have to bargain themselves. By

the same token, it is very wrong to abolish QWAs and deny workers the opportunity to bargain themselves. It is very wrong to abolish QWAs and entrench the union forever as a compulsory part of the negotiating process.

It would be a terrible mistake if the Independent members, who realistically will ultimately decide the fate of this legislation, were swayed by the sanctimonious, patronising, condescending rubbish that has been repeated endlessly by Labor members. They all repeated the same speech over and over again. Aren't word processors wonderful? Sentences and paragraphs can be cut and pasted and people can say the same things over and over again. That is what Labor Party backbenchers have done for the past two days. They have repeated the same sanctimonious, patronising, condescending rubbish over and over again.

The Labor Government is intent on repaying the trade union prep school, which has provided a career path and the financial backing for so many Labor members to reach this place. This legislation is about protecting that union structure. This legislation is about paying the piper. This legislation is about denying Queensland workers a choice, and it should be defeated by this Parliament.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.41 p.m.): I rise to join in this debate on the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill. It is interesting that one of the first Bills the Labor Government has run up the flag, the first Bill of any real significance, is one to look after its union mates.

Mrs Edmond: I wouldn't say that if I were you.

Mr HORAN: Talk about unholy haste.

Mrs Edmond: There were seven pieces of legislation that you couldn't handle in two years because you couldn't make a decision.

Mr HORAN: Listen to old "Backflip" Mount Coot-tha over there. We saw the biggest backflip of all today when she stood up and made her ministerial statement. I was there during the election campaign when she talked about not having co-location at the Royal Brisbane——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Would the member return to the Bill?

Mr HORAN: I am just responding to the interjections of the "Backflip" member for Mount Coot-tha.

The unholy haste with which Labor has rushed into this Parliament to repay its union mates has been absolutely amazing. That demonstrates for everyone in Queensland what the Labor Party is all about. It is about looking after its union mates. It is about looking after the source of funds, the source of staff who helped them over time. We know about the different seats in which candidates have to be in a certain union to get preselected.

My colleague the member for Callide, who spoke before me, mentioned the trade union prep school. It is interesting to look to the Government benches and see how many Labor members have come through that prep school. What a sterile lot they are. They have all come through the same channel. Tonight we are seeing this symbolic payback for the union dominance of the Labor Party. It makes us in the Opposition proud to know that we represent individuals—people who aspire to have their own small businesses, people who run major industries and people who value the people who work for them.

One of the most important things to remember when talking about employees and employers is partnerships. Any employer or business owner worth his or her salt would know that the greatest asset in any business is a loyal and talented employee. The only way employers can hold that particular work force to their business is to make sure that their working relationship is a true partnership, that they do respect the staff they have and honour their talents and that they make sure that the staff are looked after in each and every way.

The real problem for the Labor Party with this Bill is that it provides competition for the unions. The unions want to be able to go out there and sell the maximum number of union tickets, get the membership, and siphon off the percentage to the Labor Party. They do not want to have the competition of workplace agreements that set the standard, that set a benchmark, that can set new ideals and that can provide for better ways of looking after staff and better ways of making a business successful so that it can survive with jobs that last and provide some stability of employment for workers.

We all know that times have changed. We do not have to look back too far to see that. It used to be the case that there would be a young lad at the garage to put air into the tyres and water into the radiator and so forth. There was more work about then, but now there is competition. Now at garages there is usually only someone behind a console. Times have changed, and it is important that we try

to create as many job opportunities as we can, particularly for young people.

There is all sorts of new and emerging work available for people. Once upon a time it was mainly factory-type work—everyone going along on their push bikes for the 8 o'clock to 5 o'clock shift. Now there is work in hospitality and tourism. In any of the suburbs of Brisbane or in any of our regional towns there are a great many young people working in hospitality—for example, in coffee shops that might spill out on to the footpath. The retail sector involves many different types of working hours. Small business has to work in with what is happening and has to recognise the needs of consumers. There are people working in the entertainment, transport and tourism industries—people who operate buses and who may have to operate them seven days a week, perhaps 24 hours a day.

We need flexible arrangements so that people can have jobs and so that employers in small and large businesses can compete successfully. Queensland workplace agreements provide that flexibility. They provide choice. How anyone could object to workers having the choice between a workplace agreement—collective or singular—or an award is beyond me. Employers could have an award system for some of the staff where it suits or a workplace agreement where it suits. It is about flexibility and choice.

A lot of people do not want to be involved with a union because they do not need it. They can quite adequately advocate for themselves. They want to work in a true partnership with their employer. They want to see their job and the business flourish and they want to be assured that their job can last, because they know that at the end of the day——

Mr Johnson: They have to help the boss make a profit.

Mr HORAN: If the business does not make a profit, there is no business and there is no job. Then everyone is down the gurgler. The legislation we are debating tonight is about taking away from workers choice and opportunity. It is putting workers' jobs at greater risk because there will not be the flexibility to enable small, medium and large business to be more successful.

Small business today is a real battle. Many of our small businesses involve families—mum, dad and some of the kids. There would not be a small business around that would not love to put on another one or two employees. The people involved are working long hours. Often times they are forced to work six or seven days a week, starting early in the morning by collecting the produce or the goods and working late into the night and then doing the book work later that night. There is hardly a small business that would not like to put on some extra staff.

We often see Governments making a big announcement about a particular major enterprise being attracted from overseas that will employ 100 or 200 people, but we forget the importance of small business in our community. If we go through any of our suburbs and towns and look at all the panel beaters, shops, couriers, hotels, clubs, machinery repair operations, light engineering businesses and all the other businesses that are around—retail and wholesale—we will see how important small business is. We should realise what our communities would be like if we did not have small business. Queensland workplace agreements provide a way in which small business can be flexible enough to enable them to meet the harsh competition they face.

This Labor Government, which is endeavouring to take away from small business the opportunity to enter into Queensland workplace agreements, is the same Labor Government that has walked away from the Industrial Relations Commission and taken away support for small business in the area of extended trading hours. These small businesses operate six days a week. What will be in it for them if trading hours are extended? Absolutely nothing! The Labor Government does a great disservice to people who run small businesses by not advocating on their behalf in the Industrial Relations Commission against extended trading hours. We see the big supermarket chains, like great white sharks, wanting to take the lot—not just the food and the groceries but also garages, whitegoods, clothes and everything else. The family operations in our suburbs and towns are facing ever-increasing competition.

What has the Labor Government done to all of those families in the towns in our electorates? It has walked away from them and left them on their own. We will make our society better if we have families operating small businesses. Many people aspire to that sort of life. At different stages of our lives, we have all thought about how we would like to have our own little operation; to one day save up enough money to have our own business. What will be in it for such people if the expanded shopping hours come in? Just another days' work—probably another 16 or 18 hours' work—for less money. They will work longer hours for less and less because the

biggest share is being snapped up by the great white sharks—the huge supermarket chains. If anything is destroying our country towns, regional cities, the uniqueness of the suburbs of the regional cities, it is the gradual takeover by these huge chains and the gradual demise of small business.

Honourable members should speak to any of these people in small business. We used to have a lovely lifestyle in many of our towns. Fortunately, we still do in Toowoomba. However, many families would like to go to the races, netball, cricket or the footie on Saturday afternoons or the school fete on Sundays. People like to do things with their families. However, we are gradually breeding a society in which a shop has to stay open 24 hours a day. The small businesses are being ground into submission and are being made to compete with the chains. Tonight in this place the Labor Government is doing its best to get rid of Queensland workplace agreements—something that gave true flexibility to small business.

We see that there were a number of advantages for small businesses, particularly in rural communities, and their employees when we examine some of the great features of Queensland workplace agreements. I congratulate my colleague the member for Clayfield, Mr Santo Santoro. When this legislation came into the Parliament about 18 months ago, this was one of the big steps forward for Queensland. This was about Queensland being able to compete, being at the forefront, leading the way and getting the support that it needed from a Government that recognised the importance of small and medium sized business. We encouraged strong partnerships with employees, a bit of trust, working for each other and looking after each other. That was the recipe for successful business in this State and delivered the economic growth that we enjoyed.

During the term of the coalition Government we saw economic growth of some 4.5%—double that of the rest Australia. We saw the creation in Queensland of 40% of all the new jobs in Australia although we had only 18% of the population. The proof of the pudding was in the eating. It was the environment that we put in place for business that gave it the confidence to expand, put on staff and create all of those new jobs.

To illustrate how beneficial Queensland workplace agreements have been, I will reiterate the arguments that were put forward at the time of the debate on the original legislation. They were as follows—

> The Workplace Relations Bill has provisions for the making of agreements not only with single employers and single employees but with groups of employees. That is good for small business, regardless of the size.
>
> It has a provision that plays a key role in the development of a framework for encouraging cooperative workplace agreements.
>
> More cooperative workplace agreements will lead to greater productivity at the enterprise level and, at the same time, provide greater opportunity for employees to balance work and family.
>
> There is an enhanced ability of businesses to meet market demands. It will have a positive effect on customers and clients, resulting in improved economic performance at the enterprise level. The result of that is more jobs, particularly for young people.
>
> It provides greater productivity and performance at the individual enterprise level. That can only lead to economic prosperity not only for Queensland but for Australia as a whole.

I have already said that these agreements have particular benefits for small business. One of the complaints of small business is the endless red tape involved in compliance. The former coalition Government endeavoured to slash red tape by up to 50%. For example, a person running a business by himself might start at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning. At the end of the day, after the book work has been done, what would that person have to do? That person then has to go through all sorts of other rubbish.

During the day, the last thing anyone would want is for some union characters to turn up and demand a ticket. I have seen them turn up in the middle of a concrete pour. That is their favourite tactic. When everyone is tramping around in the concrete they say, "Where's your ticket?" They used to do that in Toowoomba. We knew when they would come. They always came around just before Federal and State elections. That just goes to show that their purpose was to siphon off a bit of money for the ALP election campaign.

The arguments for QWAs continue as follows—

> Many businesses operate with only one or a few staff and do not currently have the capacity to change award provisions or strike up formal arrangements that will both assist their business and provide

flexible working arrangements for their staff.

Larger enterprises, which at least have more capacity to facilitate changes to existing working arrangements, find that current arrangements are too restrictive, resulting in lost opportunity as market demand changes.

This results in a loss of benefits for both business and employees.

The Queensland workplace agreement system is underpinned by the award system, the no-disadvantage test and the creation of the positions of the Enterprise Commissioner and the Employment Advocate.

While the simplification of the award system will maintain a solid base of entitlements for employees, the QWA process will provide an avenue for employers and employees to put in place enhanced arrangements that can have overall benefits for everybody.

The award system will still provide a safety net for employees, but at the same time will encourage employees to become aware of and involved in determining their conditions of employment in cooperation with their employer. Is that not the way we would like to see businesses operating, that is, with both parties—employers and employees—understanding the needs of the other? That results in a happy partnership, some stability of employment and, most importantly, a successful business.

The no-disadvantage test has ensured that employees' rights and entitlements are protected, while the ability to implement flexible arrangements has meant that employers have been able to maximise their business potential.

We are entering a new era through these Queensland workplace agreements of partnerships, cooperation and flexible arrangements, which all assists job creation. Let us have a look at some of the assistance in regional and rural areas of Queensland for the putting in place of these Queensland workplace agreements. There is the Queensland Employment Advocate and the Workplace Information Unit, the District Industrial Inspectors Offices, which are placed right throughout regional and rural Queensland—north Brisbane, south Brisbane, Ayr, Bundaberg, Cairns, Emerald, Gladstone, Gympie, Ipswich, Mackay, Maryborough, Mount Isa, Nambour, Rockhampton, Roma, Southport——

Mr Johnson: A good place, that Emerald.

Mr HORAN: That is right. The offices are also located at Townsville and Warwick.

There is another aspect that shows just how important these Queensland workplace agreements are to this State. There are 125 local governments in Queensland, 100 of which have adopted Queensland workplace agreements. They can see the advantage of workplace agreements and the advantages of having flexible arrangements. They can see the benefits for their employees and the rural community. They know what they are doing. Their employees know what they are doing and have protection. They can work out something that suits their particular locality and the jobs that need to be done. If anything illustrates the success of Queensland workplace agreements and the way in which they will gradually increase in number throughout Queensland as people become more aware of their usefulness, flexibility and benefits, it is the fact that 100 of 125 local governments throughout Queensland are using them in some way or other.

Queensland workplace agreements are good for industry, small business, rural employment and for creating competition. The unions themselves are placed on their toes and will not be able to collect the cheque in the mail that comes in for the annual tickets. If they are to survive, this will make them perform. Just like small business has to compete with small business, the unions and union officials will have to be on their toes and they will have to compete with the QWAs. They will have to come up with something that the workers want more than the QWAs. They will have to come up with a bit of good old-fashioned service instead of just taking the money and siphoning it off every three years to assist the Labor Party at elections and to prop up a few of its factional mates.

The QWAs are really about choice, with protection and flexibility. It means a greater opportunity for employers to make a success of their business, to help keep Queensland strong, to help keep Queensland's economy strong, to create new jobs, to hold the existing jobs that they have, to be able to meet competition, to be able to be flexible to those businesses that work out of hours, to be flexible with their staff who have got kids or need to work at particular times and to be flexible to be able to cope with those peak times of demand compared with other times of demand in those business when there may be very little to zero demand. It is about the no disadvantage test. It is about access to a

bargaining agent, which can be a union representative. It is about time to review—even after the agreement has been entered into—so that everyone can be sure that it is right, backed up by the commissioner and the Employment Advocate.

We must reject this ideology of Labor, which wants to have compulsory awards and compulsory involvement in unions. It wants to stop flexibility and stop employers and small business operators from entering into an arrangement that can only benefit their employees. We must stay in the front in Queensland. We must have QWAs. That will mean that we will be a prosperous State with a happy work force with every opportunity to reach the full potential of this great State. We can do that only by the involvement of QWAs.

Time expired.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (9.01 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise tonight to support the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill which will honour Labor's election commitment to working men and women in this State. The policy objectives of this Bill are to provide for an award system to be the primary vehicle for determining wages and conditions, for general conditions of employment to be detailed in legislation, for the abolition of secret Queensland workplace agreements and to ensure that the status quo is maintained, pending a review of the Queensland industrial relations system.

Up until 1997 Queensland workers had benefited from an industrial relations system that delivered improved working and living conditions for working men and women and their families, whilst delivering economic growth to the State via the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and the award system since 1915. Of course, the industrial relations systems require legislative changes from time to time to reflect the needs of the worker, the employer, the community and the economy. An example of such change was the introduction of award-based enterprise bargaining. Enterprise bargaining under the award system has allowed workers, unions, employers and industry to negotiate in a transparent manner for higher wage outcomes and flexible working arrangements in exchange for higher productivity and efficiency at the workplaces across industry.

During the debate in 1997, the former Minister for Industrial Relations stated that one of the key objectives of the Workplace Relations Bill was to promote economic prosperity and welfare by encouraging the pursuit of high employment, improved living standards, low inflation and national and international competitiveness through higher productivity and a flexible and fairer labour market. However, his legislation had the reverse effect. His legislation was all about undermining the award system and increasing the gap in wealth between the rich and the poor, the weak and the strong, and giving significant opportunities to unscrupulous employers to drive wages and conditions down through Queensland workplace agreements.

During the debate in 1997, the former member for Mundingburra let the cat out of the bag when he exposed the real intention of the legislation when he said that the rationale behind this legislation was to enable Australia to compete against its Asian competitors by having a lower wage outcome in order to be productive. These remarks have been backed up by the report on the effects of the introduction of Queensland workplace agreements. In the report, the average wage increase granted under QWAs was 2.6%.

Mr Seeney: We have heard all this.

Mr MULHERIN: The honourable member will hear it again.

However, 57.8% of QWAs gave employees no wage increases. The average wage increase for a certified agreement for the same period was 4.1%, with an average wage increase of 2.9% in the awards.

Mr Seeney: It is the same speech.

Mr MULHERIN: The honourable member will hear it again.

The report also highlighted substantial erosion of employee entitlements. For example, 38.7% of QWAs increased the ordinary weekly hours, 53% of QWAs increased the span of hours, 69.4% removed or decreased penalty rate entitlements, 42.5% removed overtime, 17.9% removed annual leave, 31.3% removed allowances and 19.4% removed or decreased sick leave entitlements. This is in stark contrast to an examination of 142 certified agreements, which found that clauses contained within these agreements focused on improvements in the workplace. In particular, clauses relating to training represented 75% of the agreements; occupational health and safety, 67% of the agreements; productivity improvements, 64% of the agreements; multiskilling, 45% of the agreements; career paths, 45% of the agreements are predominant, unlike the QWAs in which only 2% of the agreements examined contained clauses relating to increasing hours of work.

The Workplace Relations Act of 1997 was purely a union bashing exercise. It was not about delivering higher productivity and flexible and fairer labour markets or improved living standards for workers. During yesterday's and today's debate, members opposite in their speeches displayed a pathological hatred for trade unions and workers who want to participate in the trade union movement. Yesterday we heard the member for Clayfield trying——

Mr Seeney: Rubbish! We gave them the choice.

Mr MULHERIN: The honourable member does not like hearing this, but he should listen to it. Yesterday we heard the member for Clayfield trying to put a libertarian spin on Queensland workplace agreements. He said, "Why not give employees and their families a choice to decide what is good for themselves and not have a Big Brother to do the job for them?" This is in stark contrast to a response I received from the then Premier, the member for Surfers Paradise, in relation to a question on notice I put to him back in June last year. I asked—

> "With reference to his comments regarding the rights of individual workers to freely choose whether they join a trade union organisation or not, will his Government amend the Primary Industries Act to outlaw compulsory membership to primary producer organisations; if not, why does he support double standards?"

His answer states—

> "The statute to which I assume the honourable member is referring is the Primary Producers Organisation and Marketing Act ... which in fact was introduced by the Forgan Smith Labour Government in 1926. The Act provides for the payment of a funding levy by producers to statutory bodies established under the Act. The statutory bodies are established for, and represent the interests of producers in the sugar cane, dairy, pork and commercial fishing industries.
>
> This arrangement ensures that the Government is able to consult with the relevant industries through a single representative organisation and that such an organisation has sufficient financial resources to represent the views of its constituents effectively and facilitate a proper and timely flow of information in both directions. The funding of these bodies by way of compulsory levies ensures that these objectives are met and provides significant benefits to all members of the industry in question.
>
> If any producers in these industries have a specific problem with the way in which the relevant representative bodies are representing their interests, they have two main options. Firstly, they can pursue the matter through the appropriate channels within each organisation. Secondly, under the provisions of the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act, which the honourable Neville Harper introduced when he was the Minister in 1987, it is possible for 30% of the producers in any of the four industries covered by the Act to effect a review of the organisation. If this 30% petition for a poll—and a poll of the entire producer membership in the industry would be conducted by the DPI—and if 50% voted and 60% of these were in favour of the abolition, the organisation would cease to exist. This is a democratic process which is available to the membership of each of the four bodies operating under the Act, namely the canegrowers, the Queensland Dairy Farmers Organisation, the Queensland Pork Producers Organisation and the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation."

This really shows the hypocrisy of members opposite. Primary producer organisations are no different to trade union organisations. Each organisation acts in the best interests of its constituents. I ask: why does the coalition support compulsory trade unionism for primary producers and outlaw compulsory trade unionism for workers? The answer is obvious: it despises the right of workers to collectively negotiate in the best interests of their fellow workmates and will do anything in its power to prevent workers from collectively negotiating through their respective unions for fair and just wage and working conditions outcomes.

The stance taken by the coalition is hypocritical to say the least. On one hand, it wants to bash trade unionists, but on the other hand it wants to look after its primary producer mates. For the record, I say that I fully support the concept of compulsory unionism, be it a trade union for workers or a trade union for primary producers. I believe that all primary producers should be members of an organisation that is funded through compulsory levies to represent the views of its constituents and provide significant benefits to its members.

The Bill will deliver improved working and living conditions for working men and women and their families whilst delivering economic growth to the State. This Bill will bring back the cooperative era of industrial relations that Queenslanders enjoyed up until 1997. This Bill, unlike the coalition's Bill of 1997, is based on the premise of fairness and equity to both parties. I would like to congratulate the Minister on his policy initiative to abolish Queensland workplace agreements and for establishing a task force to review the State industrial relations laws and his commitment to developing new industrial relations laws that will take this State into the 21st century. I urge members opposite to support the Bill.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (9.10 p.m.): In speaking on the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill it is important to recognise the job creation record of the former coalition Government. More than anything, this record points to the success of the Workplace Relations Act which was introduced into this Parliament by the coalition in 1997. It also demonstrates the coalition's commitment to getting on with the job.

Job creation is one of the most important roles of Government and I would like to think that the Labor Government is conscious of that in establishing its objective of reducing current unemployment levels to 5% within the next few years. I know that the coalition in Government took this role very seriously and did more than just talk about the need to create jobs.

There is no doubt that from 1989 to 1996 Queensland suffered as a result of the repeated failures of the Goss Labor Government. That Government, despite its significant parliamentary majority, presided over some of the worst unemployment figures and some of the highest rates of industrial disputation ever recorded in this State. This came from a Government that had the audacity to claim that it was pro-business and pro-jobs.

Premier Beattie and his colleagues make the same claim. These are the same people with the same union backgrounds who got us into so much trouble in the past. "Today's Labor", as they have dubbed themselves, are no different from yesterday's Labor. The facts speak for themselves. The Beattie Labor Government is destined to follow the Goss Government down the path of unquestioned union interference in the workplace. There can be no better proof of this fact than the mere existence of this Bill.

By introducing this Bill the Labor Party has shown that it is not serious about job creation. This puts in jeopardy the new Labor Government's election strategy of job creation. It shows that the Premier is not serious about enabling our economy to compete. Significantly, it shows that the Government has been hijacked by the union movement.

The coalition's Workplace Relations Act heralded a new era for industrial relations in Queensland. During the two short years when the coalition was in office, more than 91,000 jobs were created; or to put it another way, under the coalition more than 91,000 extra Queenslanders were given the opportunity to work and to earn an income. Let us compare that with the Labor Party's achievements over an equivalent period. Under Labor, unemployment in Queensland rose to more than 11%—more than one in 11 Queenslanders were unemployed and unable to earn an income. Members opposite should take a long, hard look at those facts. Not only does the appalling record of Labor reflect on its own mismanagement of the economy but also it shows quite clearly how Labor's industrial relations policy failed.

The Premier is on record as making job creation the central plank of his Government's election strategy. Who could forget those advertisements—those that had Mr Beattie ham acting to a group of sycophantic Labor supporters? More importantly, however, who can forget the Premier's commitment to reduce unemployment to 5%—first over three years, but over five years recently. I am not sure which time frame the Premier is determined to achieve.

Mr Springborg: Do I hear a decade?

Mr HEGARTY: We start with three, we go to five. Do I hear 10? Do I hear 20?

Mr Springborg: Try a generation.

Mr HEGARTY: I thank the member. I am still not sure whether we have settled on three or five. No-one in the Government seems sure about this small detail. Regardless of whatever time is eventually agreed upon, the real crux of the matter is that the Premier has made it extremely clear that he will do whatever it takes to reduce unemployment in this State. I commend him for that commitment. Nobody in this House would dispute the worthiness of that sort of intent. But if the Premier insists on introducing legislation such as this Bill it is quite plain that he does not have the conviction of his word.

The Bill is nothing more than an instalment on Labor's debt to the unions. It is

a Bill that does nothing more than restore the power of the unions to ride roughshod over all employers and all employees in this State in the determination of wages and conditions. It will return Queensland to the bad old days of union thuggery, inflexible work practices and uncompetitive workplaces. It will serve only one real purpose—the creation and entrenchment of "jobs for the boys". One thing is for sure—it most certainly will not create jobs for decent, hardworking Queenslanders.

This Bill is anti-jobs and anti-business. It is a Bill that could only be supported by a Government that does not want Queensland businesses to be able to compete at a national level, let alone at an international level. Unfortunately for Queensland, the Beattie Labor Government is very quickly shaping up to be such a Government. I find it very hard to even comprehend how any Government that claims to have job creation as a top priority could support this Bill.

Even the Treasurer, Rhodes Scholar that he is, would understand that business—private enterprise—cannot create jobs if it cannot compete efficiently. This morning the Premier was proudly claiming credit for the increase in business confidence amongst Queensland's small business operators.

A Government member interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: At the moment it is, but I wonder whether he will be crowing so loudly in six months' time. Nevertheless, when the regressive amendments to the Workplace Relations Act proposed by the Premier take effect they may tell a different story altogether. We will then see whether the Premier is so keen to claim credit or whether he is silent. It is very simple: business cannot compete efficiently if it does not have the ability to maximise the effectiveness of its work force, and by this I mean employers working with employees to determine wages and conditions that are suitable and that are agreed to by both parties.

The provision of Queensland workplace agreements within the existing Act provides employers and employees with the means necessary to facilitate the establishment of wages and conditions specific to individual employees. Under the coalition's legislation, employees and employers were able to come together for the first time and negotiate wage outcomes that most suited their individual needs. A perfect example of this is the case of a mother who, under normal award conditions, has to work 36 and a quarter hours per week. This mother, who has two young children in child care, is considering leaving work so that she can spend more time at home. As she is the only one in her small workplace in this situation, and as her employer is prepared to accommodate her needs, she is able to negotiate a workplace agreement that allows her to spend four days per week at home with her children. The same principle can apply to a father who wants to pursue other activities such as study. The principle also applies to businesses that believe that an alternative to the normal "square peg in a round hole" award system would better benefit them and their employees.

Mr Roberts: What is the name of the award that covers her?

Mr HEGARTY: The name of the award does not matter. This is a case of choice between State and Federal coverage. The Government's actions are pushing people from the State system back to the Federal system. This adds to the confusion of people in the work force and the employers.

More and more people are beginning to appreciate the freedoms and flexibility of negotiating a QWA. They are beginning to look beyond the archaic industrial relations system that the unions, thanks to the Labor Party, had protected for so long. The reality is, however, that unions do not create jobs and unions should not have the right to interfere in the work conditions of those who do not want their involvement. Unions do not have families to care for, academic studies to complete or businesses to run. Unions are essentially interested in only one thing—protecting their turf and protecting their power to influence Governments and bully employers.

A way for unions to protect their turf is to ensure that the award system remains intact. Unions are well aware that the devolution of a centralised award system weakens their power. One has only to look at the current system, with its declining union membership, to highlight that fact. Without a highly centralised award system, unions cannot dictate that each and every worker in a specific category must work to certain wages and conditions. We have heard from several members today—and the member for Gregory comes to mind—who have given examples of real life situations. The member for Callide is in a similar situation. Those members have experienced the archaic imposts that unions dictate to the work force, which eventually results in the workers whom they are supposed to support losing their jobs through their employers not being able to sustain those unrealistic working conditions. Union officials who actually have to get out and work for their members should realise that.

But it was a long time ago when they actually worked in the workplace themselves.

If the union movement was serious about representing Queensland workers, it would support the existence of QWAs. I find it hard to believe that unions do not view QWAs as an avenue for ensuring that the specific needs of members are rewarded and recognised. If one thing can be drawn from the union movement's support of this Bill, it is that unions are not prepared to fight for the best interests of their members. Unions apparently see no real benefit in trying to help members negotiate the wages and conditions that best suit their needs and most reward their abilities. Is it any wonder that the union movement can no longer claim to represent Australian workers? As I said, union membership in this country is really on the decline.

If the union movement was serious about representation, it would reflect on this grim analysis and take stock of where it has gone wrong. People in the union movement certainly would not have to rely on the existence of a centralised award system for their existence. If the same people who have been running the union movement for the past 20 years had been running a private business, they would have had to move to Majorca a long time ago. The sad thing is, however, that the Premier and the Minister are aware of this fact. They are aware that the biggest hurdle standing between them and job creation and job security is the union movement. Yet they are unwilling and incapable of acting.

Mr Mickel: Incapable.

Mr HEGARTY: I take the interjection from the member for Logan, who is interjecting from other than his own seat.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HEGARTY: Mr Speaker, I seek your protection from the vindictive remarks of the member for Logan.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will continue his speech.

Mr HEGARTY: By introducing this legislation, the Labor Party in particular and the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations have put a serious hurdle in the way of the Queensland economy's efforts to continue registering record rates of employment growth. When the former Treasurer, the honourable member for Caloundra, introduced the coalition's 1998-99 Budget into this House, she said that employment growth in Queensland was 4.1%—more than double the national average of 1.8%. This record is reflected more accurately in the fact that, during 1997-98, almost 40% of new jobs created in Australia were created in Queensland. These jobs were created under a modern industrial relations framework which was established by the coalition. They were created in an environment where flexible work practices were encouraged and industrial disputes were on the way down. I wonder how the Beattie Government proposes to sell its industrial relations policy.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: How will the Premier and the Minister who is so keen to interject tonight explain to potential employment-creating investors that they have decided to return Queensland's industrial relations system to the past—a past dominated by unions, industrial disputes and inflexible work practices? What they will have to offer to investors who are more inclined to set up their businesses in Victoria, Western Australia or those other States which offer a more flexible industrial relations environment remains to be seen. Maybe the Premier should just come clean and tell Queenslanders that he is really not serious about job policies. It would be much fairer for everybody if he admitted that his promise to cut unemployment to 5% was just rhetoric, that he cannot achieve it because, amongst other things, he does not have the fortitude to stand up to the union movement.

This Bill sends a very clear message to the business community. It sends a message that reads of short-sighted policy making, a reluctance to accept reform and a lack of understanding on the basic elements of how to create jobs. It sends a message also that shows the union movement is back in control along George Street. My colleague the honourable member for Clayfield has already informed the House that the coalition will not be supporting this Bill. The shadow Minister has spoken at some length on the differences between the industrial relations system that he, as the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations, tried to create and the one that Labor would like to restore. It would be timely for the new Minister to look very carefully at the differences. I can assure him that there will be a lot of unhappy Queenslanders when it is realised that the Beattie Labor Government has introduced legislation seeking to return to the union movement the keys to every Queensland workplace.

A great number of the unemployed people in my electorate know that the union movement and the award system have failed them. The same applies to the great number of workers in my electorate. In this day and

age it is grossly unfair to suggest that people should not have the right to determine fair and reasonable workplace agreements. What is more disturbing, however, is the Minister's apparent belief that unions are much better equipped than anyone else to negotiate wages and conditions. What a suggestion! It is a laughable suggestion.

With the appropriate safeguards and guidelines, such as those contained in the existing Workplace Relations Act, employees and employers who wish to do so should be entitled to negotiate specific workplace agreements. After all, this is the nineties, and we do have an increasingly informed and educated work force. By all means, let us keep the guidelines, the safeguards, the no disadvantage test and the rest, but let us remember that individuals have different needs and that what may suit one employer and employee may not suit another. This cannot be achieved by abolishing QWAs, and it most certainly cannot be achieved by providing for the award system to be the primary vehicle for determining wages and conditions.

I support freedom of choice, and I am fervently in favour of anything that is pro-jobs and pro-private enterprise. This Bill fails to come up to scratch on any of these requirements. This Bill is a sell-out to the union movement, and it seriously lets down the public of Queensland.

As to the pre-election position of the Queensland Labor Party when in Opposition, the Labor Party made it perfectly clear that, if elected, it would abolish QWAs. Imagine the alarm bells that that set off in the business community. People in the business community have to plan long term. They knew that an election was looming and that the Labor Party was going to abolish what had been set in place a very short time before by a coalition Government.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: The member cannot interject. He is not sitting in his correct seat. He has not been here long, but he should know from his past——

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: The member should go to his own seat if he wants to interject.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will control the House.

Mr HEGARTY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was looking for your direction, and I seek your protection.

The newness of the QWA provisions is obviously one thing that has confused the business community. That is one of the reasons why, to date, so few businesses have entered into QWAs. But as I said a minute ago, bearing in mind that there was an election looming, why would business move into something when there was no certainty? It was a new initiative, but a good initiative, for those industries, particularly the child care and the real estate industries. They took advantage of it because they saw an umbrella where the employers and the employees had a win/win situation. But unfortunately, with an election looming, and because of the very short time that the coalition had in office to ramp up those initiatives in the Queensland Workplace Relations Act, I can understand the reluctance of many businesses to move into it.

Mr Santoro: That will change.

Mr HEGARTY: It will change. The member for Clayfield knows what the business community wants. He consulted widely before moving to enact that legislation. Moving back from that tonight, through this regressive amendment that the Minister now proposes, will put Queensland, the business community and job creation back to where they were prior to 1996. Queensland cannot afford that in this particular economic situation. There is no way that the Labor Party will achieve anywhere near its employment target if this Bill is passed tonight. For that reason, I do not support the Bill.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (9.30 p.m.): I rise briefly to support the shadow Minister and member for Clayfield in opposition to the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill 1998.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his speech.

Dr WATSON: When addressing this amendment Bill tonight, I believe it is important to refer back to when the Minister for Industrial Relations, the honourable member for Clayfield, introduced the original Workplace Relations Bill in 1996. I believe his comments in his second-reading speech are the most relevant aspect of tonight's debate. When introducing the Bill, he stated—

> "... we must take the necessary steps to meet the economic and workplace challenges of the future. Queensland's coalition Government is committed to providing the State's businesses, particularly small businesses, with the best industrial relations system possible to

meet the economic challenges of the future."

That was what the then Minister said he was trying to do. That is what he accomplished through the introduction of that Bill. That is important in today's age as technology and economic conditions throughout the world are changing very rapidly. If we are to continue to be productive in this country and in this State, if we are to compete against other countries in the export sector, we must be able to change our businesses to reflect the demands of any particular occasion. That is what the Bill that the former Minister introduced in 1996 was attempting to do.

The problem with this amendment Bill that we are debating tonight is that it is going backwards. It is starting to pull back the flexibility that was introduced in the Workplace Relations Bill 1996. This is a "back to the future" kind of amendment. It has no vision about the future of Australia and Queensland. It shows where we were in the past and desires to return to the past. That is one of the major problems with what we are doing tonight. This is a one-size-fits-all approach to industrial relations, a one-size-fits-all approach to running businesses and competing in an economy, rather than an approach that recognises that the economy changes, economic conditions change, technology changes and that we need a system that allows some adaptability and flexibility to meet those challenges.

The second problem with this Bill is that, in essence, it is anti-investment, anti-business, anti-jobs and anti-growth because it does not take into account the fact that we need to be flexible and adapt to economic changes.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Dr WATSON: The Health Minister who interjects talks about a particular part of the tax package. If she wants to see a tax reform package that completely misses the idea of taxation reform, if she wants to see a tax reform package that is anti-jobs, anti-growth——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This debate is about Queensland workplace agreements.

Dr WATSON: I am discussing those, Mr Speaker. I am discussing flexibility.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his speech.

Dr WATSON: If members want to see a tax reform package that is anti-jobs, anti-growth and anti the unemployed, they should study the package that Mr Beazley released today. Unfortunately, the thinking demonstrated by the Federal Labor Party today is exactly the same kind of thinking that runs through this Bill. Forgetting about flexibility, forgetting about having to adapt to changes in economic circumstances, forgetting about changes in technology, forgetting about changes in the way our exporters have to compete, forgetting about the way domestic businesses have to compete against those importing into Australia—forgetting about all of those changes—this Bill reinforces the restrictions that are typical of the Labor Party's thinking.

When one remembers back to when we were considering the waterfront dispute and if one puts aside some of the extreme incidents that occurred during that dispute, one will realise that one aspect that came to the fore was the importance of the cost of doing business on the waterfront in Australia. Once upon a time, that aspect was not particularly important. When we were moving goods across the waterfront in Australia—even if we had "relatively inefficient practices"; even if we took longer than we should have taken—the costs of doing that were a rather small proportion of the total costs of transporting goods to Australia or exporting them from Australia.

However, over the past couple of decades, Australia has witnessed a substantial change in the cost structure in the transportation industry. In the exporting and importing fields we have seen larger and faster ships. We have seen containerisation for shipping and land transport. We have seen developments in bulk handling. Each and every one those developments—whether it be in relation to the speed of the ships, the technology of handling, the kind of turnarounds that can be achieved—has driven down the costs of transporting goods to and from Australia.

Once we start driving those costs down, if we do not then also drive down the costs of moving items across the wharves—that is, the cost of wages, the time involved, the length of time ships are idle and the large investments involved in handling equipment on the wharves—eventually they become a very substantial part of the total cost of transportation. What was being done in the workplace dispute on the waterfront was a microcosm of what the coalition tried to do in its Workplace Relations Bill and, of course, what this Bill goes against. That dispute was trying to address the issue of a flexible work force, one that could adapt to the necessary changes that were occurring on the waterfront, adapt to changes caused by technology and

adapt to changes in shipping arrival and departure times because of weather disturbances and other factors. That was an attempt to control those costs.

The intent of the Workplace Relations Bill was to provide businesses and work forces with the flexibility needed to adapt to demands. It is only by adapting to changing demands that we will have efficiency in business. That is the only way we will continue to encourage investment in business. That is the only way we will get jobs. If we are not efficient, if we do not put the money into investment, then we simply will not have the productivity required to expand the employment base. This Bill is about reversing the kinds of incentives that are needed in Australia, the kinds of things we need to do in this State if we are to continue to be a strong economic force. Rather than encouraging a future vision of adaptability, a vision that allows Australia and Queensland to be at the forefront of economic development and growth to ensure that we and our children have jobs, it is very disturbing that we have a Bill before the House that will reverse that process.

That is bad not only for this Parliament but also it is bad for Queensland, it is bad for families and it is bad for jobs. There is no doubt that a key aspect of ensuring that we have a productive work force is to have a work force that actually works with the management of companies. The other key part of the Workplace Relations Act was that it tried to get companies and employees to work together. The purpose was not to set up a conflict situation, it was to set up a structure whereby management and employees could work together to solve the problems that they were facing in individual businesses and enterprises. Again, that is a particularly important part because we in the Parliament cannot set up a structure where, as I said earlier, one size fits all. Firms are different, even within the same industries. At times they face different levels of competition, different forms of competition and different demands on them. We must provide the flexibility for management and employees to get together to work out what is best for them—their industry—but, most importantly, their firm. As I said, this Bill reverses that process.

I am disappointed that we are having to debate this Bill. I think that it would have been far better if we had been able to encourage a flexible work force. It would have been far better if this Parliament was to go ahead and encourage businesses to invest not only in technical things but also in productive workplace relations in any individual firm. For that reason, as disappointed as I am in seeing the thing, I have to join with my colleagues on this side in opposing the Bill and opposing it vigorously.

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (9.41 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill 1998, but I wish particularly to speak generally about economic reform, of which industrial relations is just a part. Economic reform and micro-economic reform in particular mean different things to different people. Traditionally, micro-economic reform means a correction or an improvement of the economics at an industry level. However, I would hazard to say that the Labor Party has a totally different definition of what micro-economic reform is all about.

One may recall that the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments were the ones most inspired to initiate the substantial micro-economic reforms that have occurred in Australia over the past 15 years. But let us look at what micro-economic reform means to the ALP. It regards micro as meaning tiny, or very small— miniature almost—and reform from the point of view of atonement or a confession. Like a prisoner, the ALP is apologising and purging itself. So the ALP regards micro-economic reform as an atonement or an apology for a tiny economy—an economy that produces a tiny amount of permanent employment. I might add that the legislation that the Labor Government is proposing fits in beautifully with its definition of micro-reform—apologising for creating a tiny economy.

The Labor Government is also saying that it is looking for flexibility. However, its idea of flexibility is as flexible as a seesaw with one end nailed to the ground. On one end of the scale, initiated by the Hawke and Keating Governments, the Australian economy was opened up to all the insecurities of an economic rationalist, globalised, market-driven economy. However, Labor also believes that it can somehow have industry exposed to the world but not one of the major aspects of the productive sector of the Australian economy, and that is the work force.

It is like the old saying, "You can't be just a little bit pregnant." We cannot be just a little bit globalised. If we want business to be opened up to the rigours of the international globalised marketplace, the work force has to be opened up as well. If we try to put artificial barriers in the way of permanent employment, such as this legislation, quite simply we will move industry more and more away from permanent employment. I can assure

members that someone with a flexible employment agreement in a full-time job is far better off than the person who can achieve only a casual job.

Why will this happen? The employer is not game to employ workers on a full-time basis because of all the rigidities that this type of legislation is introducing. I refer to yesterday's Courier-Mail editorial headed "Why Australia cannot hide from the world", which states—

> "Insecurity is a part of a modern global economy but there is compensation. Globalisation provides a bigger economic pie through growth and therefore enhanced employment opportunities."

If we agree with an economy opened up to global competition then we agree that the marketplace has to dictate the level and remuneration and conditions of any form of sale within that economy. That sale also includes the sale of one's labour in the work force. However, sensibly, one understands that there has to be a safety net and, quite rightly, an appropriate safety net. I might add, that was put in place by the previous Labor Government. That is the bottom line for security for employees and that bottom line, which was written and created by the previous Labor Government, was set in concrete in the previous coalition Government's industrial relations legislation. That is what it was about.

I do not intend to go into the minutia of the legislation; that will be undertaken during the Committee stage by the shadow Minister. I wish to look at the principle behind what is happening here. Certainly, no-one would suggest that the Courier-Mail is any friend of the coalition but, in today's editorial under the heading "Flexible agreements create real Jobs", it states—

> "... they"—

meaning the union leaders—

> "want control of awards so they can maintain and protect their membership base, ensuring an income stream to support their own generous salaries."

So a union-dominated Labor Government is simply putting in place legislation to look after its union mates to ensure that their secure position within the economy is even more secure in exchange for substantially reduced flexibility. Is it any wonder that Labor talks about micro-economic reform when it really means that it is apologising for doing special deals with its union mates that will create an even smaller permanent work force. Again, that shows quite clearly what a Labor Government means by micro-economic reform.

I would like to put into a little bit more perspective what has happened over the past 15 years. Prior to the 1980s, Australia had what was commonly known as the Australian settlement model. This model was all about entitlement. The word "entitlement" is very important, because the Australian settlement model said that everyone within the Australian system was entitled to be dealt with fairly. On the industrial relations side, that extended to having an entitlement, at the very bottom level of worker, to the basic wage. Depending on the worker's circumstances or skills, the worker would have a further entitlement to another increment of one type or another.

Mr Lucas: Straight out of Paul Kelly's book.

Mr CONNOR: No, it is not. So the workers had a skills allowance—an allowance for the experience they had at a particular level. Then they had the balancing factor that the employer and industry were also entitled to a fair return. The only way in which the system could work was that Australia had to have its own isolated and insulated economy. The entitlement model ensured a fair return to the employer and to industry by a series of shelters—a big tariff wall—built around Australian industry. Even with all its faults, the Australian settlement model worked because it was balanced and fair. It had many shortcomings but there was a balance of entitlements on both sides.

Mr Lucas: Are you sure this isn't Paul Kelly?

Mr CONNOR: I have not read Paul Kelly for about 10 years.

Mr Lucas: Where is it from?

Mr CONNOR: I read other books.

In recent times, mainly since the early 1980s and mostly put in place by the Hawke and Keating Governments, we moved away from the Australian settlement or entitlement model to one of rational economics where the marketplace would determine the return on productivity. So productivity was the catchword and all aspects of the economy were rewarded on the basis of each sector's productivity.

Of course, at the same time there was a safety net put underneath the worker. That system of productivity-based reforms extended across the whole economy. The idea was that this would pave the way for industry to be opened up to a competitive world market. It was not based on entitlement but was based on productivity. At the same time as the work

force became more flexible, in theory at least, the tariff walls would come down and, as the Courier-Mail said yesterday in its editorial—

> "Insecurity is part of a modern global economy but there is compensation. Globalisation provides a bigger economic pie through growth and therefore enhanced employment opportunities."

Mr Hayward: Tell us where you got it from.

Mr CONNOR: I wrote this without referring to anything other than the Courier-Mail.

Mr Hayward: You invented it.

Mr CONNOR: I do not know who invented it, but this is what I am saying. At the same time as the work force became more flexible, in theory at least, the tariff walls would come down. The Courier-Mail stated yesterday in its editorial—

> "Insecurity is part of a modern global economy but there is compensation. Globalisation provides a bigger economic pie through growth and therefore enhanced employment opportunities."

I acknowledge to members opposite that I have read the Courier-Mail, but not Paul Kelly. Those employment opportunities will only come if workers are as flexible as industry in a globalised environment, and there has to be a balance kept at all times between the flexibility of industry, its openness to the world economy and the flexibility of the work force. Now, I am not promoting economic rationalism. This Government did not put it in place; it was put in place by the previous Hawke Labor Government. With all its positives it has many problems, and I will look at those in a moment.

Under this new system, the moment one sector of this very fine balancing act gets favoured treatment, the market place takes over. That is what the unions and Labor continue to forget. The previous Hawke Labor Government moved this whole system into a globalised, economic rationalist environment where the market is everything. That means that if an industry becomes inflexible to the demand of a very flexible international market place, another firm, another industry or another country will fill that market void. It will become flexible enough to supply that demand at the expense of the inflexible Australian industry.

It goes without saying that, hypothetically, if our cane growers want to produce sugar and because of inflexibility they will only supply it at $400 a tonne but the world market will only ensure them $300 a tonne, then they will not sell a lot of sugar. Thailand or Brazil will come in and undercut that price and be sufficiently flexible to deliver that to the market when the market wants it and how it wants it. It is commonly known as the law of demand and supply. The market prevails.

At the same time but at a different level we have the work force. The work force is a major input of the production sector, but it is not the only input. In many cases, like many inputs, the work force does have substitutes, mostly in the form of capital goods or equipment. The more inflexible and expensive a production input is, the more the substitute will replace it. As the marginal cost of labour increases as a result of inflexibility, so labour will be substituted either by labour in another country or by substitute capital in Australia; or, as we have seen happening more and more in Australia, it will be substituted with an alternative form of employment, that is casual, insecure employment.

I now move on to another aspect of industrial relations, that is, the further effects of globalisation. In the process of doing that I wish to quote Clive Hamilton, the executive director of the Australia Institute, a Canberra public policy research centre. He teaches in the public policy program at the Australian National University. He says—

> "For ordinary workers, real wages have been virtually stagnant since the early 1980s and to earn their pay they have had to work longer and harder."

Further, he says—

> "At the end of the 1970s fulltime employees worked an average of 40.5 hours per week. They now work 43 hours per week. One-third of the workforce work overtime, and two-thirds of those do not get paid for it.
>
> ...
>
> Unemployment has risen from an average rate of less than 2% in the 1960s to 9% in the past 10 years. Job security is increasingly a thing of the past. The proportion of workers employed on a casual basis has risen from 17% ten years ago to 24% in 1995, one of the highest rates in the OECD."

So, what has this magic formula of micro-economic reform achieved? Honourable members should remember what I mean by micro-economic reform as far as the Labor Party is concerned. What has this Labor Party inspired apology given to the Australian community? It has given us since the early 1980s virtually stagnant wages, and we are working longer hours for it. As a result of this

Labor inspired workforce inflexibility, we are seeing the proportion of people in the workforce working without any security at all, that is, on a casual basis, being almost one in four.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr CONNOR: I will answer that in a minute. This is a staggering figure. One in four people is without secure employment—one of the highest proportions in the OECD—and now working casually because of the rigidities of our industrial relations system.

Members may at this stage be wondering who this Clive Hamilton is. I can assure them that Clive Hamilton is a respected academic who has had the paper I have quoted from published in Australasian Science, a respected academic journal. He has also written a book, published last year, called The Genuine Progress Indicator. This paper approaches globalisation from the perspective of the winners and losers, hence the title of his paper Winners and Losers from Globalisation. Hamilton argues that—

> "... economic growth is a hoax and that we are no better off than 40 years ago."

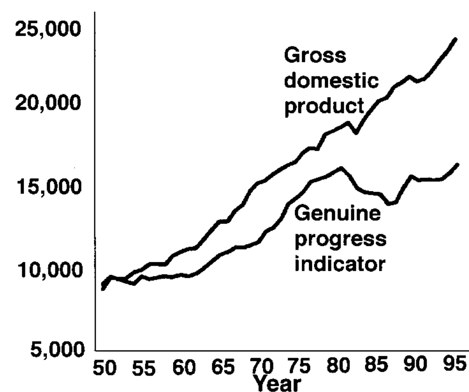
He shows that GDP is not an appropriate measure for the ordinary Australian of the progress that we have made. In fact, he maintains quite the contrary. He charts the growth from 1950 to 1996, in current prices or inflation adjusted prices, of gross domestic product measured against the individual. In other words, he is saying that the ordinary person's position now is not that much better than in the 1950s. He says—

> "Adjusted to eliminate the effects of inflation, GDP per Australian rose from around $9000 in 1950 to more than $23,000 in 1996, an annual rate of growth of 2.1%. If we take GDP to be a measure of national well-being, then young people today appear to be much better off than their parents were."

I suggest that the member for Lytton would not fall into that category. Hamilton maintains that this is not a fair measure of the real wellbeing of ordinary Australians. He maintains that a number of other factors, 23 in fact, should be taken into consideration when one looks at the wellbeing of the individual. He argues—and I think quite rightly—that matters such as the distribution of income, the value of housework, the cost of unemployment and overwork, the cost of car accidents, and congestion and the depletion of non-renewable natural resources should be considered. He also looks at the run down of our social capital and industrial capital and infrastructure, all of which go towards what he maintains is a far better measure of our wellbeing. He calls this the "genuine progress indicator". I would say that few on the other side of the House would dispute that none of these factors should not be taken into consideration when looking at the welfare of the Australian people.

The very interesting aspect of this genuine progress indicator is that since the early 1980s it has not increased at all. Those opposite might listen to this, because I think they may find it interesting. In fact, in the mid 1980s it actually went down steeply, improving only marginally in the early 1990s to regain the level of the early 1980s. A graph I have here quite clearly shows that between the early 1980s and 1996, measured by Hamilton's genuine progress indicator, the Australian worker's wellbeing is no better than in the early 1980s. In fact, for almost all of that period in between workers were worse off. I seek leave to have this graph incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.



Mr CONNOR: The Australian people have paid a huge price for globalisation and the opening up of Australia to the world economy. That does not mean that we should go back; otherwise we have gone through 15 years of horrendous pain through Labor's microeconomic reform for nothing. I now wish to quote from the editorial in yesterday's Courier Mail, which stated—

> "We do have a responsibility to identify losers in the competitive market place and provide economic and social cushions to protect them."

That should be the No. 1 issue on Australia's agenda today. Without a doubt, that is the most important comment or statement that I have read in recent years. On that basis, I will quote it again—

"We do have a responsibility to identify losers in the competitive market place and provide economic and social cushions to protect them."

That statement needs to be fleshed out fully, because it leads to the next question: what form should those cushions take?

This debate has only just begun. A book titled Among the Barbarians published recently by a Sydney Morning Herald journalist by the name of Sheehan starts to open up this debate and look at it from some different perspectives. If anyone for one moment considers that Mr Sheehan is a front for One Nation, I assure them that the true position is quite to the contrary. I have spoken to Mr Sheehan. His position on most issues is diametrically opposed to that of One Nation. However, what he has done is open up a debate on a number of issues that look towards this issue. I disagree with many aspects of his book. However, it certainly makes one think. I can assure members of one thing, and that is that making permanent employment less flexible, which is what this proposed amending legislation will do, is not the cushion that we are looking for. It will not improve the lot of the worker. To the contrary, the only people who will benefit from this are a small number of union organisers. A whole lot of workers will pay the price for that. Their permanent jobs will disappear; they will be replaced by casual jobs, machinery or jobs in low-cost countries.

Time expired.

Mr GRICE (Broadwater—NPA) (10.01 p.m.): Tonight I wish to speak against the Government's attempt to abolish Queensland workplace agreements. The amendments being proposed by the Labor Party are the recipe for everything that Queenslanders feared. They are not amendments of some so-called Today's Labor; rather they are the policy rantings of a "Yesterday's Labor". These amendments are all about returning to the union heavyweight days and the days when freedom was a word that had no place in the workplace. They are about returning to the days when a worker was forbidden to be an individual. They are about a return to the days of either complying and conforming, being a member of the union and accepting what the union said or not having a job.

It is ironic in the extreme that a Government elected on a platform of jobs, jobs, jobs is so determined to act against job creators, that is, the small business sector. It is equally ironic that a political party that has always claimed to get its mandate from the workers is so fanatically determined to take away the basic rights of workers that were enshrined by Queensland's workplace agreements.

The Workplace Relations Act introduced by the coalition was a visionary policy—a policy aimed exclusively at tackling unemployment. Queensland workplace agreements provided an opportunity for the Parliament to do something very positive for Queensland and for Australia. At a time when unemployment is unacceptably high there is an urgent need for fair and progressive legislation, not the regressive amendments proposed by those opposite.

This is the moment to move with the times, not revert to some political rhetoric found exclusively in the pages of union handbooks. For six years under the former Labor Government, Queensland moved backwards in the area of industrial relations, which was a one-sided exercise dominated and controlled exclusively by unions. The ALP became a puppet Government manipulated by its masters in the union movement. And now when the Premier claims to lead a "Today's Labor Party", we are seeing proposed amendments that mirror the same fatal errors that made Queensland and indeed Australia become the industrial joke of the Western World.

Today we have an opportunity to stick with the reforms introduced by the coalition Government by rejecting the amendments of those opposite. These reforms did away with the bias that was entrenched in our industrial relations system. They ensured that the unfair, inequitable and inefficient provisions that applied to businesses were abolished. They ensured that the rights of employees were protected. The reforms were extensive and introduced a new right of entry provision.

Labor's laws entrench the right for unions to enter any workplace where the work being carried out was covered by that union regardless of whether the union actually had members in the workplace. There was no legislative requirement to provide notice to an employer of any intent to enter. As one would imagine, such broad powers have provided unscrupulous union officials with the opportunity to enter workplaces uninvited with the intent of intimidating not only the employer but also the workers—workers who did not want to become members of the union.

These intimidation and standover tactics were bliss to the unions, so much so that a survey conducted by the Queensland

Chamber of Commerce and Industry showed that almost one third of the responding employers had experienced what they described as union intimidation. We had union officials entering a workplace uninvited, intimidating staff and management and disrupting work activity. The coalition put an end to that, and so it should have. A Labor Government would never have done what was right by the worker if it meant compromising union dominance in any way.

The coalition is committed to freedom of association and freedom of choice. It is a pity that I should even have to highlight this point, but I do so only because it is a point that drives a wedge between both sides of this Chamber. It is a pity that such a basic and fundamental principle should in fact be opposed by an established political party, let alone one that governs our State.

In a bid to return to union dominance, this Government has raised concerns about the industrial relations reforms introduced by the coalition—concerns that can best be described as undiluted nonsense. The Minister described Queensland workplace agreements as most harsh and unfair. The Government has tried to paint a picture that QWAs are somehow making employees suffer—somehow depriving employees of basic rights and wages. The Government has tried to paint a picture that QWAs offer no safeguards. Such claims are arrant nonsense.

Before approving agreements, a Commissioner for Certified Agreements or an Enterprise Commissioner must be satisfied that the agreement does not in any way disadvantage employees in relation to their employment conditions. What could be a more secure safeguard than that? The commissioner has the power to refuse to approve an agreement if he or she considers on balance that the employer or employee's employment conditions were reduced. Again, what could be a more secure safeguard?

The Government cannot claim that this safeguard has not been working. As at 4 May, 23 QWAs had been refused by the Enterprise Commissioner and a further 21 had been withdrawn, yet the Labor Party will try to convince anyone who will listen that this safeguard is not working. Why would such distortions be put forward by the Labor Party. The answer is as transparent as any X-ray image. QWAs did not rely on unions, but the Labor Party does. It is interesting that on not one single occasion has any ALP member of Parliament ever raised an instance of an abuse of a QWA in this Chamber, yet now they feign concern and outrage.

The coalition has always been committed to the rights of employees, and that is why a particular effort was put in to ensure that QWAs were fair. The Enterprise Commissioner is able to become involved in a dispute resolution if the parties to a QWA make that provision in the agreement. The Employment Advocate is able to provide help and advice to both employers and employees on their respective rights and responsibilities under the Act. The Employment Advocate is also empowered to investigate and remedy complaints and alleged contraventions in relation to QWAs. Even more importantly, an employer or employee is able to appoint a person to be a bargaining agent for the making, approval, amendment or termination of an agreement. What could be more fair? What could be more fair than allowing an employee to enlist the assistance of anyone?

The Labor Party's problem with QWAs does not stem from any genuine concern about employees. It does not stem from any genuine commitment to boost job creation and lower unemployment. Rather, the Labor Party's opposition to QWAs stems from union domination. Its fear stems from the fact that its bankrollers will lose their monopoly in the workplace. Whereas the coalition respected the rights of an employee to have his or her QWA kept confidential, the Labor Party termed this "secrecy". The Minister claimed that QWAs were not subject to public scrutiny. The Labor Party is opposed to the basic concept that the private dealings between two parties in relation to personal dealings is not a matter for public knowledge. The amendments proposed by the Government tonight fly in the face of reform.

Mr Healy: They are draconian.

Mr GRICE: Draconian and old, old Labor, as the member for Toowoomba North reminds me. The Minister's arguments are nothing more than carefully placed decoys to distract everyone's attention away from the real motive behind the Labor Party's burning desire to get rid of QWAs. At no point has the Minister or any Government member been honest and said that the proposed amendments are all about returning union power—all about entrenching the union's monopoly in the workplace.

These amendments are inconsistent with a Government that professes a commitment to job creation. These amendments are inconsistent with the basic principle underlying job growth and job creation, and that is the principle of a flexible workplace. These amendments are regressive; they punch the heart out of industrial relations reform. There is

only one simple motivation behind these amendments, and that is union control.

As I move about my electorate and speak to businesspeople, they ask me why the Labor Government is going to wreck the industrial relations legislation. Those people see the current rules and regulations—the coalition's rules and regulations—as a positive. They see them as the best way to the future.

Mr Hayward interjected.

Mr GRICE: I thank "Break-even Ken" for his interjection from up the back.

Over time and consistent with economic conditions, they want to increase business and employment and their own financial positions. However, the regressive laws planned——

Mr Lucas: Could you have been a contender?

Mr GRICE: I accept that inane interjection. I would rather be a has-been than a never-been like his good self.

However, the regressive laws planned for implementation by the Beattie Government are not going to achieve that. The people of my electorate—and I am sure all Queenslanders—want to see fairness and equity in all things. They want the law to be just, so that both employers and employees can have a fair go and get on with creating employment. But these Braddy Bills will not do that. I am sure that the constituents who approach me frequently about their situation would welcome a decision by the Government not to proceed with the wrecking operation that it is planning.

The coalition's legislation, which has been in place for 18 months, represents the culmination of an exhaustive process of consultation. It involved consideration of matters such as the reviews expressed by major stakeholders, including unions, employer groups and business; the need to logically harmonise State and Federal legislation; the unique nature of industrial relations as it operates in Queensland; the future prosperity of the Queensland economy; and consideration of the need to incorporate those principles guiding this Government and on the promised enactment of which this Government was elected to power. It is on that last point that I wish to elaborate.

When Queenslanders went to the polls in July 1995, they voted for reforms that would introduce fundamental industrial relations reforms—reforms that would reinstate the direct relationship between an employer and employee as the central and most important relationship, reforms that would provide employers and employees with the freedom to choose the most appropriate and mutually beneficial form of workplace agreement, reforms that would at least ensure that basic tenet of freedom of association for Queensland workers, reforms that would compel industrial organisations to be more accountable to their members and, finally, reforms that would bring fairness and balance back into the industrial relations system. The legislation fulfilled the coalition's promise to enshrine these principles in law. Most importantly, the consistent application of these principles throughout the drafting process has resulted in two cohesive and workable pieces of legislation.

This consistency of approach marks a significant departure from the Goss Government's idea of democracy, which saw principles applied variously to different parties within the system. When I say there was a lack of consistency in the application of the Goss Government's industrial laws, I realise that some might suggest that I am giving a rather polite interpretation, but I do that in deference to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Goss Government was selective in how it formed and then applied its legislation because it received political benefit from it. Quite simply, the old rules—the rules which the "Braddy Bunch" now seek to reimpose—do not apply to Labor's union mates. The long and short of it was that Labor did not want to offend its sugar daddy for fear that he might take away some of its money. Labor has always bent over backwards to accommodate the union movement, and often sideways and forwards to boot.

Mr Mackenroth: I've got the impression from your speech that you don't like unions.

Mr GRICE: I simply advise the member that, as he staggers through the balance of his career, he will find it just as easy to be pleasant.

Unfortunately for the people of Queensland, the unions forced Labor to its knees. For example, the Goss Government clearly recognised the importance of enterprise level industrial agreements. In an attempt to appear even-handed—and I stress appear—that Government offered enterprise flexibility agreements as a gift to the hopes of small business. However, the gift was a Trojan Horse because, at the same time, Goss Labor invested power in a third party, namely uninvited trade unions, to stifle the negotiation and approval of the very agreements that employers and employees had worked so hard to develop. Far from being productive, its gift

to small business was counterproductive. It was this appalling situation that the coalition sought to reform.

It is this essential reform—this profitable enterprise for the private sector in Queensland and the small business sector in Queensland, the two great engines of our economy—that Labor, which is now back in power by a slender thread stretching from the electorate of Nicklin to the Premier's office in George Street, wants to wreck. I cannot let this happen.

Mr Healy: It will be tested tonight.

Mr GRICE: It will be tested tonight, indeed—in spades.

The people deserve better than a one-way ticket on Minister Braddy's mystery tour to the past. If this legislation is passed, they are in grave danger of finding that it is just simply a one-way trip. The coalition stands for enabling employers and employees to develop their own working arrangements without unwarranted and uninvited interference, and there are some compelling reasons for doing so. The old, highly legalistic and adversarial industrial relations system was premised on assumptions that are no longer relevant. It assumed that employer/employee relations were, by nature, perpetually in conflict, and it assumed that employers and employees were incapable of overcoming that conflict without assistance and protection.

We all know that that is wrong. Even the members on the other side of the House know that that is wrong. In fact, employers and employees have very much in common. Primarily, they are both dependent on the long-term viability and profitability of the enterprise, much as a boxing promoter might be—a fact that Labor and its union mates still seem, at any rate publicly, unable to understand. Today's workers have the education and maturity to recognise this fact and reject the paternalistic and patronising attitude that is the backbone of the union movement. Employers are fully aware that the success of their enterprise is dependent on a committed, skilled, productive and well-rewarded work force.

Our working culture is way ahead of the antiquated industrial relations system preferred by the ALP, that is, the "Arrogant" Labor Party. Employers and employees need to be given the freedom to negotiate harmonious and productive workplace agreements. They must be harmonious because the most highly valued working conditions at one workplace will not necessarily be the same as those at another. Agreements which acknowledge this fact and are tailored accordingly will naturally promote higher levels of worker satisfaction. Anybody who has experienced that knows it for a fact. The agreements must be productive because agreements that are flexible enough to accommodate the unique production requirements of the individual enterprise are by their nature likely to be more conducive to productivity growth than those that do not take into account local conditions.

All that is needed is for Governments to facilitate this process by removing obstacles and providing opportunities. That is what the coalition in Government did. That is what the people of Queensland want Governments to do. However, far from seeking to remove obstacles in the way of creating greater opportunities, the Beattie Government now wants to create new ones. It is prepared to sacrifice the welfare of ordinary Queenslanders for the benefit of union bosses. This Government has nothing to be proud of on that score. The coalition legislation that the Beattie Government wants to replace—the coalition legislation that has been in place for only 18 months and which is yet to take full effect in terms of impact on the labour market—enshrines freedom of choice. The introduction of Queensland workplace agreements meant that for the first time agreements could be made between employers and individual employees without uninvited union interference. These QWAs particularly suit the needs of small business. Under the law, these agreements must be freely entered into but are binding on the individuals who sign them. As a further choice, informal over-award arrangements continue, as does the option to continue within the award system. Trade unions are an integral part of the process under the coalition's law; it is just that they no longer have monopoly benefits.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr GRICE: There is no disagreement with that, as my colleague advises. Unions with members at a workplace can continue to be able to negotiate certified agreements and be party to those agreements at the request of their members. Employees negotiating an individual workplace agreement can still choose to be represented by a union representative but they have the option of doing the negotiating themselves or appointing alternative bargaining agents. That is another example of freedom of choice. Without doubt, trade unions that offer high quality, relevant services to members will continue to play a powerful role in the industrial relations system, whatever the make-up of that

system. That is the true benefit of competition in the marketplace.

If a person is good, he will win. If he sells a product that people will want, people will buy. If he does not do that, people will not buy, and why should they? Under the laws which the Beattie Government wants to scrap, workers have a greater say in the type and size of industrial organisations that represent them. In direct contrast to Labor's centralist approach, the coalition's laws actually encourage formation of new unions by reducing the minimum membership required from 120. The Workplace Relations Amendment Bill before the House shows that the Government has learnt nothing. It must be defeated on the floor.

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.22 p.m.): Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr Purcell: Freshen it up a bit.

Mr COOPER: What is that?

Mr Purcell: Freshen it up a bit.

Mr COOPER: I intend to do that. I have 20 minutes and I thought I would enjoy it. We are debating the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill and I think it is unfortunate that we have to debate this sort of legislation because I do not believe that this is what the people of this State want or need. This is a step back into the past and I think that is extremely unfortunate. I look at you people across there and I see a massive division between the two sides of this House. You look the same but that is where it starts and finishes. As far as we are concerned, we represent the future. The future is that the people want change and they want to be able to adapt their workplace situations to their employment.

Mr Purcell: They have had enough change and they are sick of it.

Mr COOPER: Enough change? Look at what you are doing with the changes as far as this legislation is concerned. You are turning it right back into the past. We had a very good system in place which offered a choice which was called fairness and equity. That is something that you people cannot handle. That is unfortunate because in this day and age people—regardless of what you think with your 38% minority Government—want change and they want to be able to adapt their employment to working conditions.

It is one of those unfortunate things that we get this thick-headed or pig-headed approach that you people have where you must go back to something that is owned and operated by union thugs. That is just to keep you people in employment. You talk about jobs, jobs, jobs. It is really a case of keeping yourselves and your union mates in a job.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! Would the member for Crows Nest please address his remarks through the Chair?

Mr COOPER: I will do that. I want to reiterate these things because, whilst there are some on the other side of the House who have similar occupations—none rural—

Mr Purcell: I am President of the Bulimba Pony Club. What are you talking about?

Mr COOPER: I know a fair bit about your past. I will say that you came from a pretty good area originally—the Texas area. Then you came into this area where you have to wear cement boots. You changed your ways along the way and I think that is a pity.

I believe that this whole exercise is about choice. I would like to think that when we come to the most important part of this legislation, namely the vote, that we see retention of choice and a retention of workplace agreements. We are supposed to be representing the people and not just vested interests. That is what you people are about. People are sick and tired of having these changes pushed upon them. I do not believe that you have a mandate to do this. I believe that what we had in place needed to be given a further extension.

When we do return to that side of the House—which will not be too much longer—we will return to workplace agreements if they are defeated tonight. Small business and rural industries and enterprises want flexibility in order to survive and in order to have continuity of employment. I believe continuity of employment is absolutely vital to people who have jobs, who want to keep their jobs and who want to have a future. Flexibility will allow us to expand so that we have actual and real jobs, not just jobs that look after people with vested interests. I refer here particularly to the union area. This is an example of union muscle being flexed. I am afraid that quite often all we see is muscle between their ears. That is unfortunate in this day and age when we should be looking for change.

You cannot live in the past. You people seem to have a dinosaur or neanderthal image. It would be nice to think you could move with the times and do what the people want. This is sad and tragic and I think it is done purely out of vindictiveness. You say you are going to return it to what it was because you say you believe that is what the people want. That is not the case. You obviously did

not listen to the people at the last election. The people want choice and they want flexibility, not just in employment but in many other things as well. You people know it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I thought we established earlier today that the word "you" would be out of order. If the honourable member could address himself through the Chair, as I asked before, that would be much better.

Mr COOPER: I am addressing myself through the Chair, Mr Acting Speaker. When I say "you", I am talking about the people on the other side of the House. Many, many speakers have used that terminology all the way through this debate. I want to address some of the issues that have been raised. I want to refer to farm workers and people in employment in the rural sector. These are the sorts of people who are adapting to change. It is unfortunate, Mr Acting Speaker—

Mrs Edmond: He is the Deputy Speaker, not the Acting Speaker.

Mr COOPER: What would you prefer, "Mr Acting Speaker", "Mr Deputy Speaker"?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: "Deputy Speaker".

Mr COOPER: Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: And you are doing very well.

Mr COOPER: Good on you. Thank you very much. I will continue. Employers and employees are involved in this. People who are creating jobs or who are trying to provide jobs recognise that there is a need for change. Farms were traditionally involved with sheep, cattle, wool, wheat and so on. Now we are seeing a vast diversity of new markets, niche markets and niche products. People are being forced into these things; nevertheless, they are being very successful. These things encourage employment. I know this occurs in many industries right across the State. It is a good thing that we can find new markets, new industries and new products for people to move into.

In my electorate we have some of the traditional things such as horticulture, which is still going extremely well. These things provide employment opportunities and a lot of the employment involves casual labour. It is good for people to be able to match their lifestyles with the various kinds of employment that they need. Often that suits the employer. I also recognise that there must be flexibility within workplace agreements whereby the employee and the employer can work it out between themselves, particularly in rural industries. For example, quite often, Mother Nature and climatic conditions have a lot to do with the lifestyle and employment factors in various industries. Whether it is wet or dry, hot or cold, harvest time or planting time, the workplace changes and we have to adapt to that. There must be give and take on each side in order to make employment possible and to make the industry viable.

People have wanted these sorts of agreements for years so that they can work things out between themselves and come up with agreements with which both sides are satisfied. That is the sort of thing that people want and on which we were able to deliver. We need to be able to retain those agreements. It is not a matter of people in this place thinking that what they want would be a good idea; it is a matter of what the people out there want—the employees and the employers.

Let us take some of the traditional industries, such as the wool industry. Whether it be shearing time, joining time or whatever, all of those factors come into account and things must be done in different ways. If it is a long, hot summer, then we have to have the kind of workplace agreements whereby people can start work early, have a break in the middle of the day and then work until late. The same applies to some of the newer industries that are coming into being.

The cut flowers industry in my electorate has been enormously successful. It is a very big employer. I believe that one particular person has been involved in that industry for up to 15 years and, at various times, employs between 15 and 50 people. According to the kind of climate and conditions and the niche markets that they can pick up in Queensland, in other parts of Australia or overseas, people in the industry need to be able to adapt and have workplace agreements so that employers and employees can work together to make the industry a success. In large part they are able to do that. Right from the start those people were asking for these sorts of workplace agreements so that they could have that flexibility and equity, which does work. But we are turning back the clock, and that is most unfortunate.

One particular person in the cut flowers industry has been extremely successful, producing up to 20 tonnes of flowers a week—proteas and Australian flora—which are being sent overseas. That person has created those markets, and the employees have joined in. Together they have formulated tremendous agreements, and the cooperation and flexibility that go with that are making that

industry successful. Often one finds that people in the traditional industries, such as beef, wool and pork, are suffering because of imports or whatever. They need to consider other industries, and that is what they are doing. But with that goes a need to ensure that they have flexible agreements and arrangements that make things work for both sides—the employee and the employer. Those agreements are working extremely well.

In another case, a stone fruit grower in the Crows Nest area carved up about 100 acres at the back of Crows Nest. That land was not highly regarded as good fertile country, but the moment they started putting stone fruit trees in there—as they did in Stanthorpe—it has proven to be very successful. Apart from growing the trees, that industry involves picking, packing, processing and marketing. That grower employs up to 40 or 50 people.

Another person in my electorate has started growing rhubarb. I do not know whether you like rhubarb, Mr Deputy Speaker. Whether one likes it or not, it is a product, and many people do like it. Until recently, I believe that person was one of the largest packers and processors of rhubarb in Australia, employing up to 40 or 50 people, taking in rhubarb from other producers around the area, packing it, processing it, value adding it, and even taking out a worldwide patent on snail bait.

Mrs Edmond: It's quite a toxic product, rhubarb. It's very dangerous. You know that, don't you? You have to be careful. Parts of it are poisonous.

Mr COOPER: I like it. If it is dangerous, why does the member not have some? She should try it. As far as I am concerned, it is quite okay. The member should not ridicule this.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mr COOPER: The member is ridiculing it. These people are making the changes that have to be made, whether we like it or not. The Minister for Primary Industries has just come back into the Chamber. He would realise the need for changes. He should not look amazed. The Minister for Primary Industries should be catching up on this, and I believe that he is.

Mrs Edmond: He would know that rhubarb is a poisonous plant.

Mr COOPER: His mind is open, and he is flexible with these industries. I am talking about traditional industries——

Mrs Edmond: You know how dangerous it is.

Mr COOPER: Shush! I am talking to the Minister for Primary Industries.

The Minister knows that we are constantly exhorting our primary producers to look elsewhere for new industries, new markets, more efforts for employment, more opportunities for employment, more flexibility and so on, because the traditional industries are having trouble. I have been talking about cut flowers, stone fruits, rhubarb and all sorts of products and industries that do require some imagination. As well, they require some courage and cooperation between the employer and the employee. That is what I am driving at. Many people are moving in that direction.

It takes a lot of courage for people to move out of a traditional industry in which they have been involved for generations. They find it very difficult to move away. But once we can tempt them to move into a new industry and to start employing more people than they do in the traditional areas, this creates a benefit to everyone: the employer, the employee, the State, the economy—everything. That is why we need these flexible agreements—to be able to make those sorts of things work. It is not just about flexible workplace agreements; it involves choice. That is what we require, and I do believe that most members would know that. Most people will get to them eventually and tell them that this is the sort of thing that we need.

I give credit to the former Minister who introduced these workplace agreements. Of course, there was a lot of opposition to them from members opposite. But after 18 months, it is regressive to want to turn this legislation on its head and go back to the past, from which we are trying to move away in order to give people a chance. It is also vindictive. It is the sort of thing that we simply do not need.

As to other products—clean food products are in high demand in Asia. I am sure that the Minister for Primary Industries would know that, under the present conditions, that market is poised to grow tremendously in the future. We should encourage that. Many people in the rural sector are desperate to find new ways and new methods of production. People in the wool industry often go through peaks and troughs. They are in a very long trough at the moment. We do need to find in the western areas of this State new products, new industries and new ways to go. That is not an easy thing to do, especially given our climatic conditions. But we cannot be fixed and tight on how we are going to employ people. I am not saying that we should abuse people, rip

them off or anything like that; that never works, because the people will not cooperate; they will not spend. We do not get a good result or a keen work force unless they are happy. They have to be happy. They do not have to sign these agreements, but they can if they have that choice. And once they make that choice, they can get on with their employment.

Members opposite talk about the need for jobs, jobs, jobs, but they have to be productive jobs—something that provides a future not only for the people concerned but also for the industry, so that this State can prosper and progress. With that will come even more employment. That is why we are very disappointed that this sort of legislation has been introduced, especially when many industries are in trouble and new industries are finding niche markets. It is wonderful to see these things, but unless people get off the main road they never see them. There are people out there who do take the trouble and the financial risk to move into new industries.

Another industry is the nursery industry, which is a large and growing industry. Some in the industry are very successful. Some have backyard operations. But even if they are backyard operators, at least they are doing something productive for that industry in this State and this country and by creating export opportunities. Unless we can give those people the opportunity of a flexible workplace, they will not succeed. Why cut off our nose to spite our face, especially at a time when we are moving into this very difficult area of change and diversity?

We have always exhorted rural people to diversify. We have encouraged them not to have only one industry on the go but to try to have a mix with some other industries. They can take such steps if they have the flexibility, the wherewithal and the tools to do the job. Unlike the members opposite, we are aware of the damage that will be caused by passing this legislation. It is very unfortunate. However, members opposite want to make that decision and they will have to live with it. The people who will suffer as a result of this legislation will not forget that when election time comes round again. The electors will opt for flexibility.

What I have said applies equally to small business. A lot of those aspects have been canvassed throughout this debate. Small business prospers or otherwise to the extent that rural industry—the productive sector—prospers. There is a spin-off effect for both. They have to work together. That is the atmosphere that we created. Now we are taking this backwards step into the past. It is extremely unfortunate. I appeal to the Independents and other members to recognise that they have a responsibility to exercise their vote for the benefit of the people of this State.

Time expired.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.41 p.m.): I rise to support the Opposition spokesman and the concerns that he has raised in relation to the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill. The legislation that he introduced some time ago was very effective. It is true that not a large number of people have taken up Queensland workplace agreements. However, sometimes conservative people take time to adjust to new situations. I believe that is the case in this instance.

It is important that we remain competitive. The member for Crows Nest, who preceded me in this debate, was discussing the rural industries that are extremely important to this State. They earn us a lot of income—approximately $5.5 billion. It is extremely important to have flexible workplace arrangements for the many itinerant workers in those industries.

As a result of computerisation, people are being replaced by technology. We cannot stop that trend. That is progress. That is what is happening in the workplace. Technology is advancing at a rapid rate. There is a need for change. Of course, we need to work with change. We cannot stem the tide: when it comes in, we have to flow with it; when it goes out, we have to adjust our psyches. We live within a global market. More and more businesses are having to import goods for their own use. We export goods. Whether one operates in the domestic market or the export market, one certainly has to be very much aware of exactly what is going on in the world arena. Owing to our dependency on exports and the cross flow of goods that we import into Australia—such as tractors, implements and high-tech equipment—we have to achieve the balance of trade that is so vitally important. From time to time, that balance gets out of kilter. That is why it is extremely important to have very flexible work arrangements such as the Queensland workplace agreements that were put in place by the shadow Minister when he was Minister. They were very effective. If the Government could have waited a little longer before rushing in this amending legislation, I believe we would have seen some real benefits from the coalition legislation.

Many countries have work practices that are not as sophisticated as ours. If members

have ever travelled to countries such as Indonesia they will be aware of the sweat shops at which people work very hard, under very difficult conditions, to make ends meet. In comparison, they are probably receiving the equivalent of $20 per week. Their pay rates are very much lower than ours.

Mrs Edmond: That's what you want for Queensland.

Mr ROWELL: That is what the Minister says we want. She does not know what she is talking about. I think she is off the track.

Mrs Edmond: That's what you want for Queenslanders.

Mr ROWELL: The Minister might want that for the health system, but we do not want that for the workplace in this State.

The same circumstances apply in Malaysia. I spent some time travelling through Thailand and seeing the work practices in that country. It is extremely important for us to understand what we are competing against. We are competing against a labour force that has very cheap weekly and hourly rates. However, we have technology. We have to use that technology and do the best we possibly can with it. Of course, we are doing that. Our workers need to adapt to that technology and change their thinking as time goes on. We cannot just stagnate. We cannot just stay where we are. We cannot just vegetate as some people, such as the members opposite, would like us to do. This is a matter that demands our attention.

I have spent approximately five years as a canecutter. I know how difficult it is to live in tin barracks and to have a shower by a metho heater. Has the Minister for Health had a shower like that?

Mrs Edmond: I'm not one of the silvertails.

Mr ROWELL: I am sure the Minister has not. She should have some more rhubarb because that is good for her, too.

I worked at Pinkenba at the silos. I worked on a construction site that had a great deal of scaffolding. I understand what the building industry went through in its early days in comparison with what it has been doing of late through the use of modern scaffolding. In Hong Kong one can still see bamboo scaffolding being erected at 20 and 30 storeys above the ground. We do not do that in Australia. I believe the technology that we are developing in those sectors is very important. Through their workplaces, people have to learn to adjust to take on board the new level of technology.

Let us consider specific duties, such as those performed in restaurants. Restaurants do not employ staff on a full-time basis. Their staff come and go. They need a certain level of expertise. The Queensland workplace agreements that were developed by the coalition could be extremely important for such sectors. As time progressed, I believe we would have seen more and more of them used in that particular trade. The catering trade has very similar conditions. People prepare food and go out to cook it. They work for a few hours during the day and a few hours at night. The work is intermittent. An employer can arrive at an arrangement with an employee to do those types of duties efficiently. It is always very effective to have a simple agreement. That is what the Queensland workplace agreements are all about.

We could discuss delivery services. People in that field get up very early in the morning to deliver goods. They probably work for only four, five or six hours a day. Newsagencies are another typical example. Of course the agriculture industries—as the previous speaker was saying—use itinerant labour. Their staff come and go quite frequently. Within the cane industry, during planting and harvest times we need people on a part-time basis. It is extremely important to be able to come to a mutual arrangement with those workers, rather than having to nail down the conditions in cement as the Government members want to do. Government members want to turn back the hands of time and take retrograde steps in relation to the way employers make agreements with their workers regarding how they go about their duties.

At my place we may do some spraying late at night. It is good if I can come to an arrangement with a person to go out and do this specific type of work. In some respects it is quite demanding because of the intricacy of the equipment that is being used. It is quite important that a person understands the job fully and I pay that person particularly well to do that type of work. I believe that if I could have an agreement with a person over a period, that would be very beneficial to my operations.

The coalition could see advantages in the workplace agreements for the economy, for the worker and for the employer because of their ability to implement flexible work practices. That is the essence of it: flexibility. If we get away from having flexibility in employment in the future, we are going to have a great many problems. Under the Act, employees and employers have a choice. They have the basic process of reaching an

agreement on what the employee is actually going to do. In that respect, a great deal of benefit could be gained from having an Employment Advocate to assist in reaching an agreement. The agreement has to contain the basic legal entitlements of the worker involved, such as a contribution to superannuation, protection against discrimination, protection against unlawful dismissal, parental leave, long service leave and the right to come and go beyond what a union would necessarily want. All of those conditions are taken into consideration when making Queensland workplace agreements.

The Enterprise Commissioner—a very important person—verified and approved of this process. These deals are not secret; the Enterprise Commissioner would look very closely at these agreements and make sure that they had all the components that I have just mentioned that were important to the worker, that were important to the award that he or she was employed under, and that were important to his or her wellbeing. Under those circumstances, we saw only a very small number of Queensland workplace agreements. Something like 40 were knocked back, which I think is quite significant. It meant that there was really no requirement for Big Brother to be telling people what they should do.

That is the unfortunate thing about the union movement and certainly about the ALP opposite. They think that they have to control people. That is not the case. Nowadays, people have the will, the capacity and the intellect to reach an agreement that is going to be satisfactory to them. I think that we have to cut the umbilical cord, for want of a better term, and not be so patronising to the workers. We should let them make agreements that are going to be of benefit to them. Unless we do that, with the changes that are going to occur, we will lose contact with the very essence of what the workplace is all about.

Time and time again we have heard the rhetoric of the members opposite about 2,000 employees being involved in about 1,500 agreements. This has been going on for 17 months. There is every prospect that, as the shadow Minister suggested, if we let the process go for another 12 months before we start stripping these awards—and they are very outdated and outmoded—we may see a turnaround. The system will be less restrictive and people will not be inhibited from putting together an agreement. Instead, people are trying to read the fine print of all this rhetoric that a lot of the awards have in them.

As many speakers from the Opposition have said, at present the members opposite, with their 38% mandate, are in a payback situation. They have rushed into Parliament these amendments to what is a very good Act that has some great prospects in the future. Opposition members do not really understand why the rush is necessary other than the political ramifications about which we have spoken. Of course, we run the risk of having the Federal system, which is the equivalent of the QWAs, overriding a lot of what we could be doing in this State. There is a high cost to small business involved in negotiating certified agreements. It really puts it beyond the capacity of a lot of workers and a lot of employers—and particularly the employers, because they are the ones who pay to negotiate such agreements.

I would like to spend some time talking about the National Competition Policy, because I think that is quite important. Keating put the cleaner through many industries with this initiative and, back in 1994-95, the former State Labor Government was fully supportive of it. There was no doubt that many industries had to improve their competitiveness. However, this great National Competition Policy did not consider workplace relations. There was no sharing of the burden of the initiatives to improve Australia's productivity. I think that was a great disappointment. If we were going to start with a clean slate and look very closely at how we could improve productivity in Queensland and in Australia, we should have looked at workplace relations and our work practices. Without that component, we were only putting a lot of industries under pressure, because they had to work in an archaic system.

The sugar industry was put to the sword. We were lucky to maintain single desk selling. If Labor had been in power, that would have been under a great cloud of doubt. Of course, tariffs had to be sacrificed to maintain single desk selling. That was the cornerstone of the sugar industry, which is worth $2 billion to Queensland, and had we not maintained it the industry would have been in real jeopardy. Many other industries such as dairying and chicken meat are facing deregulation under the National Competition Policy. A great deal of uncertainty is being created. I have been out to dairy farms that are doing it pretty tough. In relation to farm gate pricing and that type of thing, some of those smaller operations are under tremendous pressure. I do not think that it behoves any Government——

Mr Veivers: Thanks to the National Competition Policy.

Mr ROWELL: That is what I am talking about. The National Competition Policy, which was introduced by Labor both at a Federal level and State level, placed unnecessary pressure on a lot of people. A lot of people were doing it tough because of seasonal conditions, competition and a whole range of other issues. They were finding it very difficult to survive, and then along comes the prospect of deregulation. Families out there are in a tail spin. They have to contend with drought, they have to contend with a whole range of very difficult conditions—repayments and so on—and they really do not know where they are heading.

The taxi industry and newsagencies are also being considered for deregulation. It would be an absolute disaster if we had deregulation of the taxi industry. If that occurred, every time someone wanted to whistle for a taxi, that person would have to go out there, show a leg and hope to hell that somebody picked up that person. That is the type of thing that we can expect. That is the type of thing that we confront with this National Competition Policy. It has some good elements to it, but it has really bit into some areas and people who really do not have the capacity to cope with it are finding it extremely difficult. All that it is doing is playing into the hands of the large consortiums—those big shops such as Coles, Woolworths and Franklins—who now take about 70% of the retail trade throughout Australia. I think in the US it is about 14% and I have heard that in England it is about 25%.

Here in Australia we have succeeded in giving these big organisations a large percentage of the market because of their ability to really screw the workers and through things such as the National Competition Policy. Tonight we are talking about the workers. These large organisations are paying low wages and are making their employees work at odd times. Of course, the workers do not have to stay in the job, but in many cases these are the only places in town that really have the capacity to employ people. Of course, they get people who are prepared to work for the absolute basic wage.

Many industries are disappointed about the proposed changes. We certainly heard from the sugar industry about them. It has had some input on the issue of Queensland workplace agreements. We have heard about the real estate industry, which has been involved in workplace arrangements, as have companies involved with the gold mines in Gympie and so on.

It was interesting to hear Garrie Gibson supporting what we were doing. We on this side of the House are not alone in thinking we were going about things in the right way with workplace agreements. It is very gratifying to see the Opposition spokesman for this particular Bill in the House, giving us some support as he always does. He built me a very nice TAFE college up in Ingham—it is in the process of being built—and I am very grateful for that.

Employers generally have a whole plethora of issues to address when employing people. It does not relate solely to paying people. Employers have to get workers' tax file numbers. Getting tax file numbers from 50 itinerant workers can be very difficult. Employers have to chase up the people, and they never know whether they have got the right name. And then they have to deal with superannuation.

Time expired.

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (11.01 p.m.): It is important that the coalition's industrial relations reforms stay in place. Not only do these reforms mirror Federal legislation; they are also pro-jobs. Complementary State and Federal legislation allows business to function more efficiently. An efficient business is a job-creating business. The passage of this Bill will only create more difficulties for businesses.

The coalition created Queensland workplace agreements to ensure that employers and employees could determine a package of wages and conditions that best suited their respective needs. In this modern day and age, it is absolutely imperative that employers and employees have access to flexible workplace arrangements. Under coalition reforms, employees are able to annualise both sick and annual leave. They are able to job share. They are able to make provision for banked time. Existing industrial awards do not allow employers to even offer those arrangements to their employees.

It is unreasonable to think that the Government would seek to deny employers and employees those flexibilities. It is even more unreasonable to think that the Government would force employers and employees back to a centralised, archaic and inflexible award system.

I have reasonable experience in this area, because I had to deal with the United Firefighters Union and its approach to wages.

During 1997-98, under my guidance, an arrangement of industrial relations and human resource management issues was bedded down, and new awards and certified agreements were finalised. That union was not easy to deal with, but at least it did the right thing by the union members. We also bedded down the enterprise partnership, as well as funding the cost of a change to a 38-hour week. During the 18 months I was in the portfolio there was an enormous change in management through workplace reform. The entire management structure was changed. That is what we are talking about here.

Under the Government's approach, these avenues will be unavailable and they will be replaced with confrontation. We did not have confrontation. We sat around the table. They put up their ideas, we put up ours and we shot a few holes in each other's arguments. But in the end we came to agreements that were best for the employees in the fire service, so much so that morale went through the roof. At one major fire station in Brisbane, sick leave was reduced by 62% because morale went up and those guys were happy to get back to work.

I do not care what anybody on the other side of the House says, I, along with a man called Henry Lawrence, was able to make that work. It was not easy, but what the Government is doing will take things backwards. I am not saying that we in the Opposition are infallible, although the honourable shadow Minister is just about bulletproof. I think he has done a marvellous job with our legislation. Those in Government are going backwards, and that is not good.

I think it is unreasonable for the Government to force employers and employees back to that centralised, archaic and inflexible award system, but that is what the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill is all about. I was quite amazed by the Explanatory Notes for this Bill. It is hard to believe that in 1998 the Minister would even try to introduce legislation that provides for the award system to be the primary vehicle for the determination of wages and conditions. That is crazy, archaic stuff. That is like reverting to the 1800s and the cotton mills. It is hopeless.

This Bill stops the making, approving, amending and extending of any further Queensland workplace agreements. That is also crazy. Workers want to work. They want to get ahead in whatever industry they are in. I return to my example of the fire service. Those guys start at the bottom and, under the regime we implemented, in about 8 to 10 years, maybe even less, one of them could be the chief fire commissioner. There were plenty of protection mechanisms put in place. I think even the member for Bulimba would nearly agree with me on that.

Mr Briskey interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I know a bit about it. The Government is sending a message to each and every one of us that it is not serious about job creation. This Bill demonstrates that the Government is not serious about creating an environment which fosters employment and efficiencies.

I understand that about 1,500 QWAs have been approved by the Enterprise Commissioner. More than 2,000 employees have been able to negotiate flexible workplace arrangements. Because of coalition legislation, they have been able to sit down with their employers and work out a package of wages and conditions that best suits them.

I am not going to say that there are not one or two nasty employers out there. They are there, but the commissioner is there to make sure that the employees are protected, that everything is all right and that no funny business goes on. Employees have been able to ensure that their needs are met and that their skills are rewarded. Employers have benefited, too.

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do believe that members are not allowed to interject from seats other than their own.

Mr Foley: No wonder your nickname's "Erskine May".

Mr VEIVERS: What a cutting remark from the Attorney-General.

Mr Briskey interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I did, too. What year was the battle of Hastings? The honourable member does not know. It was 1066. We have to help these sorts of people. And he is telling me that I do not know history! There are a few things I do know about.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: Since the Attorney-General has lost all that weight—I do not know how many kilos he has lost—he has become most active. He is looking better.

Mr Foley: You're a bit sensitive.

Mr VEIVERS: I am. When one slips back in the fold to the backbench, one becomes a little sensitive. The member for Cleveland would not know about that; he has not been forward to go back. However, if what

happened this morning in the Parliament keeps going, about five or six members opposite could slip into Emergency Services; I think there is a bit of a vacuum there.

Employers have benefited also. The use of QWAs has given employers greater flexibility in the workplace. The minority Labor Government does not want to hear these facts. It does not want to know how its "back to the future" industrial relations policy will affect workers or Queensland businesses. I am told that the Government and particularly the Minister did not even have the courtesy to consult with the employer organisations before they announced the changes contained in this Bill. However, more alarmingly, the task force established to review the Workplace Relations Act did not even meet until after this Bill was introduced. That is putting the cart before the horse. As a former Premier used to say, everything has bolted before it even got into place. That is not good. It was a big sham.

The Premier tells us that he is serious about his job creation target. No doubt in his own mind he possibly is. He tells us that the priority of his Government is jobs, jobs, jobs. I have some news for the Premier: nobody, not even him, can create jobs by ignoring small business, which is the greatest employer and job generator in the State and in Australia. Nobody can create jobs by obstructing business flexibility. That is what members opposite are about—and some do not even know that. The Government's rationale for abolishing QWAs is simply wrong.

Mr Briskey: We've heard it all before.

Mr VEIVERS: No, the member has not. It is wrong because it denies existing rights to hardworking Queensland employees.

Mr Briskey: That's nine minutes. That's long enough.

Mr VEIVERS: The member has not done this; I have. I was able to negotiate great things for the Fire Service in Queensland.

Mr Purcell: That wasn't under QWAs.

Mr VEIVERS: The member should listen. He is getting a bit toey about this.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I come from the same——

Mr Purcell: They agreed.

Mr VEIVERS: They were all happy with it.

Mr Purcell: That's right. They agreed. That was under a QWA.

Mr VEIVERS: The Government is taking that away from them. They will not be able to do that under what his Government is trying to do.

Mr Purcell: Yes, they can.

Mr VEIVERS: No, they cannot. I ask the member to stop shouting. They will not be able to do that. The Government is taking away that right. That is the wrong thing to do, because it denies the existing rights of hardworking Queensland employees and employers. It is wrong because it will lead to a dilution of the State's industrial relations system.

Mr Foley: What do you care about all this stuff—I mean, really and truly?

Mr Purcell: You're just a pyromaniac—you burn everything.

Mr VEIVERS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I take umbrage at that and I ask for your protection. I am definitely not a pyromaniac, as suggested by the member for Bulimba. What do I care about this? I care a lot. I have been in various businesses—very successful businesses—and have formed companies employing upwards of 75 people. That is a small business.

Mr Beanland interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I never want to go back to that. It took me 40 years to get out of those hills. If I ever see another cow the way I used to see them it will be too soon. The member opposite is writing again; he is using a pink marker. That is a real worry. I employed people and I made sure that they were happy. I put my own workplace arrangements into place. I kept asking my employees whether they were happy or needed a bit more money. If they said that they were not happy, I gave them some more money. They worked hard and were employed on a casual basis, including weekends. They were looking after sport and dealing with people who were haughty at times. Basically, I have to admit that I employed friends. But those friends worked. Business is business.

Mr Purcell: Relations, hey?

Mr VEIVERS: No, I am an only child. I am lucky to be an only child. The member should not say that I was spoilt, either. I went to the same school as the Minister who is bringing in this legislation; I boarded for six years with him. Also, I sat beside Bill D'Arcy for six years. That was something in itself. When we were going through exams——

Mr Fouras: Where did you go wrong?

Mr VEIVERS: I will tell the member where I went wrong. I had trouble when I sat beside Bill D'Arcy, because on his examination paper he used to write, "I don't know the answer to

this." Unfortunately, I had to write on my paper, "I don't know it, either."

Mr Briskey: You copied off him?

Mr VEIVERS: It is a bit different today. They use computers and cannot do mental arithmetic.

Mrs Gamin: Can you use a computer?

Mr VEIVERS: Yes, I can.

Mr Briskey: What's a Nudgee boy doing playing Rugby League then?

Mr VEIVERS: If the member really wants to know, I was a flashing breakaway, but I started at 5/8 and I was able to kick with both feet. The member should leave me alone.

Nobody in this House should need to be reminded of the failure of the centralised wage fixing systems of the seventies and eighties—not even the member for Bulimba. Nobody should need to be reminded of the horrific unemployment levels presided over by State and Federal Labor Governments—nobody, that is, except the members opposite. Labor members must be living in a fantasy world—a world in which everyone is in a union and collective bargaining works. Unfortunately for them, that world does not exist. Members opposite might like to have it that way, but only about 25% of private sector employees choose to join a union. That means that three out of four private sector employees do not believe that being a member of a union is important. This Bill totally ignores that fact.

Mr Briskey interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: What an un-Christian attitude that is.

The Government is saying to three out of every four private sector employees, "You don't deserve to have a say about how much you should earn. You don't have a right to tell your boss how long you want to work for. Those friendly people from the union know what's best for you." I have news for the Government: that is totally wrong. Unions have no right to claim that they are in the best position to represent all workers.

Mr Briskey interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I have two children who are professionals and who are also members of the union.

Mr Briskey interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: The member can be a skite. I had only two children because we were drought-stricken farmers and I wanted to bring them up the right way.

Mr Briskey: You had plenty of milk.

Mr VEIVERS: No, we did not; we were drought stricken. My two children work in a workplace and are members of the union. One of them—and I will not say which one—has never been helped by the union once in her working life, and yet she has paid union dues. I notice that the member for Bulimba has gone a bit quiet.

Mr Purcell: It's like insurance, brother; you hope you never have to use it, but if you need it it's there. You don't burn your house down to get the insurance, do you?

Mr VEIVERS: There were a couple of times when those youngsters needed the help of the union, and the bloke was not in sight. The union representative was too busy driving his car down to the local pub to have some lunch and a drink on the workers. The member for Bulimba should not try to tell me that they do not do that.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: The member should not try to tell me that they do not do that. That is what I do not like about this.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: The member will get me going very seriously. One of my children asked for help on one occasion and it was not forthcoming. Does the member know why? They said, "See your Tory father." I do not like that. The Attorney can sit and stare, but he knows that I do not tell fibs in this place. They were ostracised because they were the children of a Tory member and, in the end, a Tory Minister. I did not like that. They were not protected.

There is silence on the other side of the Chamber—and so there ought to be. Members opposite ought to be ashamed. Those people worked and paid their money—$300 or $400 a year in membership. The union reps took it and shot it up against the wall down at the pubs, and they did not go anywhere near them. I am telling honourable members opposite that it does not go down well with me when they say that they are going to look after the worker. I have looked after the workers better than those people have, and they were not even in the union. I made sure that I looked after them. I have only two minutes remaining and I want to finish this.

It is about time that the Government accepted this fact. It is about time that the Government gave employers and employees more credit for the ability to negotiate in harmony. The Labor Party has always treated employers like bogymen—unable to be trusted—and has always been looking to

squeeze an extra ounce of blood out of them. It is no wonder they get toey. As I admitted earlier, there are mongrels who employ, but honourable members opposite should not tell me that there are no mongrels on their side of the House, too, as I pointed out.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: No, they have to be crushed. This kind of image is quite simply fictitious. Most astute businessmen and women know that, to create a successful business, they need to invest in, among other things, human capital. They have to employ people; they have to trust them and they have to look after them, otherwise their business will fold. I have to say that not too many people on the other side of the House have been in business. How many of them have invested $800,000 or $900,000 of their own money and then tried to make the business work, make a profit and employ people? Not too many members over there would be able to put their hands up.

A successful business cannot afford to have high staff turnover rates or a disgruntled work force. It is in the interests of employers to ensure that their employees are happy and rewarded appropriately. If we listen to members opposite, however, we would be forced to believe that bosses use legal provisions, such as QWAs, to deprive employees of their rights. Furthermore, we would have to believe that employees were forced to sit and cop this without recourse. I thank honourable members for listening.

Time expired.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (11.21 p.m.): I decided to speak on this Bill only late this afternoon after listening to several Government and Opposition members speak.

Mr Purcell interjected.

Mr LAMING: This is true. Would I tell a lie? The comments I heard led me to revisit the Bill and to read again the Minister's second-reading speech. I note that the Minister talks about his Government's pre-election commitments. My first thought was, "I wonder whom those commitments were to?" To whom were these commitments made? Maybe to the unions, but certainly not to the struggling small businesses and certainly not to the thousands of unemployed in whom the unions do not seem to take much interest!

Mr Fouras: You take five minutes and I'll send you a bouquet—five minutes.

Mr LAMING: I listened to the member for Ashgrove. I will have a question for him and his colleague sitting over there a little later. I ask him to please not leave the Chamber because I would not like him to miss this.

The thousands of unemployed will not be helped out one jot by this legislation. The Minister talks about a comprehensive review of industrial legislation. Does this mean that this amendment is just the first instalment of what is to come? Is there more? Are the unfair dismissal provisions, which were made more reasonable under our Government, the next on the Minister's hit list? I think all members of this House deserve to know what is next on this Government's anti-job agenda. Is it going to roll back our amendments on unfair dismissal provisions? Is any Government member brave enough to indicate tonight that that is next? I see the member for Ashgrove has——

Mr Mackenroth: Next on the agenda is winning a few of your seats and putting you out.

Mr LAMING: We get a response, but it is not to the question. I do not hear anything from the members for Bulimba, Inala or Cleveland. They are sitting there, but they do not want to respond to whether unfair dismissal laws are next. It is very important to people who are going to be voting on this legislation tonight to know whether they are just voting on this amendment or whether this is just the first instalment of a whole raft of anti-job Bills coming through this House.

Mr Purcell: Monotonous repetition.

Mr LAMING: We have to keep asking the questions if members opposite will not answer them, and we are getting the same monotonous, repetitious answers—they are not going to indicate.

I could not believe it when I read further into the speech where the Minister talks about the establishment of a modern, progressive system of industrial relations. I can respond only by saying that his speech writer must be the Rip Van Winkle of industrial relations and has just emerged from a 40-year snooze. The Minister goes on to talk about job security—maybe, but for fewer and fewer workers—and jobs growth. It is just rubbish that this legislation is going to create job growth. The Minister then went on to talk about social and economic objectives for employers and employees. It all sounds terribly good. It is great sounding stuff, but there is only one way to provide decent social objectives, and that is to provide jobs—not anti-jobs legislation.

I would like to come back to this expert representative independent task force that is

being set up to review the State's industrial laws. That is the Minister's term; it is certainly not my description. I do not know who is on the task force. It really stumped me when I read that. Has the task force already met and considered whether this amendment should be put through this House? I do not know whether it has met or whether it has considered this and the whole raft of legislation that might need to be changed. Anyway, we are going to have this expert representative independent task force—what a mouthful—yet we are debating this legislation here tonight.

That really did stump me. Had the task force already recommended the abolition of QWAs before it met or is it going to be given the benefit of the Government's wisdom when it says, "We have you here to tell us what we should be doing about industrial relations, but we have already decided what we are going to do and here is the list. We actually did that one last week and these are the ones that you have to recommend to do in the next session of Parliament." Is the Government going to list them all out so that the expert representative independent task force can be really objective in what it recommends to the Government and ensure that it stays on track with the Government's agenda? I really wonder why the Government takes all this drastic action before the task force reports. Conversely, why bother having a task force if the Government is going to act before that task force reports?

I return to the unfair dismissal laws. What will this Government do if this task force is as good as it sounds and it comes out and suggests that the Government make no changes to the unfair dismissal laws or perhaps even change them so that they are easier for employers to use? I speak with a lot of employers and this is one area about which they are very concerned. They are very concerned and reluctant to put people on. They are concerned that they might not be able to dismiss a person if that person turns out to be not suitable for the job. I know that people on the other side of the Chamber think that that helps employment because the person is not put off, but that is not how it works. At the end of the day employers will put people on if they need them. They will not put them on if they do not need them and they will not put them on if they fear that they will get the wrong person and it will be difficult to dismiss them.

If this expert task force comes out and says, "We recommend that you do not make any changes to those changes", or, "We recommend that you revert back to the position before the coalition changed it", I really wonder whether this Government will listen to that task force. That will be very interesting.

Mr Roberts: Are they still concerned about the current unfair dismissal laws?

Mr LAMING: I take the interjection from the member for Nudgee who asks if they are still concerned. They feel that the amendments we made are an improvement but there is still some concern with them as they are. That is something that needs to be debated. I am sure it will be debated, because I would be most surprised if the Minister and the Government do not come back and try to put the unfair dismissal laws right back where they were when the Government was last in office. I have not seen anyone opposite indicate that that is not going to happen. I think an indication on that matter would be very instructive to the two or three people who may not yet have made up their minds. They might change their vote if they knew that tonight's legislation is just a precursor or a harbinger of the doom that might be coming along. We wonder what the task force is going to do about that matter. We wonder what the Government would do if the task force reported that the unfair dismissal laws should be left as the coalition Government amended them during the last Parliament.

The Minister goes on to list the four key elements of the Bill. The first element claims that provisions for wages and conditions of employment were to be protected. The Government might protect wages with awards and it might protect conditions with awards but it will never protect jobs with awards. Unfortunately, over recent years the union approach has had a fundamental flaw. The unions have tried to protect the interests of a shrinking constituency. This has had a reverse effect when it comes to the provision of jobs.

The Labor Government might think that it speaks for workers but it certainly does not speak for those people who find themselves unemployed because legislation like this does not do anything for the unemployed. When, and not if, the Government does not achieve the 5% unemployment target—and let me say that I applaud any effort and any commitment towards reducing unemployment—

Mr Foley: Good on you, comrade.

Mr LAMING: It is nice to be invited into the brotherhood. I believe that the Attorney-General, as a former Minister for Employment, is a person who genuinely feels for the unemployed. I think he recognises that I have a similar point of view.

I was referring to the Premier's commitment to 5% unemployment. I am not sure where the time line is on that commitment. I am not sure whether it was one year originally. I know it was three years and now I think it is five years. That is a pity. Regardless of which side of this House we find ourselves sitting on, I believe we should all be aiming to get unemployed people back into jobs. It is passing strange that this legislation is not only not going to assist to achieve that result in 12 months, three years or five years, but it is really going to be a negative.

If this Parliament allows the Government to proceed down this track tonight we will have a situation in which the Government is not only not contributing to reaching its own target but is also making it more difficult for itself. I wonder who came up with this legislation. I wonder whether it was workers, union personnel, political minders or was it the creation of the Minister himself. We are talking about jobs. If we are talking about jobs, we are also talking about unemployed people. I bet not one unemployed person had any input into this.

Mr Beanland: It was the union bosses.

Mr LAMING: The member for Indooroopilly suggests that it was the union bosses. He might not be too far wrong. I bet there was not one unemployed person consulted because such a person would say, "What nonsense. This is not going to get me and other unemployed people a job." As a matter of fact, it would make it worse for them.

There are many initiatives that the Government might consider. A lot of things are being considered that would contribute towards rolling back the huge problem that we all identify as unemployment. This amendment does not contribute towards that outcome and I believe it is counterproductive. The House should reject the amendment.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (11.35 p.m.): As someone who comes from rural Queensland, I have pleasure in taking part in the debate on the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill. I believe it is important for us to understand that what is being attempted here tonight will undo a tremendous amount of good that has taken place in country areas.

I will give the House a few examples. Many people in my area live on hobby farms or on the edge of small towns. These people have plant of their own such as a backhoe, a cotton picker or various other bits of equipment that they work during the season. In the off season they go away and work for other people on a contract arrangement. This has worked in with the coalition's legislation in respect of workers compensation because those people can be self-insured. As a result, they are covered by insurance and they are able to follow a much more individualistic style in the work that they carry out.

The Government is trying to undermine much of that individuality which has been built into the workplace. I know lots of people who are tremendously pleased with the system of QWAs because they can make agreements with individuals. For example, let us take someone who owns a cotton picker, a module builder, or various other pieces of equipment that are suited to the cotton industry. The cotton picking season sometimes extends from February until May. Those people may take some time off and do some part-time work during the last part of the winter. The winter crop is harvested in the spring and summer. These people probably own their own vehicle, their own compressor, their own welder and their own tools with which they can repair headers. They drive headers to other people's properties. Sometimes those people will be farmers and sometimes they will be straight out contractors.

These people then work under a contract arrangement. Both parties are very happy with that. In most instances, those people are making far more money per hour than the average worker who simply works for wages. These people see themselves as contractors. They are very happy with that situation. Anything that this Government does to undermine that situation will make it more difficult for those parties to get together and have such a relationship.

Another example I would like to quote concerns the rural shires. A very good example which has been highly successful in my area concerns the Waggamba Shire. The Waggamba Shire Council went to a lot of trouble to negotiate a contract arrangement with its council employees. I get a lot of feedback when I speak to the people who work for the Waggamba Shire and they tell me that they take very little notice of the clock. Sometimes they work a short week and sometimes they might work a longer week; it depends on the job they are doing and what is needed. So if they go out to work on a particular road and they need to spend more time on that particular job, they will extend their hours and work according to what is needed.

If members speak to the Waggamba Shire executive, the mayor and those people who are in charge of the executive side of the council, they will find that that arrangement

has been highly successful. As well, those people are doing better than the average council workers who are working for other shires. If the Government is not careful, it will wind back the clock and make it more difficult for the people who wish to enter into these sorts of arrangements.

I am one of the few members on this side of the House who have held an AWU ticket. I was a member of the AWU. My friend on the other side of the Chamber who wears riding boots and wanders around this place was rather surprised to discover that I was an AWU member.

Mr Purcell: Did you keep yourself financial?

Mr ELLIOTT: Only when the organiser turned up. I have a good understanding of how the whole system works. The member who took Di McCauley's place has worked in that sector. I believe that he made some good points. One does not often see union organisers in areas where it is difficult to drive, and one does not often see them when it is about 110 degrees in the waterbag. They tend to frequent the airconditioned bars in town quite a bit.

In all seriousness, I believe that we all need to consider this situation. When I was in that position, I always wanted to work in a way that suited me. I have never been a great conformist. Many members on this side of the House would say, "Hear, hear", to that and say that it is a pity that I was not a bit more of a conformist. But there are times when people look back on their lives and realise that it is important to have more flexibility in their workplaces. That is what I believe these QWAs are all about. It is very important to be able to be flexible to work when there is work to do. And when there is no work, rather than trying to make work for employees, people should be able to agree that it is probably a good time to go to town or to go to an agricultural show or one of the various other shows that are on from time to time. That is what sensible employer/employee relationships are all about.

I have mentioned Goondiwindi. It is interesting to note what is happening there at the moment. The people of Goondiwindi are facing the possibility of another flood tomorrow. The river is about eight metres at the moment, and it may well reach close to nine metres tomorrow. That will cause tremendous damage to roads in my electorate and in the electorate of Warrego. I have been in touch with various Ministers—the Premier, the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for Emergency Services. I take this opportunity to thank them for their willingness to have equipment and personnel on stand-by should the river peak at a higher level than I have been talking about. It is going to create a tremendous amount of damage to roads in that area. Under contract, people from the councils will go out and fix those problems.

Opposition members understand that the problems experienced by people in those areas are different from those experienced by people here in the city. The whole situation is very difficult. We must understand that the land-holders along that river have had a large amount of damage inflicted on them already, and there is potential for an even greater disaster if the rains continue. It could bring ruin to what could be the most incredible winter crop that we have seen in a long time. Those people will need to be able to employ people on a casual basis to fix many of those problems.

All members need to understand just how practical QWAs have been. I would be absolutely amazed and distraught to think that members would be silly enough to change that system and bring about a change that will create very large problems to many people in rural and regional Queensland.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (11.45 p.m.), in reply: Firstly, I thank my colleagues for their valued contributions on what I regard as significant and necessary amendments to failed sections of the Act. The Workplace Relations Amendment Bill is the first step by our Government to re-establish a balance in the industrial relations landscape—a step which recognises that job security, job growth and fair wages and employment conditions are factors of real importance to all Queenslanders.

As I stated earlier, in the election lead-up the Government made a commitment to the people of Queensland to maintain a relevant and up-to-date award system and to repeal certain harsh and unfair aspects of the current legislation. The idea of pruning awards back to just 20 allowable matters was a concept not thought through by the previous Government. Awards are documents intended to cover all aspects of the employment relationship, as well as being one of the primary vehicles for determining wages and conditions. The consequence of not moving quickly to halt the award stripping process would be to substantially reduce entitlements for employees under current award arrangements. If Labor did not move swiftly with the amendment Bill, provisions contained in the

Industrial Relations Act 1990 relating to hours of work, public holidays, etc., and general conditions of employment enjoyed by Queenslanders engaged under State awards or certified agreements would cease to apply from 27 September.

QWAs have been the subject of most of this debate. They are not about flexibility, job security or family-friendly policies, as the Opposition would have us believe, but about how employers can best manage their awards to accommodate their own needs. There is nothing innovative about QWAs. QWAs thumb their noses at occupational health and safety, training, career paths, multiskilling and productivity improvements. QWAs are not the way of the future.

In his address to the House, the honourable member for Clayfield pointed to dispute statistics and a decline in industrial action as apparently highlighting some form of success in his legislation. However, the decline in industrial action can be attributed to other factors, including being part of a worldwide trend, not to mention the tone set by the Accord between the Labor Government and the unions throughout the 1980s. The truth is that the current Santoro/Borbidge Act, which mirrored much of the Howard/Reith Act, has led to some of the most bitter and protracted disputes in the nation's history. The Curragh coalmine, Hunter Valley coal and the Queensland teachers dispute—not to mention the Patrick waterside fiasco, supported by the Opposition—are glaring examples of how legislation is capable of seriously hurting our nation and its workers.

The member for Clayfield and the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe that Queenslanders are happy with the current legislation. How can they say this when the State has reached unprecedented levels of job insecurity? How can they say this when the legislation has caused worker morale to plummet in Queensland? The Labor Government has never hidden its intent in regard to QWAs. We were elected on that policy, and we made it clear that that was not one of the negotiable matters that would be referred to the industrial relations task force. Many Opposition members wasted their time tonight making spurious claims in relation to that. We made it clear that there were certain non-negotiable matters, and these were some of them. This is very brief legislation, in effect. The rest of the matters are before the industrial relations task force.

How can the member for Clayfield question this Government's openness and consultation when he, as the Minister, wrote his Act following a series of informal meetings with his buddies while excluding others, including unions, from genuine input? This is the same person who, as Minister, left the tripartite industrial relations consultative committee high and dry in the development stage of the Act—and he had not met with the IRCC since the introduction of the Workplace Relations Act.

During his address, the member for Clayfield referred to collective QWAs as being an alternative to collective certified agreements. The section talks of agreements "negotiated" collectively. The truth of the QWAs is that they are not negotiated and not required to be negotiated.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the plight of the Gympie Eldorado goldmine, an employer which has a number of employees bound to QWAs. He said that employees would lose out on pay rises and above award arrangements should QWAs be scrapped. Awards set minimum terms and conditions and employers are free to remunerate workers at above-award rates. In fact, this is common practice in a lot of workplaces. Furthermore, if the Eldorado goldmine has the support of its employees, as the Leader of the Opposition informs us, they would have little trouble attaining a valid majority to put in place a certified agreement.

One of the claims made continually by the Opposition in the course of this debate was that this legislation was about union dominance. Nowhere in this legislation does the Government seek to take away the power to have non-union agreements. They are available to the employers and employees of this State.

We have seen a recent attempt by Business Queensland to analyse the truth in relation to this matter in an article published this week. Their article is titled "QWA demise is no loss". The article states that industrial relations leaders are almost unconcerned about the demise of QWAs. The article says—

> "Experts agree with Industrial Relations Minister Paul Braddy who questioned the relevance of the measures which have attracted little interest since their introduction under the Coalition government in March 1997."

David Miller, a partner at the law form Allen Allen and Hemsley, best sums up the tone of the Business Queensland article on QWAs when he is quoted as saying—

"... if QWAs were a share issue, it would have been very undersubscribed."

The Opposition Leader, the member for Clayfield and others have referred to examples of employers who want QWAs to remain in place. However, an essential ingredient was missing from the Opposition's argument: where were the examples of employees who want QWAs to remain? The truth is that the member for Clayfield did not want to have the information placed before this Parliament about the analysis of the report. He wrote to me seeking a copy for himself; yet when I rose in this place to make a statement and table the report, he immediately sought to prevent me from doing so. What he wanted was not for this report to be distributed in the community. He wanted one for himself so he could dissect it and argue about it; but he did not want one placed in the Parliament. That was despite the fact that he could have provided analysis over the period when he was a Minister, because he had provisions in the Act to do so. He never did that. As a Minister, he never requested a report about the operation of the QWAs; yet he comes in here whining about the need for an independent analysis. There is no power for an independent analysis. There is a power for analysis under the Act, which was his legislation.

The findings presented by the department in the report are based on the facts. The facts about wage increases are based on the statistical data held by the Industrial Registrar. These are facts that the member for Clayfield could have provided to the Parliament if he wished, but he did not. Why? Because the facts indicate that QWAs have not been a success! These agreements cover only 0.2% of the Queensland work force. The Opposition continually tells us that these amendments are about ensuring that unions continue to control the bargaining process under enterprise bargaining. In saying that, they turn a blind eye to the fact that our amendments recognise the continued existence of a number of agreement types—both collective and non-union collective agreements.

There is a lot more to be said. The hour is late. I believe that there will be considerable debate at the Committee stage. I do not intend to continue as long as I otherwise would have. The Bill before the House today reaffirms this Government's commitment to establish a progressive industrial relations system aimed at stability, economic growth and the development of the Queensland economy. This Government is committed to jobs security, jobs growth and, just as importantly, fair wages and employment conditions for all Queenslanders. We inherited from the Borbidge Government industrial relations legislation aimed at reducing conditions for workers. The award simplification process coupled with QWAs is a glaring example of the harsh and unfair nature of the Workplace Relations Act 1997. I commend the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill to the House as, in the interim, a just alternative to the legislation left behind by the Borbidge Government.

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

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 42—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: McGrady, Stephan; Beattie, Littleproud

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Committee

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—

Mr BRADDY (12.02 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, lines 10 to 12—

omit."

The amendment that I am now proposing is a further amendment to the Bill. I do so on the understanding that, with 13 non-Government and non-Opposition members, the Government is not likely to win the debate in relation to the clauses relating to QWAs in their current form. So I indicate that I will be moving some further amendments that relate primarily to the harshest aspects of the QWAs. My amendments are designed to take away some of the worst aspects of them. For example, the secrecy——

Mrs Sheldon: That is a volume of amendments to be presented at this stage.

Mr BRADDY: Yes. If the member had bothered to listen instead of talking down her nose as she always does she would have heard me say that in this place there are now 13 non-Government and non-Opposition members. It was only very late in the piece tonight that it became apparent that my legislation was not going to proceed to be passed——

Mr Horan: There are six pages.

Mr BRADDY: Is the member listening? There are 13——

Mrs Sheldon: There are six pages.

Mr BRADDY: That is too bad for the honourable member who is interjecting not from her own seat. I repeat what I said before. If the 13 non-Government members in this place had given me an earlier indication for certain as to what they were going to do, I would not have had to move these amendments.

During the course of debate in this Chamber, the members opposite are going to see more of this. We have a situation that has never existed before. In the term of the previous Parliament, we saw uncertainty when we had one Independent member who sometimes was not in a position to say what she was doing until the last minute. Now we have 13 who are in that position. The Government has to work on the basis of knowing what is happening only when the Government is informed about what is happening. So the member is just going to have to put up with it instead of whingeing, as she does usually. Why does she not get back to her own seat and interject from there. So let us get on with the debate. That way we will get out of here sooner. This proposed amendment amends clause 3 of the Bill so that the object of the Act retains reference to individual agreements.

Mr SANTORO: We have just heard an extraordinary statement by the Minister. During the past 24 hours to 48 hours in this place, there has been considerable debate about the veracity or otherwise of statements made in this place, including those by the Honourable the Minister. The Minister says that if only the 13 non-Government members had indicated what they were doing then maybe we would not be facing the situation in which we have a raft of fundamental amendments to his amendments. The Minister is blaming his lack of knowledge of the decision of the Independents and the non-Government members. I have just consulted with the Independents. I asked them, "Did the Minister consult you before he introduced the amendment Bill?" The answer was "No." In fact, one of the Independents said, "The Minister always was aware that I was going to be opposing this Bill."

I ask the Minister: did he develop any work ethic or any work habit that enabled him to ascertain their opinion before he came in here and dumped the Bill, with very short notice, with no consultation despite what he has said, or has he gone about his usual way of doing work and think that he can take this Parliament and these members for granted and say, "I am going to put my Bill in and it will be supported"?

On the very brief amount of consultation that I have been able to have since the Minister started claiming that he had not known what the other members of Parliament—the non-Government members as he calls them; the members of One Nation and the two Independents—were going to do, I have been able to find out that the Minister did not even bother asking them. He now comes into this place and drops a raft of complex amendments that go to the heart of the way the QWA provisions in this Act operate. At approximately midnight, the Minister is saying, "Let us have a go at it."

So that it can be clear for all honourable members, the reason why we have been carrying on with this debate is that this Opposition has been trying to find out what the other members of this Parliament who are not members of the Government were, in fact, prepared to do in terms——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! So far, neither member has spoken to the clause. I will not tolerate it. We have to get on with the Bill and we are not going to have this debate on every clause. It is a clause that means very little. If the member speaks to the clause, that is fair enough.

Mr SANTORO: Of course I am speaking to the clause. In speaking to the clause I am making the general point that the Minister is trying to negate the original amendment proposed by him with another amendment. The excuse that the Minister is using to negate this amendment—I am trying to address the substance of his remarks—and the reason why we are now considering this new amendment is that he was unable to ascertain the opinion of the Independent non-Government members.

I say with the utmost respect to the Minister that he cannot do that at this stage in

the debate because, clearly, the amendments that he proposes demand a hell of a lot more consideration than we are able to give when they are dropped in front of us while the Minister is in fact moving them. I reserve my right to speak further.

Mr BORBIDGE: At this very late hour the Minister has proposed a series of complex amendments of which we have not had notice. I think it is fair to say that all members on the non-Government side of the Chamber deserve proper consideration in respect of the very detailed amendments proposed. This never happened under the previous Government.

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Not substantial amendments at this hour of the night in respect of a key element of legislation. Some of the amendments proposed we may well be able to accept, but we do not know that because we do not know what they mean. We do not know the implications. At 10 past midnight the Minister drops on the table of the Parliament six pages of amendments to key pieces of the legislation. Out of respect for this Parliament and due process, I therefore move—

"That the Committee report progress and seek leave to sit again."

Question put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 42—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Pairs: McGrady, Stephan; Beattie, Littleproud.

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Mr Chairman, as the previous speakers from the Opposition were expressing some concern about debating these matters with no notice, I noticed that one of your comments was that this was a small amendment. I would have to say that it is one of the major amendments. The whole purpose of the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill was to remove QWAs and 20 allowable matters from the current Workplace Relations Act.

Amendment 1 to clause 3, circulated in both my name and the name of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, retains QWAs in the Bill. On that basis, obviously, as I indicated this afternoon, I will be supporting that amendment. It is not a minor matter; it is a significant shift in the direction of the Bill as it has been debated today. It is a disappointment that there has not been time for everybody to digest that information appropriately. Given that it is an amendment moved by the Minister to retain QWAs in the Workplace Relations Amendment Bill, I indicate my support.

Mr SANTORO: I wish to support the comments made by the member for Gladstone. Obviously, if the Minister was not removing this part of his amending Bill we would also be moving that it be struck out, but on the basis that the Minister is seeking to remove that part, we certainly will be supporting it.

I think it is important to rebut some of the arguments put by the Minister. Again, the Opposition certainly does not agree with the definition of confidentiality given by the Minister and other members opposite. They define it as "secret". We define the word "confidentiality" precisely as it is meant to be in the Act. That is, the QWA is confidential between the two parties and if either of those parties wants to make it a public document, either on the front page of the Courier-Mail or broadcasted in some other major way, they can do so.

There is protection for employees under QWA provisions within the coalition's Workplace Relations Act. The QWAs are not tools that can be used to coerce employees into entering into unfair workplace arrangements. They have worked. In relation to the report that the Minister is so keen to defend, I again state very publicly in this place that it is one sided. It simply talks about what the Minister perceives and what other members opposite have sought to portray as a diminution of wages and conditions. But in reality the Minister did not include within that report one example of a QWA showing the benefits accruing to employees who had their wages, conditions and other remuneration annualised or who had cashed in some form of leave. In that report the Minister did not provide one example of how under a QWA benefits accrued to an employee.

I am not aware of the terms of reference that the Minister put to the people in the department who compiled the report. It would be interesting to find those terms of reference, because I think it would be proven after some scrutiny that they are very restrictive. The report resulting from the terms of reference did not show any of the benefits that accrue to people participating in a QWA arrangement.

I also reject any suggestion that this part of the Act has failed. Speakers on this side of the Chamber have indicated clearly why the uptake of QWAs was not as high as members on this side of the Chamber would have desired. The political climate at the time and the threats of the Labor Party in Opposition clearly discouraged people from entering into QWAs. For the Minister and others to say that they received a mandate to abolish QWA provisions, as he has stated, is absolutely ridiculous. The vote of the Labor Party at the recent State election fell by 4%.

Mr Fouras: That is a stupid argument.

Mr SANTORO: That is not a stupid argument. That hardly suggests that people were enthused by the industrial relations and other policies of the Government. We on this side of the Chamber utterly reject that the Government has a mandate to abolish QWAs. Undoubtedly forced by the circumstances of this Parliament, which I believe more genuinely reflects the will of the people—and that is that the people do not like the Labor Party and its industrial relations policy—tonight the Minister is being forced to abandon his Government's pre-election policy. This Parliament reflects the will of the people far better in favour of the non-Labor side than the Labor side. Members opposite should not try to fool anybody about the fact that the vote for the Labor Party fell by 4%. By definition, the non-Labor Party vote went up. The Government has no mandate. It is not doing us any favours at all by moving this amendment. What is happening is that the will of the people, at least in terms of QWAs, is being effected in this place.

Clause 3, as read, negatived.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr BRADDY (12.25 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, lines 17 to 19—

omit, insert—

'Amendment of s 74 (Employer and employee may make a QWA)

'5. Section 74—

insert—

'(4) The employer may not make a QWA with an employee who is not

an adult.'.'.

'Amendment of s 81 (Filing QWAs and ancillary documents)

'5A. Section 81(5)—

omit.'.

'Amendment of s 84 (Additional approval requirements for QWA and ancillary documents)

'5B.(1) Section 84(1)—

insert—

'(e) if the employer did not offer a QWA in the same terms to all comparable employees—the employer did not act unfairly or unreasonably in not doing so.'.'.

'(2) Section 84(3)—

insert—

'(e) if the employer did not offer an amendment agreement in the same terms to all comparable employees who also have a QWA in the same terms—the employer did not act unfairly or unreasonably in not doing so.'.'.

'(3) Section 84(7)—

omit, insert—

'(7) In this section—

"comparable employee", for a QWA, means an employee of the employer who does the same kind of work as the employee who is a party to the QWA.

"required number of days" means—

(a) for a new employee—5 days; or

(b) for an existing employee—14 days.'.'.

'Amendment of s 85 (Approving QWA)

'5C.(1) Section 85(1)—

insert—

'(c) the QWA is not contrary to the public interest.'.'.

'(2) Section 85—

insert—

'(6) In considering the public interest, the enterprise commissioner may consider—

(a) the relative bargaining power of the parties; and

(b) the particular circumstances and needs of low paid workers and any likely changes in the safety net of minimum wages during the period of the QWA; and

(c) the particular circumstances and needs of workers including women, persons from

a non-English-speaking background, young persons, apprentices, trainees and outworkers; and

(d) anything else the enterprise commissioner considers relevant to the QWA.'.'.

'Amendment of s 86 (Approving amendment agreement)

'5D.(1) Section 86(1)—

insert—

'(c) the QWA is not contrary to the public interest.'.'.

'(2) Section 86—

insert—

'(5) In considering the public interest, the enterprise commissioner may consider—

(a) the relative bargaining power of the parties; and

(b) the particular circumstances and needs of low paid workers and any likely changes in the safety net of minimum wages during the period of the agreement; and

(c) the particular circumstances and needs of workers including women, persons from a non-English-speaking background, young persons, apprentices, trainees and outworkers; and

(d) anything else the enterprise commissioner considers relevant to the agreement.'.'.

'Omission of s 108 (Hearings to be in private)

'5E. Section 108—

omit.'.

'Omission of s 109 (Identity of QWA parties not to be disclosed)

'5F. Section 109—

omit.'.

'Amendment of s 111 (Reports and advice about development in making QWAs)

'5G. Section 111(3)—

omit.'."

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The amendment that the Minister has moved in only one aspect duplicates the amendments that I circulated and significantly expands the intended changes that my circulated amendment No. 2 would create. The first sentence of the Minister's amendment, "At page 4, lines 17 to 19", was an omission that I intended to support. However, the Minister's amendment then adds a significant number of changes, the first of which is that a QWA cannot be made with an employee who is not an adult. I presume that refers to someone who is not over 18 years of age. That is not a bad proposal. However, subsequent to that change are significant changes to the filing of documentation, the approval requirements, the approvals of QWAs in 5C, which introduces a new test, and paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) on page 3 of the Minister's circulated amendments, which are already in a different form in the Act. 5E is a completely new provision. 5F is the provision concerning more public knowledge of who the QWA parties are.

Because I do not support those other amendments, particularly from 5B onwards, I cannot support the Minister's proposed amendment. However, I foreshadow that if the Minister's amendment fails, I will be moving my foreshadowed amendment to just exclude lines 17 to 19. I will not be supporting the Minister's amendment, but I do foreshadow another amendment.

Mr SANTORO: I have similar concerns to those expressed by the honourable member for Gladstone. I think the Minister owes an explanation to this Chamber in terms of the amendment that he is suggesting in relation to minors. He is introducing an amendment without any explanation. For example, during this debate he has not raised one example of abuse of somebody who was not an adult and who in fact has participated in a QWA.

As the Minister knows, there are many apprenticeships within schools that avail themselves of QWAs. As the Queensland Confederation of Commerce and Industry has suggested, the elimination of Queensland workplace agreements for young people—and I suspect that this amendment is aimed at younger people—will greatly compromise the willingness of employers to take on young kids who are still at school and who cannot be covered in their apprenticeship by another industrial arrangement.

The honourable member for Gladstone has a very successful school-based apprenticeship scheme operating with the cooperation of employers and the local group training scheme in her electorate. I am not sure that any of those kids are covered. It is probable that they are. However, there are certainly young school-based apprentices who are covered by QWAs. This amendment will negate the effect of having those kids employed in part-time apprenticeships under those special QWA arrangements that afford

protections for young people. Those protections are contained elsewhere.

I am saying to the honourable member for Gladstone that I understand the argument that the Minister may, in fact, put forward to this Chamber if he does enter the debate. We would perhaps like to see some examples of where the abuse has occurred. I do not believe that the Minister can put up any examples because, as I have stated previously in this debate, if that abuse had occurred it would have been made very public by honourable members opposite and unions during the time that we were in Government. I can see that unions are very vigilant on behalf of people who do not enjoy positions of power within workplaces. If a young person was being disadvantaged, that would have been splattered all over the front pages of the newspaper.

The Minister has not given us any argument, but he is seeking to in fact exclude that very special group of people about whom I have just spoken. Before I attempt to encourage the Opposition to support this amendment, I would like to hear some examples and some reasoning from the Minister.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SANTORO: I still have seven minutes and when I sit down I will probably have a few more in which to reply to whatever argument the Minister puts forward. The member opposite would like me to sit down, but he will have to cop it tonight.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member will address the clause, not the individual.

Mr SANTORO: If people interject, I do have a right to at least make some brief replies to them, particularly when they are so stupid and do not make sense.

I also share the concerns of the honourable member for Gladstone in terms of the so-called confidentiality changes that are being made under this amendment. Again, I do not know how we are going to get members opposite to understand the difference between the concepts of confidentiality and secrecy. I believe that they are very clear. I believe that the provisions within the coalition's industrial relations legislation are sufficient to protect the interests of people who, for some reason, may want to make the provisions within their QWAs public to third parties, to an individual third party or, indeed, to the entire world through some means of mass notification.

Because of those reasons, I am not inclined to support any of the amendments that are being put forward by the Honourable the Minister, including those relating to excluding young people from the making of QWAs. That is a very important exclusion. If the Minister is fair dinkum about providing a smooth transition for young people moving from school straight into workplaces, he should realise that part-time apprenticeships contribute significantly to that smooth transition. If the Minister is fair dinkum about providing training—real training—for real jobs, which I suspect will not be created in any great amounts as a result of policies such as these that are being implemented in legislation, the Minister, with the utmost respect, is going about it the wrong way.

I urge the Minister to listen very carefully to the statements that were made by the honourable member for Toowoomba North, Mr Healy, when he talked very eloquently about Toowoomba and what would happen if QWAs were abolished in total, as the Minister was originally proposing. He also talked about what would happen if those young kids were then deprived of opportunities to enter into QWAs, which provided enough flexibilities for them to be covered by an industrial arrangement which afforded them protections and which still enabled them to be employed as part-time apprentices.

I see the honourable member for Bulimba looking at me intently. He knows how important those part-time apprenticeships are to those young kids. I urge all honourable members to reject these provisions, unless the Minister can in fact convince us otherwise.

Mr BRADDY: I will speak briefly because of the lateness of the hour. The objections to QWAs have been set out in the course of the debate. One of the objections, of course, has been that they do not recognise the unequal bargaining power which exists in the workplace. In particular, many employees have no choice in signing a QWA if they want to take a job. The report on the effect of the introduction of QWAs indicates clearly that a number of QWAs make no provision for wage increases. As the lifetime of a QWA can be up to three years, it is likely that a number of employees will fall below the requisite award rate. Awards are generally adjusted each year by a safety net adjustment. The most recent adjustment was for $10 to $14 a week, with the $14 per week adjustment applying to the lowest paid.

This amendment No. 2 is basically about encouraging more openness in relation to

these matters. The amendment inserts in section 74 of the Act a new subsection (4), which states that an employer also may not make a QWA with an employee who is not an adult. It is inappropriate and grossly unfair that a young person could be made to negotiate an industrial agreement with an employer. Section 81(5) of the Act requires the registrar to keep a QWA or an ancillary document in a way that maintains the confidentiality of its contents. The proposal omits section 81(5) of the Act. This relates, of course, to the unfair secrecy provision of QWAs. The possibility of public scrutiny of these documents will help to cut out the more harsh and unfair agreements. All other industrial instruments are open to public access. Why are these documents not open to public access? We believe that, if the secrecy provisions are taken out, then the process would at least be better. Obviously we cannot succeed in removing QWAs altogether.

I repeat what I said before: I am indeed sorry that these amendments had to come up at the last minute. As the leader of One Nation would know, I was advised very late in the piece after a lot of toing and froing as to what his party's members were doing in this particular debate. I am not appreciative of that at all, either. I am not blaming either of the Independents in relation to the late notice of what would be likely to occur here.

Mr Borbidge: There was late notice of the amendments.

Mr BRADDY: I repeat that there was late notice of the amendments. I wanted to make it clear about the members for Nicklin and Gladstone. I certainly had sufficient notice of what they were doing, but One Nation was very, very late in terms of giving us a final indication of what was occurring, and we are therefore all placed in difficulties in relation to this.

Miss Simpson: Why don't you adjourn it?

Mr BRADDY: Because the award stripping process has to be reversed before 26 September.

Question—That the Minister's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, 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, 42—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: McGrady, Stephan; Beattie, Littleproud

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr BRADDY (12.43 a.m.): I move—

"At page 4, lines 21 and 22 and page 5, lines 1 to 13—

omit, insert—

'6. Section 115, definition "award"—

omit, insert—

' "award" includes an award under the Commonwealth Act, part VIE.'.'."

This amendment ensures that section 115 of the Act is retained essentially as it is. This section includes a number of definitions necessary to allow the no disadvantage test to apply to QWAs. The only effect of the amendment is to remove exceptional matters orders from the definition of "award". Clause 15 of the original amendment Bill removes section 130 of the Act—exceptional matters orders. These will no longer be required as the commission will no longer be restricted to arbitrating on allowable matters. Section 128 of the Act and clause 113 of the amendment Bill apply.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The amendment that the Minister has just moved is the same as my foreshadowed amendment. I will be withdrawing mine and supporting the Minister's amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Mr WELLINGTON: I move the following amendment—

"By omitting all words after the word 'omit' first occurring."

The effect of this amendment is to retain the exclusion of the exceptional matters orders in the definition of award in section 115 of the Act. This is consistent with my objective of maintaining the restriction of awards in allowable matters only.

The CHAIRMAN: That question was put and passed by the Committee. The clerk tells

me that we do not have an amendment from the member at the table. We had no idea that the member was moving an amendment. If honourable members have amendments would they please rise before the question is put. In this case the question was put and passed.

Clause 7—

Mr BRADDY (12.45 a.m.): I move—

"At page 5, lines 14 to 25 and page 6, lines 1 to 7—

omit."

This again is a consequential amendment which allows for the provision in the Act in section 116—"When does an agreement pass the no disadvantage test"—to continue to apply to QWAs.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: This is a duplicate of my No. 4 circulated amendment, which I now withdraw. I support the Minister's amendment.

Clause 7, as read, negatived.

Clause 8—

Mr BRADDY (12.46 a.m.): I move—

"At page 6, lines 8 to 14—

omit."

This is again a consequential amendment which maintains section 117 of the Act. This section is in Part 3, the no disadvantage test.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Again I withdraw my circulated amendment and support the Minister's amendment.

Clause 8, as read, negatived.

Clause 9—

Mr BRADDY (12.46 a.m.): I move—

"At page 6, lines 15 to 21—

omit."

Again this is a consequential amendment which maintains section 117 of the Act. This section is in Part 3, the no disadvantage test.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Again I withdraw my circulated amendment and support the Minister's amendment.

Clause 9, as read, negatived.

Clause 10—

Mr BRADDY (12.47 a.m.): I move—

"At page 6, lines 22 to 26 and page 7, lines 1 and 2—

omit."

This is a consequential amendment which maintains section 117 of the Act. This section is in Part 3, the no disadvantage test.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Again I withdraw my circulated amendment and support the Minister's amendment.

Clause 10, as read, negatived.

Clause 11—

Mr BRADDY (12.49 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 7, lines 3 to 5—

omit."

This omits clause 11 of the Bill and so retains the provisions for the termination of a designated award which is appropriate for deciding if a QWA passes the no disadvantage test.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I withdraw my amendment and support the Minister's.

Clause 11, as read, negatived.

Clause 12—

Mr BRADDY (12.49 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 7, lines 11 to 15—

omit."

This amends clause 12 of the Bill to retain the reference to QWAs in section 127(4)(a) with a consequential amendment to section 127(4)(b).

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I withdraw my amendment and support the Minister's.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13—

Mr SANTORO (12.50 a.m.): The original amendment Bill from the Minister refers in a very substantial way to the second major amendment contained within this amendment Bill, that is, that of award simplification. It is important that the Opposition clearly signals in this place, by forcing a division, that we support the award simplification provisions contained within the coalition's Workplace Relations Bill and that we reject the amendments that are being put forward by the Government in terms of award simplification or at least removing the provisions from the amendment Bill.

We have heard during the substantive debate on the second reading of the Bill an enormous amount of scaremongering by members opposite about what has been happening in terms of award simplification, including what has been happening at a Federal level. On the one hand, members have said that award simplification is all about stripping back conditions and wages for

employees but, on the other hand, other members opposite have asked what it is all about, because there has not been very much award simplification, particularly in Queensland.

At a Federal level there have been only 125 awards simplified out of about 2,000 to 3,000. So both sides of the argument have been run by honourable members opposite just to suit their own particular whims and their particular spurious arguments. They have not really been able to conclude in any definitive manner that award simplification is a bad thing. I will not be repetitive by quoting from former Prime Minister Keating's contribution to the debate about award simplification. Suffice it to say that former Prime Minister Keating, in one of his very lucid moments in terms of displaying some logic towards genuine workplace reform, actually agreed totally with the objects and contents of the coalition Government's award simplification provisions.

Mr Keating went on to say that a competitive economy was one in which industrial instruments were fair, but they also had to be simple and they had to provide an incentive to employees and employers to enter into arrangements. In fact, as members on this side of the House have been saying for about 25 years—and former Prime Minister Keating even started accepting the validity of our argument—the award system has been a cumbersome, bureaucratic, one-size-fits-all system. Awards include provisions which really do not strike at the heart of productivity and incentive considerations at a workplace and, in many cases, provide a very real disincentive for people to enter into any process leading to the making of awards.

What the coalition at State and Federal levels sought to do was to introduce a process of award simplification. We allowed for 20 allowable matters. It is important to read into the record, as we debate this very important clause, the sort of matters that were allowable award matters. I would then like to quote from an editorial that appeared last week in the Canberra Times which clearly illustrates the fallacies within the arguments of honourable members opposite and clearly debunks their fears in terms of suggestions that employers are using award simplification to disadvantage employees.

The sorts of things that the 20 allowable matters cover are: the classifications of employees and skill-based career paths; ordinary time hours of work and the times within which they are performed, rest breaks, notice periods and variations to working hours; rates of pay, including hourly rates and annual salaries, wage rates for juniors, apprentices or trainees, and wage rates for employees under the supported wage system; piece rates, tallies and bonuses; annual leave and leave loadings; long service leave; personal and carer's leave, including sick leave, family leave, bereavement leave, compassionate leave, cultural leave and other similar forms of leave; parental leave and adoption leave; compensation for public holidays; allowances; loadings for working overtime or for casual or shift work; penalty rates; redundancy pay; notice of termination; stand-down provisions; dispute resolution procedures; jury service; and the type of employment, including full-time employment, casual employment, regular part-time employment and shift work; occupational superannuation; wages and conditions for out workers in certain circumstances. Those are the 20 allowable matters.

I believe that anybody who seriously considers and examines that particular list would realise that the most fundamental aspects of a work relationship—the most fundamental aspect of a relationship between an employee and an employer—are indeed covered by the 20 allowable matters. So we totally reject that somehow award simplification is seeking to strip back the working conditions of individuals.

I believe that it is fair to say that, at a Federal level, where some awards have been simplified—about 125 of them—the Australian Industrial Relations Commission has been very conservative and that the process can hardly be described as a process which has seen the stripping away of employee rights. Many of the things which have gone out of the awards have gone out because they were already covered under other laws and, as a result of seeking to avoid duplication, there has been a process of award simplification. Clauses such as those relating to occupational health and safety and the like have been removed.

It is interesting to note the editorial of the Canberra Times, which is not always recognised as a newspaper that supports the non-Labor people—the Tories or whatever else members opposite tend to call those people who are of the same political inclination as members on this side of the House. This is what the Canberra Times had to say about the award simplification process—

> "In the language of unionism, awards have been 'stripped to the bone'."

That is the charge of honourable members opposite, most of whom, of course, were very strong trade union advocates, inspectors or

whatever prior to coming in here. That is what people like them have been saying; that the awards have been stripped to the bone. That editorial continues—

> "The reality is less draconian than that, of course, since virtually everything of real concern—from rates of pay to bonuses, overtime, leave entitlements, redundancy pay and superannuation—comes under one or other of the 20 heads."

Those are the 20 allowable matters that I have just quoted. When talking about award simplification, we are seeking to assist workplace arrangements which will provide for improvements in conditions and remuneration for employees—not stripping them back, as honourable members opposite have been unfairly suggesting.

I appreciate that this amendment will have the support of at least one of the Independents and, therefore, despite the division, will be passed. But there will be several interesting consequences of this amendment once it is passed. First of all, State jurisdiction could well be affected as Federal awards continue to be simplified when the Howard Government gets re-elected in a few months' time. As a result of that, there will be certainly jurisdictional issues which will need to be considered.

I suspect that the Minister will be very tempted to come back into this place and, in all probability, reintroduce award simplification mechanisms so that jurisdictional issues can be well and truly addressed. As the award system becomes more simple at a Federal level, Queensland employers operating under a more complex award system may well be tempted to hop jurisdiction. That means that that will be flying in the face of the wishes of the majority of the major industrial relations players in this place. The one thing that I agreed upon with all the industrial relations players in Queensland when I was the Minister for Industrial Relations was that we should protect State jurisdiction. I agreed with the Bill Ludwigs and John Thompsons who came to me. As the relevant Minister, I often gave permission to the officers to intervene in the Industrial Relations Commission at a State and Federal level in order that jurisdiction at a State level was protected. That is a consideration that we will make again in terms of award simplification.

The issue of award simplification is not the alarmist one that honourable members have sought to create; but, indeed, it is one that seeks to create better work practices, better harmony, better productivity and ultimately more jobs within workplaces. We will be opposing this substantive amendment. Many of the other amendments that are put forward by the honourable the Minister both in his initial amendment Bill and in the subsequent amendment Bill are consequential. With respect, I do not believe that the Minister deserves the respect that the Opposition will afford him, but out of respect for other members here who have other commitments, including rest commitments, we will not force divisions on the consequential amendments. This is one move that is regressive. We have managed to keep some form of diluted and relatively ineffective QWA provisions. This is another regressive step in terms of award simplification that I think the Government will not only have to revisit but will, in the meanwhile, regret.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I want to indicate, as I did in the second-reading debate, that I will be supporting the Government in the removal of the 20 allowable matters from the Act. I will do that for a number of reasons. There have been 18 months to work towards getting award simplification for 320 Queensland awards, none of which have formally been simplified. I have residual concerns about the exposure that workers may have to the loss of some of the award elements. As I said, there has been 18 months to show that there would be no detrimental effect. That has not occurred. I seek formal confirmation from the Minister that there is a committee already established, including union representatives, works representatives and departmental representatives, which is working on award simplification. I seek also an indication as to whether there is a time frame for that committee to conclude its work. I will continue in my support for the removal of the 20 allowable matters as a protection for workers.

Mr BRADDY: I note the support of the member for Gladstone. Whatever the theoretical claims that the former Minister, the now shadow Minister, could make for award simplification, it has been a disastrous failure in Queensland. The time that was allowed for commencement of this process was not used at all. We have inherited from the Borbidge Government an industrial relations legislation that is aimed at reducing conditions for workers. The award simplification process is a glaring example of the harsh and unfair nature of the Workplace Relations Act. There is, therefore, the need for wages and conditions of employment to be protected through a

relevant up-to-date award system. Of course, that is what we are doing.

The idea of pruning awards back to just 20 allowable matters was a concept not thought through by the previous Government. It was purely copied from the failed Reith legislation. Awards are documents intended to cover all aspects of the employment relationship, as well as being one of the primary vehicles for determining wages and conditions.

In response to the member for Gladstone, I indicate that the industrial relations task force that is set up to look at the balance of the industrial legislation in Queensland—other than these four matters before the Parliament that we indicated before the election that we would be bringing to the Parliament in this way—is looking very much at award simplification. Good things have occurred in Queensland and Australia in recent years in relation to award simplification. It is not something that is starting now. That task force has three representatives from the employer organisations and three from the trade unions, as well as representatives from the Government and an outside expert. I would agree with the member for Gladstone: it is very important that the award simplification process proceed. I am sure that we will be very happy with the outcome when a draft Bill is, hopefully, available by the end of the year. I think that is an area where the employer and employee representatives can work very well together.

Question—That clause 13, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Hollis, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 42—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: McGrady, Stephan; Beattie, Littleproud

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Clauses 14 to 17, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18—

Mr BRADDY (1.10 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 9, lines 4 to 6—

omit."

This amendment omits clause 18 of the Bill, which was intended to omit the definition of "industrial authority" as this definition referred to QWAs and the Enterprise Commissioner.

Clause 18, as read, negatived.

Clause 19—

Mr BRADDY (1.11 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 9, lines 7 to 18—

omit."

This omits clause 19 of the Bill, which was intended to amend section 192 of the Act where it makes reference to an industrial authority and QWAs in relation to approving long service leave benefits.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I would just like to say that all of the Minister's amendments from No. 10 through to No. 19 are duplicates of the amendments that I have tabled. I withdraw mine and support the Minister's.

Clause 19, as read, negatived.

Clause 20—

Mr BRADDY (1.12 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 9, lines 19 to 23 and page 10, lines 1 and 2—

omit."

This amendment omits clause 20 of the Bill, which was intended to remove references to an industrial authority, which definition included the Enterprise Commissioner in relation to the taking of long service leave. The amendment retains the reference to industrial authority.

Clause 20, as read, negatived.

Clauses 21 and 22, as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—

Mr BRADDY (1.12 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 10, lines 11 to 17—

omit."

This amendment omits clause 23 of the Bill, which was intended to remove a reference to QWAs from the functions and powers of the Employment Advocate. Those functions and powers are retained.

Clause 23, as read, negatived.

Clause 24—

Mr BRADDY (1.13 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 10, lines 18 to 24 and page 11, lines 1 to 3—

omit."

This amendment omits clause 24 of the Bill, which was intended to remove the powers of the Employment Advocate to delegate his or her functions and powers in relation to QWAs. The power of the Employment Advocate to delegate those functions and powers is retained by the amendment.

Clause 24, as read, negatived.

Clause 25—

Mr BRADDY (1.13 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 11, lines 4 to 10—

omit."

This amendment omits clause 25 of the Bill, which was intended to remove the regulation power in relation to QWAs. This power is now retained.

Clause 25, as read, negatived.

Clauses 26 to 29, as read, agreed to.

Clause 30—

Mr BRADDY (1.14 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 12, lines 13 to 23, page 13, lines 1 to 23, page 14 lines 1 to 31 and page 15, lines 1 to 5—

omit."

This amendment amends clause 30 of the Bill by deleting the savings and transitional provisions relating to QWAs and the Employment Advocate and the provisions dealing with compensation for new employees for any shortfall in entitlements.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 30, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 31—

Mr BRADDY (1.14 a.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 15, lines 15 to 24—

omit, insert—

'31.(1) Schedule 5, definitions "allowable award matter" and "exceptional matters order"—

omit.'.

At page 15, lines 25 and 26 and page 16, lines 1 to 5—

omit.

At page 16, lines 12 to 19—

omit."

These amendments amend clause 31 of the Bill, which deals with definitions in Schedule 5. The amendments in clause 31 relating to allowable award matters and exceptional matters are retained as these relate to the award-stripping process. They also amend clause 31 of the Bill to remove changes made to delete definitions relating to QWAs. The definitions relating to QWAs are retained. The final amendment is similar to the previous amendment and retains references related to QWAs.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 31, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (1.15 a.m.), by leave: I move—

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

Question put; and the House divided—

AYES, 43—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, 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, 41—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: McGrady, Stephan; Beattie, Littleproud

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (1.24 a.m.): I move—

"That, if a Bill introduced by a Member, who is not a Minister of the Crown, has laid upon the table of the House for a period exceeding ninety days and has not passed all stages, that Bill will

be brought on for debate on the following sitting Wednesday evening. The House will continue to debate that Bill on each following sitting Wednesday evening until consideration of that Bill has been finalised. On those Wednesdays the House will break for dinner between 7pm and 8.30pm with the adjournment being moved at 11pm followed by a 30–minute adjournment debate."

In line with the commitment I gave to the Parliament during the last sitting week, we are debating this motion in this sitting week, even though it is 1.30 in the morning. I think the debate in relation to private members' Bills was had last time so I do not wish to debate the matter at length, but I think there is one thing that needs to be said: the Premier has given a commitment to allow in this Parliament private members' Bills to be debated.

In line with that commitment, it was at our suggestion that a trigger be placed into the Sessional Orders—it was not asked for by anyone—so that if a Bill was not debated within 90 days a mechanism would ensure that that Bill was debated. I know that the Opposition, upon seeing that, then moved to make the trigger effective after 60 days. I ask the Opposition to give the provisions contained in this motion the opportunity to operate to see how they work. At our first meeting with members of the Opposition in relation to Sessional Orders for this Parliament we spoke about the need to have some sort of trigger. It was suggested then that perhaps we could look at it. The Opposition was not happy with that, so I suggested that we place a trigger in the Sessional Orders to ensure that legislation was debated.

I am not critical of the Opposition Leader in saying this, but in line with our commitment I did offer the Opposition Leader the opportunity to debate his private members' Bill today in prime time—from 11.30 till 1—if it was going to take only an hour and a half. I am pleased that he did not take up that offer, in view of the current time. He said no because he wanted more than an hour and a half. It is his right to say that, and I am not being critical of him, but that offer was certainly in line with the commitment we made to debate his Bill.

The Opposition Leader's private member's Bill will be debated on the next Wednesday we sit. On that day the Government's transport legislation, which is on the Notice Paper, will be debated. If that Bill is dealt with in an hour we will then debate the Opposition Leader's Bill, and if it is dealt with in six hours we will then go on to his Bill. We will not stop debate on any legislation. Once the debate on the transport legislation is completed, we will allow debate on that private member's Bill. That Wednesday really is the last day available for consideration of legislation until the end of October.

With the Budget being brought down, we have one legislation day before the end of October. We will have two days to debate the Budget. We then have a fairly lengthy Estimates process. Then we will be back here. The proposition has been put by the Opposition that private members' Bills would then take precedence over Government business which has already been on the Notice Paper for a longer period. I think that is ridiculous.

Another alternative I had considered—I know the way members love to sit on Fridays—is to allow private members' Bills to be debated on Fridays. I think we should trial what we have. If we are not happy with things at the end of this year, we should look at the situation. Maybe we will say, "Let's make Fridays simply a private members' Bills day." Then if private members want to put up legislation it will be debated on Fridays. That is another possible alternative.

In the spirit of attempting to make this Parliament work, to give private members the opportunity to see Bills dealt with and passed, I ask members to support the proposition contained in the motion I have moved—that is, a 90-day trigger—and then after a period of time, at the end of the year, we can assess how that has worked. If the majority of members who are not Government members are unhappy with it at any time, they always have the opportunity to do something about it.

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (1.29 a.m.): I second the motion moved by the Leader of the House. This motion puts into place some security for the debating of private members' Bills. As such, it enhances the standing of private members. It should be remembered that the term "backbencher" is really a misnomer. We are all members of the Parliament and the role of the private member is very important indeed. At this moment in history, when the Parliament is so finely balanced, it is of the utmost importance.

The first Bill in modern Queensland history to be introduced and passed as a private member's Bill was the Parliamentary Papers Bill, which I had the honour of introducing and participating in the passage of in 1992. I make

the point that that Bill came out of a cooperative approach.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr FOLEY: I accept the interjection from the member for Moggill. The point of that Bill is that it reflected the hard work done by the Privileges Committee at that time. It was able to achieve passage because of a lot of hard work done by the committee in getting cross-party support for what turned out to be an important reform not only in principle to the law affecting parliamentary privilege but also in practice in that it allowed members of the press, the public and members of this House quicker access to the early proofs of Hansard.

In more recent times in a finely balanced House we have seen the importance of the Carruthers Inquiry Enabling Bill, which was introduced while Labor was in Opposition. We have seen also the effect of not having some secure method of ensuring that these Bills get debated. We saw Labor's Government Publicity Control Bill and the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill simply languish on the Notice Paper. The former coalition Government was able to ignore those Bills, because they were not Government business. This motion changes the situation. I commend the Leader of the House for his initiative. It is an important parliamentary reform and I encourage all honourable members to support it.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (1.32 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

> "At line 2, *omit* 'ninety days', *insert* 'sixty days'.
>
> Second sentence, *omit, insert*—
>
> 'The House will continue to sit on the following Wednesday and if the Bill has not been finalised, further consideration of the Bill will take precedence over Government business on subsequent sitting days until the Bill has been finalised.'."

In view of the lateness of the hour, I will not take too long in prosecuting the argument in relation to this amendment. However, a couple of points need to be made. This flows from a commitment given by the Premier, as the then Leader of the Opposition, to the member for Nicklin on 25 June of this year as a basis for forming this Labor Government. A proposal has now come forward from the Government in relation to private members' Bills. As we have said before in this place, without a kick-in mechanism this could very well end up as a Clayton's provision. If it is going to be meaningful, it needs that mechanism. That is exactly what the amendment does. It puts in place a provision to bring on debate, though not until after having first had an opportunity over some two and a half hours on the first Wednesday night and some two and a half hours on the second Wednesday night when the debate is allowed—some five hours.

For Bills that prove difficult or controversial—perhaps like the Bill we have just debated—we need a situation where there is a kick-in provision; otherwise, as I am sure will be the case with respect to the Citizens' Initiated Referenda Bill—lots of members probably wish to speak to it—it could mean that only one Bill is debated in six months or even longer. If all members make a contribution to the second-reading debate, combined with the debate on the clauses, it could mean that only one Bill is debated in 12 months.

There needs to be a kick-in provision to ensure that members have the opportunity to have those Bills debated. At the same time, the Government must get through its legislative program. That is the reason we have not brought it on more frequently than that—so there is an opportunity still for the Government to ensure that its legislative program is progressed while at the same time ensuring that private members also have the opportunity of putting forward private members' Bills and having them debated. The most important part is having them debated; otherwise they will simply gather dust. There is not much point in putting them forward in the first place if we do not have the opportunity to debate them.

Therefore, this is a terribly important amendment. It is all very well putting forward the proposal in the first place, but it has to be more than a Clayton's proposal. It has to be a proposal that will work, will be meaningful and will produce results for members in the House. This place has a vastly different composition of members from the previous Parliament and the one before that. That has to be taken into account. It is only by supporting the changes that we are making to the Government's motion this evening that we will have the opportunity to bring on for a debate the private members' Bills; otherwise we will certainly end up having a Clayton's provision that in reality means nothing at all. Therefore, I ask the House to give serious consideration to this amendment to the motion moved by the Government.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (1.36 a.m.): I second the amendment. We have a very, very different Parliament from any that Queensland has ever seen before—a Parliament made up of the Labor Party, the National Party, the Liberal Party, One Nation and two separate Independents. The Labor Party currently holds Government with 38% of the vote. The balance of the vote resides with the other parties and the Independents.

As a result, in endeavouring to form Government, the Premier gave a letter outlining certain principles to the Independent member for Nicklin, who agreed with it. Part of that letter stated that all members would have the opportunity to introduce private members' Bills. Although members have been able to introduce private members' Bills before, they were not able to have them debated in the Chamber. The Attorney-General spoke sanctimoniously earlier about how he had introduced an historic private member's Bill. That was only because the Goss Government allowed him to do so. In that session of Parliament, I remember that a private member's Bill from the member for Warrego sat on the Notice Paper for year after year. The Government never allowed the Bill to be debated. But things have changed and things are different.

What will happen if this amendment is not supported and we stick with the 90-day provision? The CIR Bill was introduced this week. It would be Christmas before the 90 days were up. We probably will not come back here until some time in February. We will have a week of sittings in February and one or two weeks in March, and then it will be Easter. If there is significant interest in that Bill, as there would appear to be, it could well be that there are 20 speakers on one side and 10 on the other. That adds up to 600 minutes. If we have only Wednesday night on which to debate it, that means it would take about four weeks of Parliament before we even finished the second-reading debate. Then it would have to go to the Committee stage. It would probably be about August or September—getting into next year's Estimates—before that Bill was passed.

We have three Bills on the Notice Paper. We have the one introduced by the shadow Attorney-General, the one by the member for Nicklin and one by the Opposition Leader. Already there is significant interest in it. If we are going to have some principles and if we are going to stick by the principles not only of being able to introduce these Bills but also being able to debate them, then we have to have reasonable Sessional Orders to allow this to happen.

I point out to the member for Nicklin—if he has some principle in this matter about wanting to have Bills introduced and debated not just for himself but for anybody else—that it could well be that, over the next three years, if each shadow Minister, one or two members from One Nation and the two Independents all have one private member's Bill, there would be something in the order of 22 Bills. The only way that we can deal with that is if we have the 60-day rule and the balance of it as proposed in this particular amendment.

It is essential that we apply the principle to this. The Leader of the House has said that, if it does not work, we will try some other way. I say to the House, particularly to the member for Nicklin, that this is an historical and significant change in this Parliament. It is a matter of high principle—of very high principle—for everybody in this House, regardless of which party they represent or whether or not they are an Independent. We must abide by those principles. That means that we should approve this amendment. That means that we should give this a chance. If we do not, in about July or August next year we are probably going to end up with one third of the 49th session gone and the chance for this new historic principle and Sessional Order of this Parliament 30% gone and finished. In that time we will have probably lost the opportunity for some four or five other members who have a Bill that is close and dear to their heart to be able to bring it into this House.

I say again to the member for Nicklin that he brought into the House this week a Bill which is very much close to his heart. It is a Bill in regard to which he holds high principles and it was very important for him to be able to bring that Bill into this House. He wants to have it heard, debated and adjudged in this House. If that Bill is passed, he will probably have another one to follow it. Likewise, all of us have a desire to introduce particular private members' Bills into this House.

For that reason I say that, if our amendment is approved, that will give strength to the principles that are espoused in the letter of the Premier to the member for Nicklin. It means that we can then go ahead with this new historic Sessional Order not just to have private members' Bills introduced but to actually be able to debate them. It will give everybody a fair go and we will not waste one year or more of the three years of this particular parliamentary session and lose the opportunity to have those private members' Bills debated by the members who introduce

them into the House. If we were then making a welter of it, then that is the time to say of the 60-day rule and then the two and a half hours as the amendment provides, "We are making a welter of it; we have to adjust it." At least then we will not have thrown away one year of the three-year term.

In seconding the amendment, I commend it strongly to each and every member of this House on the principles espoused in the letter from the Premier to the member for Nicklin. I hope that everybody will abide by those principles.

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (1.43 a.m.): I was not going to enter this debate, but some comments have been made by the Government Whip and the Leader of the House to which I would like to respond. We come to this place as equals; we are all here because the voters in our particular electorates decided that we should have the privilege of representing them. Having been in this place since 1980, I say this to new members, particularly the honourable member for Nicklin: the parliamentary year flies. By the time we have the Budget, the Address in Reply, legislation and Estimates debates the year is over. We all know this; we have experienced it each and every year that we have been here. I believe there is a danger that, if we accept the Government proposition of 90 days, we will not get a reasonable number—even a limited number—of private members' Bills addressed by this Parliament.

I think it is incumbent on this Parliament to err on the side of the Premier's commitment to the honourable member for Nicklin. I endorse the comments made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Just as the Leader of the House says, "Go for 90 and if it does not work we will look at 60", I suggest that we should be going for 60 and, if the Government and the House are of the view that there is some sort of abuse in the system, then we will review it. At the moment we have three private members' Bills before the Parliament: one from myself, one from the honourable member for Nicklin and one from the honourable member for Warwick, and I am planning to introduce one in the next sitting week. I know that One Nation is working on a particular proposal, too. There are probably another two or three in the system, and that is it.

A comment was made by the Government Whip about some sort of conspiracy to gum up the legislative program of the Government. I say quite clearly: we do not argue with the Government's right to govern. We do not argue with the Government's legislative program being given precedence, and it is being given precedence. The situation that we have in this Parliament is that, after 14 days, a Government Bill can be debated. Under what the Leader of the House is proposing tonight, after 90 days a private member's Bill can be debated. In the proposal put forward by the member for Indooroopilly, we are saying that, under the Standing Orders, after 14 days Government legislation can be debated; after 60 days, a private member's Bill can be debated.

Under the proposal advanced by the Opposition tonight, Government legislation is being given clear precedence and the Government's legislative program is being respected. I thank the Leader of the House for the courtesy that he did offer me—and it was done in good faith. He said, "I will give you an hour and a half for your private member's Bill."

Mr Mackenroth: If you can get it in that time.

Mr BORBIDGE: Exactly, and he did that. I said, "No, we cannot." Under the arrangements that we have—and I know he said that the Premier would not speak for 60 minutes—it is the right of the Premier to speak for 60 minutes if he wants to. I have never known him not to exercise his full time before. Of course, that would leave only 30 minutes in which the other 88 members of the House can speak.

Mr Mackenroth: You know if I told you it wouldn't be 60 minutes, it wouldn't be 60 minutes. You know that if I told you that, it wouldn't be.

Mr BORBIDGE: But I am saying: who knows what happens when we get in here? I started off being polite. The generosity that the Leader of the House offered as a token of respect for my private member's Bill was 90 lousy minutes in debating time. That is hardly an indication that the Leader of the House is fair dinkum about the motion he moved tonight. He offered me 90 lousy minutes. I just make the observation that we are not asking for anything unreasonable. Government legislation can be debated after 14 days. The member for Indooroopilly is proposing that private members' legislation can be debated after 60 days, but the Government apparently wants private members' legislation to be debated after 90 days.

We know what happens towards the end of the year. I say this in particular for the benefit of the many new members in this House, because it is a phenomenon of this place; it happens to every Government and every Parliament. Once we hit October, the sausage machine starts to work. All of a

sudden, all of the departments have urgent legislation that just has to be passed by Christmas. I say in all sincerity that it happened to the Goss Government, the Ahern Government, the Cooper Government, the Bjelke-Petersen Government and the Borbidge Government, and it will happen to the Beattie Government because that is the nature of the business. That is the nature of Government.

The simple reality is that once we hit October there will be so much Government legislation coming into this place, heaven help any private member who wants to bring in a private member's Bill. It will not fit on the Notice Paper. Unfortunately, that is a reality of Parliament. I know I am asking a number of new members who have not experienced the sausage machine to believe me, but I notice that the Deputy Premier nodded before and indicated that that happens.

Mr Elder: Nodding off to sleep.

Mr BORBIDGE: He was nodding in agreement. He acknowledges the point.

Mr Elder: I was nodding off to sleep.

Mr BORBIDGE: I do not want to unduly delay the business of the House, but I genuinely thank the Leader of the House for his indication that my private member's Bill will come on for discussion on the Wednesday of the next sitting week. But the reality is that not much else might come on. When we have legislation that will involve a lot of interest and a lot of debate, such as we have seen with the IR legislation tonight, and we have members from both sides of the House who want to exercise their democratic right, the reality is that legislation can take some time to be considered. I do not think it is fair to the member for Nicklin, the member for Warwick, the members of the One Nation Party, or members of this side or private members on the Government side who want to bring in legislation to have a situation where they get caught up in the parliamentary sausage machine. We will find that private members' Bills simply do not get debated this year.

As we know, we do not sit in this place in January, short of a crisis. We normally come back mid to late February. We sit for a couple of weeks in March. Before we know where we are we will have a situation where half of next year will be gone. I do not think this proposition is at all unreasonable. We are accepting the Government's legitimate right to govern and we have already adopted that in the Sessional Orders in respect of the 14-day period for Government legislation. All we are saying is that we think 60 days is fairer than 90 days. If the Government can debate legislation in 14 days, why is Government legislation such that it should be regarded as necessarily more important than legislation that might be advanced by non-Government members in this place?

Mr Lucas: What about our private members' Bills?

Mr BORBIDGE: You can bring in private members' Bills.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: You were not even here. The member for Warrego had a private member's Bill that sat on the Notice Paper for years. There is nothing worse than a Labor Lawyer early in the morning. I am delighted with the support I received from that remark from the Government benches. In regard to the interjections that have been made by the Government Whip on a number of occasions, may I say that there is no intention of Opposition members to deny legitimacy to the Government's legislative program. In fact, the Sessional Orders dictate that that cannot happen.

I believe that what we should be doing is going for 60 days. If that seems to be getting in the way of what the majority of members want, then let us review it a little later this year. I do not think it is quite consistent with the commitments given by the Premier for the House to accept the proposal put forward by the Leader of the House tonight. I urge a majority of honourable members to support the proposal advanced by the member for Indooroopilly.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) (1.56 a.m.), in reply: I wish to refer to a couple of points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. The point the Leader of the Opposition just made was that Sessional Orders would not allow private members' Bills to take precedence. The amendment moved by the Opposition says that a private member's Bill will take precedence of Government business.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: The Opposition's amendment actually said that it would take precedence on subsequent sitting days. What the Leader of the Opposition said earlier is incorrect. We need to be careful about that. The Leader of the Opposition made a point about private members' Bills being introduced later this year and not being debated because what he called the sausage machine will occur in October. Any private member's Bill that is introduced in October will not necessarily be

debated under the Opposition's 60-day proposition because the House will have risen before——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: That destroys the Leader of the Opposition's argument. I am not taking issue with the Leader of the Opposition on this matter. It is 5 to 2 in the morning and the reason we are sitting is because members can talk here as long as they like. In the six-odd years that I have been Leader of the House I have not once gagged a debate. I have always believed that if members want to talk in this Parliament, let them talk. I have never tried to stop people from talking.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: Come on! We are talking about debates on legislation. The Leader of the Opposition made a comment about his Bill and told us how important it was. Yesterday I dealt with amendments to the Integrated Planning Act which I think were more important than the Leader of the Opposition's Bill. We did that in about 20 minutes, so 90 minutes could have been sufficient.

I put to the Leader of the Opposition that the debate we started yesterday and which went until 1 o'clock this morning could probably have been done in about two hours. If we took all the speeches and cut out all the repetition we may have ended up with a two-hour debate. However, we had repetition. We heard people saying exactly the same thing over and over. It is their right to say it and I respect that right. I am not going to criticise members for that.

That is why I believe the proposition I put forward in relation to the private members' Bills, which has now laid on the table for 14 days, is the correct one. I have given a commitment that we will debate it on the Wednesday after the Budget after we debate the transport legislation. The Opposition can debate the transport legislation for as long as it likes and then the Leader of the Opposition can debate his Bill for as long as he likes. We will finish it that day, that night or the next morning. We will then come to the member for Nicklin's private member's Bill. I have said to the member for Nicklin that we will ensure that his private member's Bill is debated. I hope he will trust me as much as the Leader of the Opposition trusts me. I have never broken my word to the Leader of the Opposition. He has to admit that.

I am trying to do something different here, but I think back to 1990 when I went to a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee and proposed that we bring in a whole new system of questions. The Leader of the Opposition was Deputy Leader of the Opposition at that time and he looked at me and said, "What are you trying to do to us?" He rejected it. He would not cop it. He would not allow us to bring in a new system of questions.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: That was the day when we offered that system and the Leader of the Opposition would not accept it. We did not introduce the system. We waited six years, and we introduced it, and it is the same system as that which is operating now. Members opposite operated under it for two and a half years. It allows up to 2,000 extra questions a year. But members opposite rejected it because they were suspicious that the socialists were trying to put something over them.

I believe that members need to have a bit of honesty and a bit of trust. We have given a commitment that private members' Bills will be allowed to be debated. I will stick by that, even if it is at this hour of the morning.

Question—That Mr Beanland's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. I. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Pairs: McGrady, Stephan; Beattie, Littleproud

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

Resolved in the **negative**.

Motion agreed to.

GRIEVANCES

Gladstone Special School

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (2.07 a.m.): I want to refer tonight to a very special group of people in my electorate, the Gladstone Special School, and the principal, Mr David de Villiers. David runs a school for

children and adults with quite a wide variety of disabilities. He runs it in a very compassionate and very professional manner. The school has changed in its focus over the past few years through a widening range of program options and formats maximising social inclusion. Some of those new programs have included dual enrolments, with students from the special school attending the TAFE college, training at the TAFE college and receiving certification. I have been to their alfresco dining functions, and they are excellent. The students do all the cooking, the presentation and the hospitality waiting. Not only do they have an excellent approach, but the work they do is very professional.

People at the school have talked to me on an informal basis—and I have lodged a letter with the Minister for Education—about changing the name of the school from the Gladstone Special School to Rose Park School, to remove what could be regarded as a stigma, if you like, for the special school and to recognise its broader function and the fact that it has a spectacular rose garden—they are developing grounds beautification—and, more importantly, to recognise the diversity of the students whom they train and accommodate there.

Again, I commend that group to this House. They do an excellent job. The P & C is behind this name change. I encourage the Minister's cooperation in achieving that. They do a great job, and they do it with a great deal of compassion and enthusiasm.

Rheumatology Clinic, Bundaberg

Ms NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg) (2.09 a.m.): I would like to speak in support of the 5,247 people who signed a petition that was tabled in this House on Thursday morning of this week seeking Government funding to provide for a suitably staffed rheumatology clinic in Bundaberg. Members of the Bundaberg branch of the Arthritis Foundation of Queensland, who are either sufferers themselves or carers, have worked very hard over recent months to gain such strong support and are a fine example of the many groups in communities throughout Queensland who give their time freely to bring inequities to our attention and to help build a better quality of life in their communities. Arthritis is a crippling disease, and the current situation in Bundaberg, which necessitates a four-hour car or bus trip each way for patients to see a specialist, is very difficult for the patients and very painful.

The need for a rheumatology service, even in a visiting capacity, is becoming more urgent, and this need is acknowledged by health care professionals in our city. The Health Minister has advised me that this problem has not previously been brought to her attention, and I am confident that she will look keenly for a possible solution. But I draw this matter to the attention of the House to commend the members of that Bundaberg group, who are very active in providing public displays, seminars and support for arthritis sufferers throughout Bundaberg and the surrounding district and who have been responsible for gathering these signatures. In such a demanding world, it is encouraging to see the effort that these groups in our communities are making to help their own members, and they will be very grateful that their petition has indeed been tabled in this House.

Australian Magnesium Corporation; Biloela

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (2.11 a.m.): I rise in this House tonight to congratulate the people of Biloela and call on the Premier and the Minister for State Development to recognise an extraordinary demonstration of community spirit and self help that occurred in Biloela last night. The Australian Magnesium Corporation, a company investigating the possibility of constructing a commercial magnesium plant adjacent to the Callide Power Station, held a public meeting in Biloela to measure the interest of and community support for the project.

Over 550 people turned up to encourage the company to locate the plant at Biloela. A range of speakers including the Federal member, the mayor, councillors, business people and young people from the community expressed support for the project and urged the company to favourably consider the advantages Biloela has to offer. The magnesium plant will cost an estimated $700m to build and employ a construction work force of 1,000 and an ongoing work force of 450. This commercial magnesium plant would provide a solid industrial base for Biloela and the Callide Valley and complement the power generation industry already located there. It would be a huge boost for the community and the central Queensland region. Four hundred and fifty permanent jobs would guarantee Biloela's future and provide job opportunities for the young people of the area.

I call on the Premier and the Minister to lend this project every support. I believe the Government should be prepared to assist in a very real way to ensure that this project is located in Biloela. The dividends from a prosperous community in the Callide Valley will flow to the State for generations to come. I take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Biloela on their initiative. In particular, I congratulate Mr Bill Hamilton, who chaired the meeting, and Mr Ron Mazzer from the Biloela Promotion Bureau.

Darling Point Special School

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (2.13 a.m.): Last Thursday, 20 August, I was delighted to host the Minister for Education, the Honourable Dean Wells, to visit the Darling Point Special School within my electorate. I am absolutely delighted that the Minister's first visit to my electorate in his capacity as Minister was to the Darling Point Special School. The Darling Point Special School is somewhat of a local landmark and icon. Its principal, Charmaine Driver, has done a wonderful job. Its patron is the former member for Lytton, the Honourable Tom Burns, who has done a fantastic job there over the years.

Under Charmaine Driver's leadership, the school has gone from 29 students in 1993 to 68 now. That is not bad. In under six years, it has doubled in size. It has a significant vocational education component in its programs for adolescent students with an emphasis on hospitality, horticulture and furniture restoration. The Minister, Mr Burns, other guests and I had a lovely morning tea in the restaurant run by the vocational education students. I noted that the Minister ate heartily.

I was absolutely delighted by the interest the Minister took in the school. Of course, one of the problems with having such a huge increase in its numbers is that the school is becoming somewhat cramped. One would not find a better location for a school. It is on the foreshore of the Esplanade. The tide was in and the view was great. The Minister looked out to the islands in the bay. However, we need extra support in relation to the capital facilities at the school.

The Minister visited the BETA program—the behavioural enhancement through action program—which deals with children with behavioural problems in a very constructive way. The Minister also presented prizes to two students, one for raising a large amount of money in the school fun run and another for doing an excellent job in the QCWA colouring competition. Those kids do not always have it easy. However, they work their guts out, and they have teachers who work their guts out. They deserve every support.

Time expired.

Wharps Pastoral Holding; Mahogany Glider Habitat

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (2.15 a.m.): I refer to Minister Welford's ill-informed accusation of interference by me and other former Ministers in the Government's acquisition of the Wharps Pastoral Holding near Ingham. That was the worst case of abuse of land-holders by bureaucrats that I have seen in this State. The Hobbs have owned that property since 1936. One thousand hectares of that land was resumed in 1990 for cane production. Since 1990, the property has been virtually frozen by the Department of Environment. Since then the mahogany gliders have become an issue. Tree clearing has devalued the property.

The Government has devalued that property since the original negotiations were undertaken with the land-holders. No agreement could be reached. The people came to see me and also the former Minister for Environment, Brian Littleproud, at Parliament House. I mention at this stage that the Hobbses are no relations of mine. I did not meet them until they came down here to see me. The Government offered them the retention of 150 hectares of the 10,900 hectares of the property. Eventually that figure increased to 450 hectares. Now Minister Welford has offered them 315 hectares of their 10,900 hectares.

Consultant John Young has said that up to 3,000 hectares could be used. The Hobbses want only 1,000 hectares. One tenth of their property is all that they are seeking. If they got that, they would be reasonably happy. That would be a win/win situation for everybody. That would be a mahogany glider area of 9,900 hectares, and there would be very little money for the Government to pay out. Of course, the Hobbses would be satisfied with that. I do not see any reason why that cannot be done.

We have done what we can and reject entirely the gutless attack by the Minister——

Time expired.

Vandalism, Slade Point

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (2.17 a.m.): I rise to speak today about the proactive steps that have been taken by the residents of Slade Point in my electorate to curb the incidence of vandalism in their neighbourhood. In May I met with residents of Slade Point following complaints of increasing vandalism and loutish behaviour in the area. Some residents told me that they were unable to obtain insurance on their properties because of the number of times their properties had been vandalised. The Slade Point Primary School had also been targeted, with vandals painting graffiti on school buildings and even defecating on the school property.

Following contact that I made with Mackay police, patrols in the area were increased. However, in view of the obvious need for permanent action, I call for the establishment of a dedicated Police Beat at Slade Point. I believe that Slade Point, because of its geographical location and its relative isolation from the rest of the Mackay City area, is an ideal location for a Police Beat. The establishment of a Police Beat involves the Queensland Police Service providing a home and a patrol car for an officer. The officer would then work from home and therefore maintain a constant police presence in the area while working with the community. People want to see more police on the beat or driving around on patrol so they can feel safer. The establishment of a Police Beat at Slade Point would ensure that police patrols are increased, allowing residents to feel more secure and, hopefully, facilitating the capture of the vandals and louts who are currently roaming the area.

In line with our pre-election policy to extend the highly successful community Police Beat initiative, the Labor Party is committed to the establishment of the Slade Point Police Beat as part of the overall law and order package for that area. The enhancement of the community policing strategies to further promote partnerships between the police and community members will assist greatly in the curtailing of crime.

In addition to that initiative, Constable Jacinta Buchbach of the Mackay police and I organised a public meeting held on 23 July to gauge support for a new neighbourhood watch. That meeting was an outstanding success, with some 120 people attending. Guest speaker, Acting Senior Sergeant Peter Van Vree, Coordinator of the Queensland Neighbourhood Watch, said that it was the largest and most enthusiastic neighbourhood watch meeting he had attended. At the meeting, a small coordinating committee was formed and area coordinators were appointed.

Time expired.

Chevron Gas Pipeline; Stanwell

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—ONP) (2.19 a.m.): I agree with and commend the Premier's commitment to the Chevron pipeline and to the establishment of a power station in our twin cities. However, due to the concern of many residents in my Thuringowa electorate, I would like to request that he come to Thuringowa and inspect the proposed site with me and meet with Stanwell and the concerned residents in the near future. Most people agree that a power station is necessary, but there is community objection to the proposed site.

I would welcome the Premier's inspection and would appreciate consultation and his opinion on this matter. It is my opinion that the power station project is imperative to the future development of north Queensland. It will also ensure that we have a constant power supply and will foster development and jobs.

Mansfield Electorate

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (2.20 a.m.): Today I stand to defend the suburb my electorate is named after, Mansfield, from a vicious attack by the councillor for Chandler, Michael Caltabiano, the Liberal Deputy Leader in the Brisbane City Council. Recently, the Liberal councillor stated in the Southern Star that the name Mansfield devalues peoples' properties. He supported people who are endeavouring to change their block name from the suburb of Mansfield to the suburb of Carindale.

I am extremely proud that I represent both the suburb and the electorate of Mansfield. I find this attack by a public office holder highly offensive. He should leave his snobbish attitude for when he is attending the cocktail parties of the Liberal Party and not use a public paper to belittle the people of Mansfield.

Mr Schwarten: There is nothing wrong with Carindale.

Mr REEVES: There is nothing wrong with Carindale. The suburb of Mansfield was gazetted on 15 April 1967. The suburb was named after the then Governor of Queensland, Sir Allan Mansfield, who was a former resident of the area. Mansfield has a

diverse population with 74.4% of the people born in Australia and a larger than average population born overseas. This diversity is its greatest strength.

As a strong supporter of public housing, I am proud of the fact that Mansfield has 10.5% of its population in public housing compared with 4.9% of the overall population of Brisbane in public housing. As many members would know, Mansfield is regarded as the Bible Belt because of the number of churches that have located their southside headquarters in the suburb. So is the councillor saying that these churches are devaluing and blackening the name of Mansfield?

I believe that Mr Caltabiano is being a vengeful soul because he happened to be the campaign director for my predecessor at the June election. He has taken his anger at defeat out on the people of Mansfield. The people of Mansfield can rest assured that they now have proper and effective representation at both the local and State level by Kerry Rea and me. Shortly they will have that representation at the Federal level when Kevin Rudd becomes the new member for Griffith in October. In the meantime, I will defend the people and the suburb of Mansfield.

Time expired.

Irvinebank

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (2.22 a.m.) I rise to speak on behalf of the people of the small community of Irvinebank, which is located in my electorate. They are endeavouring to get a decent road to their township, or at least to have the road that they use at the moment upgraded from a goat track to something that they can drive vehicles on without having them destroyed.

The community has made its own representations to the Minister in this regard. I seek not only advice but also some support from the Minister on this issue. The small community of Irvinebank has a population of around 180 and I must say that it is the only community in my electorate that voted predominantly for Labor at the last election. However, I say that they are asking for something that I do not really think is too much to ask, and that is access to a proper road so that they can get to the nearest town, Herberton, which is a good 30 kilometres away.

This is an issue of importance in my electorate, especially for the people of this small, isolated community. I bring this matter to the attention of the Minister and back up the letters that I know have been written to him about it. I ask him to give this issue his attention and try to bring it to some sort of conclusion as soon as possible.

Literacy and Numeracy Report

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (2.23 a.m.): During yesterday's sitting, after I tabled a report on literacy that had been suppressed by the former Education Minister, I said that the report should have set alarm bells ringing for the former Minister. The member for Merrimac then told the House that it had. He said—

> "In the six years of Labor, an average of $6m was provided for literacy and numeracy. The coalition provided an average of $30m per year ... it did set alarm bells ringing and we did something about it."

His words were the direct opposite of the truth. The massive increase in funds for literacy was actually an initiative of his predecessor, the member for Ipswich. I table the relevant section of the 1995 resource agreement between Treasury and Education Queensland showing $34.2m additional expenditure on literacy. I also table a requested ministerial briefing for information dated 12 December 1997. It states—

> "State funding in real terms (literacy and numeracy initiative plus reading recovery initiative) has decreased from 1996/97 to 1997/98. This is a result of the change in structure to Education Queensland."

So, far from increasing funds for literacy, the member for Merrimac decreased them and then suppressed the report that revealed the enormity of what he was doing.

Members should consider the contortions the already gaunt member has undertaken on this issue. First he deceived the people of Queensland by hiding a critical report. Then he told the Courier-Mail that he could not remember the report. Then he told the Parliament that the report had set alarm bells ringing and that in response he had increased funding for literacy when in fact the increase that he referred to was a Labor initiative and his only initiative, as indicated to him in his own requested ministerial briefing note, was to reduce funding for literacy.

The member for Merrimac has been a very naughty boy. He has been telling fibs to Parliament. I think that he should be punished. I suggest that he should have to write out 100 lines and I suggest that the line be, "I must not hide people's reports."

Time expired.

Wharps Pastoral Holding

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (2.25 a.m.): This morning in this Parliament one of the Parliament's great conspiracy theorists, the member for Everton, made some absolutely outrageous, clearly wrong and unsubstantiated attacks on me with regard to Wharps Pastoral Holding in north Queensland. I would like to place on the record quite clearly for this Parliament that the Hobbses, as has been alluded to by the honourable member for Warrego, have been treated absolutely appallingly. On 28 April, they came to see me with their solicitor to discuss their situation. That meeting was attended by my director-general, Mr Tom Fenwick, and also my policy adviser.

The member for Everton indicated that the Minister for Environment at the time, Mr Littleproud, was at that meeting. He has misled the House; Mr Littleproud was not at the meeting at all. The member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Rowell, as Mr Hobbs' local member, actually attended that meeting and that was in the form of an introduction.

I would like to say that at that meeting I indicated quite clearly to Mr Hobbs that I understood the very difficult situation in which he found himself and undertook to do what I could as Minister for Natural Resources to overcome the years of heartache and distress and personal concern that this was causing him and his family. During the course of that meeting it was indicated that they may be able to draft a submission that I could consider and take to Cabinet. I said that I would look at it but that we would have to consider a whole heap of other legal issues as well before we could even look at taking that submission before Cabinet. I indicated quite clearly to them that there might be a possibility that the 450 hectares of land could be freeholded because it had been largely cleared or touched in the past, but that there was a problem with the other 550 hectares, which could have some native title consequences. I acted very properly in this case and every due process was followed by the department and me.

Mrs L. Saunders; Brisbane Council for International Students

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.27 a.m.): I wish to raise two matters in the Parliament. The first is that it is my sad duty to inform the House that this week saw the passing of Lola Marie Saunders in Yeppoon. Lola was born in Sydney on 30 September 1926 of solid Labor stock. Lola's father was a foundation member of the Leichhardt branch of the Australian Labor Party. Lola was married for 52 years to her surviving husband, Gordon. Lola and Gordon raised a fine family of six children—five boys and one girl. All of her children have been successful in their respective fields of endeavour. This is in no small way due to the strength and support of their mother. As her parents did for her, Lola instilled in all her children a strong sense of fairness and social justice. Just as Lola and her husband Gordon have made service to the community an intrinsic part of their lives, so their children have followed them.

Lola had been a member of the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party for nearly 30 years. On two occasions her husband, Gordon, ran as a State candidate for the ALP and was a councillor for the Longreach Shire for several terms. Her sons Graham and Bruce have also sought to serve the community through the arena of State and local politics. The tower of strength and support for all of these endeavours was Lola.

Lola will be a sad loss for the Saunders family and our hearts go out to them in their time of sorrow. Lola will also be a sad loss for the community. I take this opportunity to express sympathy to Gordon and the rest of the Saunders family. Lola Saunders epitomised the great Australian women who have formed the backbone of the Australian Labor Party.

The other matter that I raise is that of the Brisbane Council for International Students, which is in dire financial straits in terms of its capacity to continue to provide its very fine service to the community. The Brisbane Council for International Students is a voluntary organisation comprising various community and student groups and is designed to protect the welfare of international students and their families in Brisbane. The provenance of the BCIS is probably best located in the Colombo Plan of 1950. By 1968, Australia had sent more than——

Time expired.

Emergency Services, Keppel Electorate

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (2.29 a.m.): I also express my condolences to the Saunders family on their sad loss.

Tonight I ask the Minister for Emergency Services to consider allocating money in the coming Budget for the purchase of land to enable the establishment of a joint fire,

ambulance and emergency services complex on the Capricorn Coast.

Presently there is an ambulance station and a fire station in the main street. This is no longer an ideal location because of the huge expansion of the Yeppoon and Capricorn Coast areas. We see fire appliances and ambulances travelling at high speeds, which they have to, down the main street, which has roundabouts, walkways and a speed limit of 40 kilometres per hour. I am not blaming anybody for the fact that we do not currently have such a facility. Simply, the Capricorn Coast has reached the point in its progression which means that this is the next step we have to take.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the relocation of the Yeppoon Hospital. The present hospital is 22 years old. The present facility, when replaced, could be used for the extension of nursing home facilities at Yeppoon, which are currently heavily overburdened. North Rockhampton currently has a joint fire station and ambulance complex.

Time expired.

Mr R. Attwood

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (2.31 a.m.): Today the member for Southport made certain allegations against my husband. I would like to correct some errors of fact that he made in his statement. The first point that the member for Southport got wrong concerns my husband's employer. Ron does not work for the Minister for Emergency Services. He is not on the Minister's staff. He is actually employed by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, receives his fortnightly pay cheque from the authority and accrues his leave and other entitlements in the same way as any other authority employee. As to the question of whether he took leave or not: yes, he did take leave. He was assisting me to remove one of the member's colleagues from his position in this House.

With respect to the member for Southport's allegation that my husband's conduct was investigated—yes, he was subjected to an investigation by the Criminal Justice Commission following an allegation made in April this year. The CJC investigation failed to find any substance to the allegation and referred the matter back to those who made it. The CJC wanted no more to do with it and proposed no further action in April—well before the election. Then an internal departmental investigation revealed that any Fire Service employee in Forbes House could have obtained a copy of documents through the computer system. The member for Southport should note that—any Fire Service employee in Forbes House. The internal investigation failed to link Ron to any documents. He had no computer. The plug was pulled on the investigation.

It is a serious matter when employees are persecuted for their beliefs and because they remain friends with members of this side of the House and with former employees of the department. That is what I believe happened to my husband, and attempting to discredit Ron and other public servants will only do harm to the reputation of the member for Southport.

Government Air Wing

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—ONP) (2.33 a.m.): This morning the Labor Party made a little joke of One Nation's policy of disbanding the Government Air Wing. We must have taken a few leaves out of Labor's book, but I suppose that could be explained by the fact that One Nation took so many seats formerly held by Labor.

I chastise my colleagues who have come out of the Labor Party. Just because the Labor Party campaigned so heavily to get rid of the Joh jet prior to the 1989 elections and now finds itself, nine years later, so converted to the fact that these methods of transport are so wonderful after all, does not mean that we have to follow suit. Jokes aside, I think that after all these years the members opposite should show a little thanks to old Joh for that which is known as the Government Air Wing.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.34 a.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn to a date and a time to be fixed by Mr Speaker in consultation with the Government of this State."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2.34 a.m. (Friday).

R. G. GILES, ACTING GOVERNMENT PRINTER, QUEENSLAND—1998