

THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 1998

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Maryborough Base Hospital

From **Dr Kingston** (2,243 petitioners) requesting the House to take the necessary action to ensure the Maryborough Base Hospital is not downgraded in either services, staffing or equipment.

Maryborough Base Hospital

From **Dr Kingston** (8,108 petitioners) requesting the House to rescind forthwith the plans, the locations of services and staffing schedules/locations currently released and replaced by physical, equipping and staffing plans which recognise that the Maryborough Base Hospital is the epicentre of medical services in this Wide Bay region and that such plans are to be developed in consultation with the community of the Maryborough electorate and its hinterland.

Tinaroo Falls Dam, Red Claw Recreational Fishery

From **Mr Rowell** (2,626 petitioners) requesting the House to take note of the absolute rejection of Queensland Fisheries Management Authority's advertisement for expressions of interest from persons wishing to harvest red claw from Tinaroo Dam on a commercial basis, on the grounds that (a) Tinaroo Dam is the most important red claw recreational fishery in north Queensland and that commercial fishing would most probably result in a serious depletion of stocks and (b) the value of the resource to the local economy, as a recreational fishery, far exceeds the potential value of the resource, should it be allowed to be exploited commercially.

Petitions received.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Convention Industry

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.33 a.m.), by leave: My Government recognises the importance of the

convention industry to Queensland tourism and the 125,000 Queenslanders employed in the industry. The industry is one of the most lucrative sectors of the tourism industry and contributes more than \$360m to the State's economy every year—and jobs with it. On average, international delegates to conventions spend about \$500 more on their visits than other tourists. And they are likely to be first-time visitors who are often so impressed by what they see that they return on holidays to inject more money into our economy.

That is why Cabinet has fast-tracked—on the advice of the Minister for Tourism, Bob Gibbs—a meeting incentive convention and exhibition grant scheme worth \$2m which is being made available to the State's six convention bureaux. The \$2m will enable the centres, in Cairns, Townsville, Whitsunday, the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast and Brisbane to expand their marketing and promotion drives on a worldwide basis. \$1m of that money has already been released and the other \$1m will be released in January by Minister Gibbs.

I am pleased to announce that in the past month Brisbane has won three more major conventions. During these conventions it is estimated that delegates are likely to spend nearly \$3m while they are in Queensland. They are three more reasons why building Brisbane's Convention and Exhibition Centre was such a worthwhile project. The conventions are: the World Multi-conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics 1999, with an estimated 500 international delegates for four days, providing a total of 2,000 delegate days and estimated spending of \$1m; the Young Women's Christian Association 2000 with about 300 delegates in Brisbane for five days, providing 1,500 delegate days and spending of \$450,000; and the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatrics Congress 2004, with an estimated 1,000 delegates spending five days in Brisbane, giving 5,000 delegate days and spending estimated at \$1.5m.

That is why my Government will continue to drive the convention and exhibition sector of tourism to create jobs. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition would fit in well with the last convention.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State

Development and Minister for Trade) (9.36 a.m.), by leave: I present to the House a report on my recent visit to Singapore and the State of Johor in Malaysia. Many members of this House would realise that some of Queensland's emerging trade partners are having their own internal difficulties at the moment. In my view, it is important to maintain and enhance the links we have now so that when the tide turns our mutual prosperity can be maximised.

I table for the House a full report of the trip, but I would like to point out some of the difficulties that I encountered on this trip, which were similar to the difficulties I encountered on my previous trip, and similar to those encountered by the Premier on his trip overseas. I have to inform the House that in a general sense there remain some concerns over the attitude of the Queensland Government to overseas investment.

When speaking to businesspeople and the media in both Singapore and Malaysia, the spectre of One Nation and its anti-Asian position was high on the agenda. While many businesspeople with investments in Queensland were aware that One Nation did not govern the State, there remained many others who questioned One Nation's position in the Queensland Parliament. And just as the Premier explained in Hong Kong and Japan and as I did on my recent mission to Taiwan and Korea, we had to work hard to get through the message that it was a Labor Government in charge of the State with views receptive to foreign investment. I reiterated the State Government's position that we welcome Asian investment in Queensland. I made the further point that Queensland was a multicultural community with a stable political environment and was safe not only for Asian investors but for their children—a large number of whom attend our education facilities.

The reason for this situation, as we all know, lies in the perception that One Nation is a racist party that does not welcome overseas investment or, indeed, any ties with other countries. When overseas I was very diplomatic about the members of the House. However, I think that the line being pushed by those at the back of the House that somehow they are being misrepresented or misrepresented does not stack up. What I am saying to those members at the back of the House is that they must do the hard yards. They must unequivocally state that they are in favour of trade with other countries.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I thought that there was a ruling that

the Deputy Premier should refer to us as the One Nation Party, not "those members at the back of the House".

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will refer to the members of the One Nation Party.

Mr ELDER: The members of One Nation, who sit at the back of the House, more than anything else must demonstrate that they are friendly towards our trading partners. It is up to those One Nation members, who sit at the back of the House and, in particular, the member for Caboolture, to engage our trading partners. I table the report for the information of the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Overseas Visit

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (9.29 a.m.), by leave: I table a ministerial statement which covers my recent trip to New York.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Industrial Relations Task Force

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.39 a.m.), by leave: In August, I announced the establishment of an expert independent task force to review the State's industrial relations laws. The task force is being chaired by Griffith University Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Margaret Gardner, and comprises employer and union representatives as well as independent experts. The task force will consider options for developing a new system which—

- improves the strength of the economy, provides for job growth and enhances job security;

- meets the needs of emerging labour markets and work patterns;

- is fair and equitable;

- provides an effective balance between collective and individual rights;

- is flexible, responsive and accessible;

- is based on cooperation, consultation and participation.

The task force will be taking a completely new approach to reviewing industrial relations in this State. The task force will be actively seeking the views of Queenslanders on the current industrial relations laws and what changes we may need in the future. It will be consulting widely on a broad range of issues

right throughout Queensland—in metropolitan, rural and regional parts of the State. The task force will ultimately provide advice on proposals for legislative reform based on extensive Statewide consultation.

The Queensland Government wants to ensure that the public not only have the opportunity to provide submissions but are also able to base their submissions on the latest information about our current system. That is why the task force has produced a 132-page issues paper that provides a thought-provoking analysis of Queensland's current industrial relations system. It takes a close look at how people are employed; how work is changing; how the current system has been performing; and what alternative approaches there may be. The paper, titled *Review of Industrial Relations Legislation in Queensland: Issues Paper*, provides a platform for consultation never before seen in this State. It is with pleasure that I announce the release of this issues paper, which has been developed to assist individuals and organisations wishing to provide submissions on Queensland's future industrial relations system.

I table a copy of the issues paper. It contains a whole range of newly developed statistics and topics for discussion, and poses more than 100 questions that need to be assessed in the process of the review.

The State's industrial relations system has been through much change in recent years. Much of this change has reflected the Federal system without paying close attention to what system Queenslanders really need to encourage employment growth and job security. Our commitment to Queensland is to secure jobs growth for the State while ensuring a balance between the aspirations of workers and the needs of business.

We are committed to a fair and equitable industrial relations system for employers and employees. This consultation process will allow Queenslanders to have unprecedented involvement in the type of system we should have. This afternoon, the issues paper will be distributed by the task force to more than 1,000 interested stakeholders. It will also be available on the department's Internet site this afternoon for any member of the public to access, or they can contact the Industrial Relations Secretariat in my department for a copy. Starting next week, the task force will travel to seven regional centres. It will hold consultation meetings at the Gold Coast, in Townsville, Cairns, Mount Isa, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Nambour and Roma. At these

meetings, the task force will give a brief overview of the issues paper, but it will be there primarily to listen to what people have to say about the system. I invite the public to participate in this unique process.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Water Quality

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: I rise to advise the House on action this Government is taking on a very important public health issue: ensuring the quality of our water supplies. The situation in Sydney has highlighted the need to be vigilant constantly. I asked Queensland Health to establish an expert working party. This group will consider all issues associated with water-borne diseases and develop policies and standards to combat any potential risk to the community. The working party includes experts from the Departments of Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, Premier and Cabinet, and Communication, Information, Local Government and Planning. It also includes the Local Government Association, relevant local councils and water boards, and representatives from scientific and academic disciplines. Queensland Health is taking the lead agency role.

The group met last week to develop protocols to address issues and identify activities to control and manage water-borne parasites such as cryptosporidium and giardia. This whole-of-Government approach will be most effective in ensuring Queensland develops consistent guidelines to deal with any threat to water quality.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Anti-drug Initiative; Schoolies Week

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: On Tuesday of this week I told the House of concerns that Queensland police officers had with the "launch" of a "dob in a druggie" hotline by the member for Broadwater last week. The member for Broadwater launched his hotline the day before Crimestoppers was due to launch its drug initiative. Senior police expressed the concern to me that the member for Broadwater's launch may have undermined the effectiveness of the Crimestoppers' launch. The founding Chair of Crimestoppers, David Muir issued a press release on 9 September 1998, which said—

"The drugs telephone hotline launched by Mr Grice undermines the Crimestoppers program and, in that sense could only serve the interests of drug dealers."

The member for Broadwater took great exception to both my statements and David Muir's. Yesterday he made a personal explanation to the House, in which he said Mr Muir had told him that—

"He"—

David Muir—

"withdrew that press release on the same day that it was issued, 9 September."

The member for Broadwater went on to say—

"I further stress that the press release issued by David Muir, which the Minister quoted from was withdrawn."

He further said that—

"I announced the line jointly with Detective Inspector Richard Nikola."

Just so he made it absolutely clear, the member for Broadwater reiterated—

"I stress again it was launched with the detective inspector—and I table that for the information of the House—and was an existing phone line."

I think the members of the House will agree that these are very clear statements indeed. It would be almost impossible to misunderstand them.

Yesterday I spoke to David Muir about the comments made by the member for Broadwater in the House yesterday. He was kind enough to provide a statutory declaration, which I table for the information of the House. In that statutory declaration, Mr Muir said he had sent the press release to several news organisations. Mr Muir goes on to say—

"On Wednesday morning, 16 September 1998, I received a call from Mr Grice. Mr Grice asked me whether or not I had withdrawn the media release. He said he had discussed the matter with the Gold Coast Bulletin. In response I told Mr Grice that I had issued the media release in response to an article that appeared in the Courier-Mail. I told him that the Gold Coast Bulletin had telephoned me to say that "I had got it wrong" and that Mr Grice was in fact supporting the Crimestoppers program and telephone hotline. I then told Mr Grice that I told the Gold Coast Bulletin that I did not want to take the matter further."

This statutory declaration clearly shows that Mr Muir did not tell Mr Grice that he had withdrawn the press release, merely he did not want to follow through with it with only one of the numerous media outlets that it was forwarded to.

The member for Broadwater has compounded his errors by stating yesterday that he had announced the line jointly with Detective Inspector Richard Nikola. To clarify this issue I also spoke to senior police from the Gold Coast—including Detective Inspector Nikola—and relevant police media people about the member for Broadwater's assertion that police were involved in the launch. I table for members information two other statutory declarations. One is co-signed by Assistant Commissioner Greg Early; Chief Superintendent Ken Morris; Mr Brian Swift, Director, Media and Public Relations; and Ms Katrina Naumann, Media Officer, Gold Coast, in which they state—

"We jointly declare that the release of information by Mr Grice regarding a so-called drug phone-in line was not in any way done in conjunction with, or the support of, the Queensland Police Service. The Queensland Police Service had held preliminary discussions with Mr Grice and others regarding a future strategy on reduction of drug abuse on the Gold Coast, but firmly state that the 'launch' announced by Mr Grice on 8 September 1998 was premature, incomplete, and not with the agreement of the Queensland Police Service."

The other statutory declaration is from Detective Inspector Richard Nikola, which includes these statements from him—

"I did not communicate either in writing or verbally with Mr Grice until approximately 9.00 am on Tuesday 8 September 1998 when he contacted me by telephone at my office. I had been provided with a one page document outlining a proposed media release by Mr Grice. I had no prior knowledge of the release by Mr Grice and did not consult with him prior to his press release. An invitation to attend this release was given which I refused.

I did not attend the press conference by Mr Grice at his office on the 8th September 1998, nor was I involved in any launch or promotion of any strategy by Mr Grice."

I think it becomes crystal clear from these three statutory declarations that Mr Muir did not withdraw the press release and that no

member of the Queensland Police Service, especially Detective Inspector Nikola, took part in a joint launch of any drug strategy with the member for Broadwater.

The unfortunate member for Broadwater has been caught out trying to steal other people's thunder and his statement yesterday has only dug a bigger hole for himself over this whole sorry affair. My advice to the member opposite is that, when it comes to launching drug strategies or any other worthwhile initiatives, he should leave it to people who know what they are talking about. He should leave it to those people who have done all the hard work to start with, and that is the Gold Coast police and community representatives who have been planning this anti-drug initiative since May of this year.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Road Funding

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: From time to time in the life of this Parliament the member for Gregory and I will disagree on issues in my portfolio. In fact, a lot of the time I am sure we will disagree. But I rise today in relation to an area where he and I are in total agreement. The Federal coalition Government has abjectly failed the people of Queensland in relation to roads and road funding.

John Howard's first Budget in 1996-97 resulted in a \$620m reduction over four years on Australia's national highways. The 1998-99 national highway allocation for Queensland is \$22m less than it was in 1996-97. Last year, the Queensland Government had to pay \$27m for urgent construction and maintenance works on Federal roads—money for which we were not reimbursed until this financial year.

Critical road projects, such as the urgent road safety improvements totalling \$42m on the Ipswich Motorway, which carries average traffic volumes ranging between 51,000 and 72,000 vehicles per day; four-laning of the Bruce Highway between Yandina and Cooroy, which carries traffic volumes of up to 18,000 vehicles per day and has a shocking safety record with 15 fatalities recorded over the past five years; the Barkly Highway upgrade between Cloncurry and the Northern Territory border totalling \$100m to allow safe as-of-right Type 2 road train access along this entire route; duplication of the Portsmith road in Cairns, which carries in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day; and upgrading the Bruce

Highway north of Townsville between Bluewater and Leichhardt Creeks, to name just a few, have been delayed or deferred by inadequate Federal funding levels.

But members do not need to take my word for it; just listen to what the member for Gregory has had to say on this issue. On 15 January 1998 in the *Innisfail Advocate* he said—

"The Federal Government should double its funding for roads in Queensland, rather than reducing its contributions."

I table for the information of members a copy of the newspaper article in question. As recently as last Thursday, the member for Gregory renewed his call for additional Federal funding for Queensland roads, calling for an additional \$300m in three years. I table for the information of members the article in the *Herbert River Express*, which reported the shadow Minister's remarks on 10 September 1998.

I mentioned the Barkly Highway upgrade earlier. Let us just take that as an example. On 24 November 1997 in the *North West Star*, the member for Gregory described the Barkly Highway between Mount Isa and Cloncurry as the "most murderous" highway in Australia. I table that newspaper report. The member for Gregory in his capacity as Minister for Main Roads in December 1997 wrote to the Federal Minister for Transport, Mark Vaile, saying—

"However, the proposition before you"—

this is to the Federal Minister for Transport—

"has been in the pipeline for over fifteen months and I am of the view that neither industry nor the local community in this region of the State will tolerate any further delays in securing a clear funding commitment which guarantees an immediate start to these works."

I table the letter from the shadow Minister to the Federal Minister for Transport. The Federal Minister for Transport himself clearly recognised the urgent need for the Barkly Highway project, because on 5 January 1998 he wrote to his colleague Senator Parer and said—

"I am aware of the substandard condition of the Barkly Highway and the requirement to upgrade it to allow the safe and efficient movement of large combination freight vehicles."

Later in the letter he said—

"I have received a proposal to accelerate the upgrading of the Barkly from the Queensland Minister for Transport and Main Roads, the Hon Vaughan Johnson. I am giving the matter close consideration and expect to be able to announce a decision shortly."

He said that on 5 January this year. He concluded by saying—

"I shall advise you of the outcome."

I table the letter to Warwick Parer.

Last week, John Howard offered \$25m for a road project on the Bruce Highway between Pine Rivers and Caboolture. It is no surprise that this proposed work falls within the three marginal Liberal electorates of Petrie, Dickson and Longman. The only problem is that that project has a total cost of \$125m.

Then again this week, the coalition announced \$6m towards the cost of the \$11m port access road in Gladstone. There was no mention of the other \$5m. In this context, let us also consider the announcement made by John Howard last week in Brisbane that he would spend an additional \$34m for upgrading a road in New South Wales under the Roads of National Importance program—a road which carries only 92 vehicles per day. In whose electorate is that road? The former Federal Minister for Transport, John Sharp! It is a national disgrace that critical national highways in Queensland would rank behind a project on a road which carries only 92 vehicles per day.

By comparison, the Federal shadow Minister for Transport, Lindsay Tanner, has announced that a Federal Labor Government will provide an additional \$150m over three years for the national highway system, provide funds to allow immediate works to commence on a priority section between Bluewater and Leichhardt Creeks north of Townsville, maintain the Black Spot program, complete all Roads of National Importance projects which have already commenced, implement a national highway extension program to incorporate roads of major national economic significance and, through joint funding arrangements with the States, upgrade these major roads to national highway standard, following which a Federal Labor Government would assume ongoing responsibility for their maintenance along with the existing national highway system.

For the good of Queensland's roads, the people of Queensland need to throw out the Federal coalition and vote in a Federal Labor Government. But they should not just take my word for it: they should ask the member for Gregory.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Retirement Villages

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) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to inform the House that this Government is maintaining its commitment to the Queensland community to develop workable, meaningful and responsive legislation. The retirement village industry in Queensland is presently governed by the Retirement Villages Act 1988. This Act has not kept pace with changes and developments in the industry over the past decade and desperately needs revision. The residents of Queensland's 3,000 retirement villages send me that message every week, when I receive scores of letters imploring me to review the legislation.

The previous coalition Government tried but failed to meet the evolving needs of the retirement village community. Following a prolonged process of public consultation and submissions, the coalition Government released a draft of the Retirement Villages Bill in August 1997. The release of this Bill provoked a backlash and the Office of Consumer Affairs was bombarded with submissions. Unfortunately, both residents and operators condemned the coalition legislation because it did not solve the problems of sinking funds, capital replacement and retirement village maintenance. The coalition's solution was to put those issues in the too-hard basket. The coalition baulked at an obstacle that this Government will overcome. Our predecessors have left the issues that they thought were intractable to a Government that can talk, listen to and understand the fears and concerns of the retirement village community. Since taking responsibility for the Office of Fair Trading, I have worked hard to gain the trust of operators and residents. I believe that I have gained their trust by talking to them, by becoming aware of the issues that are important to them and, most importantly, by listening to them.

Retirement village residents welcomed the election of the Beattie Labor Government because they were frustrated by our predecessor's dithering and inability to grasp the important issues. The coalition Government wanted to drag them through yet another consultation quagmire. This is not what village residents or owners wanted. I am fully aware of the concerns of retirement village operators and residents. I have acknowledged to them that the current Retirement Villages

Act is an outdated piece of legislation that has not kept pace with our changing lifestyles.

Importantly, I have taken on board the diverse views of retirement village operators and residents. I understand that residents want retirement villages to be places where they can enjoy the facilities and live a calm and peaceful life. Simultaneously, operators want their businesses to be commercially viable. The balancing of those two opposing viewpoints is extremely challenging, but this Government will not walk away from a challenge.

To find common ground, I have established a new Retirement Village Task Force, which is made up of six—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms SPENCE: Members will be pleased to hear that the new task force will not give a consultancy to one of our former cronies, as members opposite did. To find common ground, I have established a new Retirement Village Task Force, which is made up of six highly credentialled retirement village residents and operators. The role of the task force will be to examine stakeholders' concerns, give them a forum for informed discussion and a chance to seek out goals together. Its aims will be the development of practical legislation and the ending of ideological differences that have prevented cooperation between residents and operators. Unlike the previous Government's oversized working party, which was chaired by former Attorney-General Sam Doumany, I believe that this smaller group of experts will quickly resolve the contentious issues concerning the residents and operators.

The task force is facilitated by the Dispute Resolution Centre, which has demonstrated superb mediation skills and has already helped it reach agreement on many past differences. It has made significant headway on the issues that the coalition left languishing in the too-hard basket, among which was the responsibility for capital replacement and sinking funds. The outcome of the meetings should make a valuable contribution to the review of the legislation, which I hope will be finalised this year. I am committed to working through the issues that time and time again have stalled the development of a workable, responsive piece of legislation.

While Queensland retirement village residents and operators once felt deserted and unacknowledged, our Government has made them a central component of legislative change. Our program of legislative reforms will not just be a bandaid approach to retirement village issues. Under this Government, both

residents and operators will be secure in the knowledge that the legislative underpinnings of their retirement villages are sound.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Drummond Range Crossing

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: This morning in Longreach, ABC radio broadcast an interview between Tom Harwood and the Minister for Transport, Steve Bredhauer, in relation to the upgrade of the Drummond Range crossing. I believe that I have been misrepresented by the Minister for Transport in relation to this issue.

Owing to a couple of mishaps on the Drummond Range, one which occurred about five years ago and another which occurred about two years ago, I immediately sought from the Government led by Mr Borbidge emergent expenditure of \$14m to upgrade that very necessary range crossing—a crossing that had not been touched since about 1880 when the track was first built. This morning on ABC radio, Mr Bredhauer said that since the contract has now expired the job has not been completed and that I made no representation whatsoever for emergent expenditure to fix the rest of the crossing.

I addressed the issue with my Premier, Mr Borbidge. The situation was that, as we were approaching the Budget and the contract was expiring, we were going to address the issue as emergent expenditure. I say to the Minister today—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We do not need a debate on the issue.

Mr JOHNSON: This is a life and death situation. Five years ago a train load of North Australian Pastoral Company bullocks ran off the rails, and the Spirit of the Outback travels that route too.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr JOHNSON: I say to the Minister here today—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not a personal explanation. The member has the opportunity to raise this matter in the two-minute debate.

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister has misrepresented me on the issue. The Minister must show some credibility and retract what he said on ABC radio this morning. He needs to find the emergent expenditure to finish the upgrade of the range crossing. I ask the Minister: what does the AFULE and the PTU think of his leadership on the matter?

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

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister has to find the necessary chaff and finish the project.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

NOTICE OF MOTION

Minister for Emergency Services

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (10.06 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this House recognises the valuable contribution being made by the Board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority; and

That this House condemns the Minister for Emergency Services for the unjustified attacks that she has made on this Board."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member for Springwood; Goods and Services Tax

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.07 a.m.): Yesterday in this place I listened to a concerted attack on the GST, so today I refer members to an article entitled The Political Economy of Taxation Reform. The article presents a very well researched and convincing argument for the introduction of a consumption tax or GST. Part of the article states—

"The introduction of a broad based tax on consumption will have an unambiguous and positive effect on private sector savings."

It states further—

"The other benefits of a value added tax are that it generally out-performs our current tax system in all three criteria for taxation; equity, efficiency and simplicity."

The article continues—

"The benefits of introducing a consumption tax exceed the costs so overwhelmingly that in reviewing the literature, not one economic argument for the continued heavy reliance on income tax was to be found."

Let me repeat that last statement—

"The benefits of introducing a consumption tax exceed the costs so overwhelmingly that in reviewing the literature, not one economic argument for the continued heavy reliance on income tax was to be found."

Where did this ringing endorsement of a GST come from? Was it from that Right Wing think tank, the H. R. Nicholls Society? No. Was it from that conservative policy group, IPA? No. It did not even come from Peter Costello himself.

Mr Fournas: Can I have a guess?

Dr WATSON: I will run out of time. I will not keep members in suspense any longer: the author of that highly favourable assessment of a GST was a Mr Grant Musgrove. Where have I heard that name before? Is it the one and the same Grant Musgrove who is now the honourable member for Springwood?

I table the article for all members to read at their leisure. I thank the honourable member for Springwood for his endorsement of a GST. I trust that the Premier will be consulting with his new backbencher as soon as possible.

Time expired.

Lang Park Grand Finals

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.09 a.m.): It is a solemn occasion indeed when a member has to stand in this place and speak against the wishes of his own leader. But as patron of the greatest Rugby League team in Queensland, I have a duty to urge fans to flock to the real home of football this Saturday—Lang Park—and support Norths, the Mighty Devils, in their quest to win no fewer than three grand final trophies. Norths play Wests in the Queensland Cup, Wynnum in the A Grade and Brothers in the Colts. We are, of course, expecting three great wins in each division to add to victories in the preseason championship and the minor premiership.

This will be a spectacle that no genuine Rugby League fan can afford to miss. Whereas I wish the Broncos well in their match against Sydney, without a doubt the best games of football this weekend will be played in our own Queensland league competition at "The Cauldron". Norths' last A Grade premiership was won in 1980 with current coach, Mark Murray, as captain. Mark is poised to further ingrain himself in Devil's history with wins in the Queensland Cup on Saturday. I pass on my congratulations to all players in all divisions for a great season. I make special mention of Colts coach Anthony Griffin and captain Brad Watts; A Grade coach Craig Grauf and captain Geoff Huxtable; and premier coach Mark Murray and captain Kevin Carmichael. I mention also the leading try

scorer for the season, Paul Hubbard, and leading points scorer, John Wilshire.

It is important also to recognise the significant contributions of the club office bearers, administrative staff and supporters. Their efforts have underpinned one of the most successful years in the club's history. I wish all of the players well and look forward to a great celebration on Saturday night. Go the Mighty Devils!

Mr SPEAKER: I might mention that coach Mark Murray was trained at Redcliffe. That is where he learned to play football.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.10 a.m.): Listening to the Minister for Education rail against the Federal Government's tax reform package yesterday, I could not help thinking of the Queensland Teachers Union. Members would probably be aware that the QTU is the Minister's primary source of education policy advice. It now seems that the QTU Journal is his primary source of tax advice as well.

The Education Minister's comments on the GST yesterday were virtually word for word from page 2 of the current issue of that journal. The front page features a large photograph of two students and various school related items, liberally sprinkled with GST captions. What it does not do is identify the wholesale sales tax on those articles—for example, 22% on the writing pad, the school bag, the cricket bat, the soccer ball, the sports bag and the computer printer, and 32% on the girl's wristwatch. In other words, the GST would replace much higher hidden taxes.

The Minister has obviously misled the House by claiming that parents would have to pay more for school related items, such as stationery, school bags and sporting equipment. Not true! Exercise books, pens, pencils, school bags, backpacks, sporting goods and the like are all subject to a wholesale sales tax of 22%. The same is true for other common student items, such as calculators, musical instruments and bicycles.

The Minister should do his own homework for a change and stop relying upon the union to do it for him. I would also make the point that Helen Demidenko is not the best role model for aspiring young students or for the Minister for Education.

Mr WELLS: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I was quoting the financial expert Austin Donnelly, not the QTU.

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

Lang Park Grand Finals

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (10.12 a.m.): I rise to support the member for Nudgee and to speak about the State League grand final to be played at Lang Park between Norths and Wests. Unfortunately, this game has been forgotten due to the unfortunate clash with the NRL major semifinal at ANZ Stadium.

An Opposition member: Are you still here?

Mr REEVES: Yes, I am still here, and here to stay—just like the MUA.

The unfortunate aspect of this clash is that it should not have happened. The NRL knew at the start of the season that the QRL had set this 2 p.m. timeslot for the grand final. This 2 p.m. timeslot is due to the Statewide live coverage by the ABC. I know that many constituents of country members, as well as city folk, look forward to this weekly slot. The NRL's dogmatic attitude has sent messages that the bad old days of Rugby League management based in Sydney may have returned. Why did the NRL not set down the match between the Broncos and Sydney City on the Sunday and set down the Sydney semifinal on the Saturday? I hope that this kind of pig-headed attitude is gone by the time it comes to granting us an NRL grand final. I am sure that the convincing arguments and the negotiating skills of the Premier will ensure that not only do we get an NRL grand final but also that the NRL will never again be allowed to clash with our State League grand final.

More importantly, I need to give praise to the QRL for running an effective and high-quality competition. It is great to see sides from Cairns to Coolangatta competing in one competition. I look forward to going to Lang Park on Saturday to watch the Devils play the Panthers, even though my beloved Brothers are not in the big one. However, I wish the Brothers team success in the Colts grade. I take this opportunity to wish friends of mine Dale Williams, Andrew Hamilton and Kevin Carmichael from Norths, and Shaun Valentine and Joel Twohill from Wests well in the final of the State League.

As a Brothers supporter it pains me to say that I believe it will be a case of standing up and cheering for Norths this year. I am sure that the member for Nudgee will be a happy man.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (10.14 a.m.): I take this opportunity to clear the air once again in relation to certain uninformed statements made by the Minister for Emergency Services. I wish to emphasise strongly that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority is not currently in trouble, contrary to the political mischief being peddled by the Minister and her myopic political advisers and a report that has not seen the light of day and which the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority Board has not seen. The Minister brought it in, made them pay \$40,000 for it, but they have not been able to see it yet. She has been quoting from a report that none of us has seen.

When I came in as Minister, the Staib report said that we had to have \$30m in extra funding for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. The Masters report, commissioned by that board, indicated a trust fund balance of \$6m in the red in 1997-98 and an \$8.5m deficit in 1998-99. This year's budget came in \$18m in the black. Does the Minister know what that means? Does she need a statement about it? There was an \$11m carryover and \$7m in savings through good management by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. At the changeover from the old Queensland Fire Service there was a debt of \$21m. That is now \$13.5m. The 1997-98 budget indicated that the trust fund would be in an overdraft situation for eight months. The actual time was two months. That was achieved despite not drawing down on loan funds available for the Kedron Park complex. During 1997-98, under my guidance, we also focused on bedding down a range of industrial relations and human relations issues, and a new award and certified agreement was finalised. I also bedded down an enterprise partnership as well as funding the cost of a change to a 38-hour week. I hear that the new Minister is now known as "Mrs Airhead".

Time expired.

One Nation Party

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (10.16 a.m.): The member for Tablelands and the member for Caboolture get very upset when anyone dares to suggest that the members of their party, the One Nation Party—sitting in the back row—could possibly be seen as racist. Last night I tabled a number of documents in relation to their racist remarks.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I find the statement that they are racist offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has found the statement offensive and has asked for it to be withdrawn.

Mr MUSGROVE: I will withdraw, even though I did not refer to the individual member. I was talking in general terms about how a member of the community may perceive—quite reasonably—that the One Nation Party is racist.

Following on from my contribution last night, I will give members a few more quotes from Pauline Hanson's One Nation Policy Document—Immigration, Population and Social Cohesion, which was tabled by the Deputy Premier yesterday. In relation to immigration, it states—

"The program will be non-discriminatory, unless immigration numbers are such that the program will alter the ethnic and cultural make up of our country."

I put it to the House that this is a race-based immigration policy. I will go on. Let us see why One Nation wants this. Pauline Hanson is quoted in the Bulletin of 22 October 1996 as stating—

"Maybe I do come in like a Sherman tank, (but) how else am I going to say that I want a halt on Asians coming into the country."

Why are our Asian trading partners afraid? This is why. Why are our indigenous communities afraid? I will tell honourable members why.

Mr Nelson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Tablelands will cease interjecting.

Mr MUSGROVE: I now quote from The Truth by Pauline Hanson. It states—

"Much has been made of the so-called genocide of the Aborigines by the white settlers. This is a myth, and is false by definition."

The genocide of indigenous Australians is a myth!

Mr Nelson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Tablelands!

Mr MUSGROVE: Why do people regard One Nation as racist? That is why. Do we also deny the Holocaust? Do we deny the genocide of indigenous Australians? How far will it go?

Mr Nelson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Tablelands under Standing Order 123A.

Natural Disaster, Helidon

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (10.19 a.m.): I rise to speak on a matter of great concern to a number of residents in my electorate. The residents I refer to reside in Railway Street, Helidon, on the eastern bank of Lockyer Creek. These residents are about to be consumed in a natural disaster that brings with it the potential for the loss of human life. It is a disaster that should be looked at on an ultra-urgent basis by this Government.

The land that these people reside on is being eroded at an increasing and alarming rate by flooding in the Lockyer Creek. Residents have brought their concerns to the notice of Ministers in what was then the coalition Government. Those Ministers claim in their correspondence to these residents that this was natural erosion. The new Government also has been contacted by these residents and others. It referred to the correspondence of the previous Government and reiterated its findings. This real concern of the residents has become a political football, kicked between the Departments of Natural Resources and Main Roads.

There are two main road bridges over the Lockyer Creek, side by side. The second bridge was built in the early 1990s. It is very obvious by inspection that we also have many thousands of cubic metres of dumped fill on the southern side of these bridges, directly obstructing natural water flow during flooding. This fill redirects floodwaters towards the banks in question. It is also very interesting to note that all the erosion is below the bridges—nothing at all above.

The concerns of these residents are very real. This problem falls outside the jurisdiction of the local government but directly under the jurisdiction of this Government. If this erosion was on the beachfront at the Gold Coast, many millions of dollars would be spent to correct it.

We must hear these people, whether the erosion has been natural or has been unnaturally accelerated by these Main Roads bridges or what would now be illegally dumped fill in the natural watercourse. I hereby call upon the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Natural Resources to come with me to Helidon to inspect this problem, to talk to the residents about it and to consider solutions before we are all shocked by a terrible disaster.

Stroke Support Group

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): Unlike my colleagues this morning, I do not propose to talk about Rugby League. I intend to talk about the invaluable time and effort that many community members volunteer to keep our sporting groups, community services, P & Cs and other voluntary associations running. This effort contributes significantly to economic and social life in this State.

It is difficult to put a monetary value on it, but some gauge of this massive effort is given in the following national figures. Lyons concluded that more than 1.3 million people donated a total of 95 million volunteer hours to community social welfare groups in Australia in 1994. When all non-profit organisations are considered, the figure becomes an amazing 374 million hours.

Today I highlight and pay tribute to a voluntary group that has just commenced in the electorate of Archerfield—the Stroke Support Group in Acacia Ridge. This group has been initiated by stroke sufferers and carers—mainly young people whose lives have been shattered by stroke. Most of us think of stroke as affecting older people. Many of the young people in the group have young families. Many had active lives and demanding jobs. Now, much of this has changed. I mention two members of the group, Sue Stewart and Bob McKay. Both had strokes in their early 40s. Sue said to me recently—

"You could be enjoying breakfast one morning, then by lunch time you could be like me."

It is a frightening thought that stroke can hit both young and older people suddenly and indiscriminately. This group has had difficulty raising funds. It is its hope and mine that it will attract local, State or Federal funding to maintain and expand its efforts. I wish it every success.

Outback Highway

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.22 a.m.): Next Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, a group of people from western Queensland—namely, from the Winton and Boulia Shires and other shires associated with western Queensland—will journey to Alice Springs to take part in a convention to promote and seek support for the upgrade of what is known as the outback highway. I hope that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads will be able to attend that meeting in Alice Springs next Thursday. I know that members

of the Department of Main Roads will be in attendance at that meeting.

Importantly, this promotion is all about upgrading a highway from Western Australia to Queensland through the centre of this great continent of ours. It starts at Kalgoorlie and goes through to Laverton, back through Ayers Rock to Alice Springs and across to Boulia and Winton. This incorporates the reef to the rock concept on the Queensland/Territory side. There are some 860 kilometres of unsealed road on this highway.

The road is significant—nationally as well as internationally probably—to this great continent in the areas of exports, tourism and the like. The upgrading of this road needs the support of the Government. I know that people in Mount Isa currently are not very supportive of this road being upgraded—they say that it will take a lot of patronage away from Mount Isa City and the north-west area—but this is about promotion of an area. The Minister for Transport would know this, as he lives in the north of Queensland.

The reef to the rock concept is certainly important to that area of Queensland as we promote tourism. I say to members of the Government and to everybody in this House: please get behind this concept. Everybody can take advantage of the benefits that will flow in the areas of tourism, livestock and so on. I seek the Government's support on this important issue.

Goods and Services Tax

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): I have had many approaches from concerned senior members in my electorate about the proposed GST of the present Federal Government. One constituent wrote to me some time ago, pleading that I should condemn the GST at every opportunity. He believes that most ordinary people are unaware of its impact on their standard of living. I wrote back agreeing about that aspect of the GST and advising that I personally did not believe that the coalition would have the gall to introduce it. How wrong I was!

John Howard is quoted as saying that he would not bring in a GST. Now he is preying on people's perceptions that the current taxation system is no good and needs to be changed, and he has introduced a GST as a better form of taxation. People have been asking how the GST will affect them. How will they survive on a meagre pension with an ever increasing tax on basic, essential items? We were told to ring a hotline number to clarify the matter. However,

if the question is too complicated, the typical answer is, "They are still working out the final details."

The current taxation system certainly has its flaws, but people understand it. The current laws need to be reviewed to ensure that there are no loopholes, particularly for high income earners. It needs to be more equitable across the wide range of incomes.

A GST will only disadvantage low to middle income earners and advantage the rich. There will be no control over what item attracts the tax and how much the tax will increase. It is not an alternative to the current taxation system. A GST has been tried unsuccessfully in other countries. It has resulted in a further separation of the rich from the poor.

Politicians at the Federal level were attempting to confuse voters through their taxpayer funded \$12m advertising campaign selling a new and better tax system to replace the old one, with offers of tax benefits for all.

Time expired.

E. J. Foote Memorial Park

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (10.27 a.m.): Last Sunday I was given the honour and the privilege of launching the book *The Foote Sanctuary*, by Tamsin O'Connor. It chronicles 50 years of volunteer work in the community to look after the E. J. Foote Memorial Park in Buderim, a rainforest park—a very beautiful place. This park was donated by the Foote family 50 years ago as a memorial to one of its ancestors, Eric Joseph Foote, who died in France in the First World War. Five hundred Australians were being killed every day at that stage of the war.

The book is a memorial to wars of all sorts and to all the people who have been killed in wars. It is a very interesting history of the Buderim area, the pioneers, the original Aborigines and the Kanakas who worked up there at the turn of the century. The park is an environmental statement. Species of trees that were missing have been replanted to re-create the environment that existed previously. This book is such a good resource that I have decided to donate a copy to each of the primary schools in my electorate.

Public Service

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): I rise to speak not so much about the powerful or influential individuals who sometimes seek to meet with local members, but instead about

those troubled individuals, those people often unsophisticated in the ways of Government and inexperienced in dealing with Government departments and agencies, who come to see local members, often in confusion as to what to do next and frequently in some pain and distress. They turn to their local members, quite appropriately of course, for advice on where to go and what to do. Frequently, in my short experience, their visits have been precipitated by a problem with a department such as Housing, Health or Family Services or with an agency such as WorkCover or the police, or even by contact with local government.

Whilst technically these people may have been given correct service by the public agency to which they made a visit, their real and broader needs and wider problems have not been recognised. There has not been a sensitivity to the fact that liaison, referral or other assistance has been required by these individuals.

This morning I put it to the House that the challenge for this Government is to recognise that good service to people in our communities sometimes requires more than a tight and well-driven, economically efficient single program. It is not so much a problem of a lack of skill in our public servants but of a limitation imposed on our public servants by attitudes from the top, by work pressures and by the tight efficiencies of accountability and of following the philosophical underpinnings of economic rationalism that have left our services inadequate and in some ways inhumane.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for Private Members' Statements has expired.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Director-General, Department of Justice

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): In directing a question to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, I refer him to his answer to the member for Warwick on Tuesday confirming that his director-general was appointed without placement of advertisements and without selection on merit procedures—in fact adopting retrospective appointment on merit—and that she is commuting between Melbourne and Brisbane at taxpayers' expense. I ask: in view of her six-figure payout by the previous coalition Government in 1996, how much of this generous payout has his fly-in fly-out locum director-general refunded to the taxpayers of Queensland?

Mr FOLEY: There are two errors of fact in the assertions upon which the question is based. The first is that the honourable member incorrectly asserted that the appointment was not based on merit and that I had so informed the Parliament. In fact, the truth is that the appointment was made on merit. It was done following advertisement in late 1995 through an open process that involved in the selection committee the then president of the Queensland Law Society. This person was subsequently sacked without reason by the coalition Government and she has now been reinstated to the position which she won on merit.

The second point is also a gross misrepresentation of the truth. The honourable the Leader of the Opposition asserted the proposition that she was commuting. That is not so. The truth is that arrangements were made by way of the relocation package to ensure that there would be some component for travel in the transition period, having regard to the fact that she has to relocate from Melbourne to Brisbane. That arrangement has been made in accordance with the arrangements put in place by the Public Service Commissioner.

With respect to the third point as to the paying back of moneys paid by way of a redundancy agreement, arrangements have been entered into in relation to this matter. The position is simply this: in accordance with the provisions of the law, where a person is re-engaged after having received a redundancy payment there is a requirement for a refund on a pro rata basis and arrangements are put in place in order that such repayments can be made in a proper and timely way. That is done in accordance with proper practice.

May I say that it is an utter disgrace that this coalition, which has consistently refused to appoint women to senior positions in Government, yet again attacks the appointment of a woman who made it through both sides of politics in a distinguished career to the top of the Public Service.

Mr Johnson: It's not talking about women.

Mr FOLEY: She deserves commendation for having served both sides of politics over a long and very distinguished career.

Director-General, Department of Justice

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a further question to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and I again refer to the appointment of the director-general without the position

being advertised and without merit-based selection, with the exception of retrospective merit-based selection. This presumes that in two and a half years or three years no-one better could have come along, thus denying the previous director-general of the department the opportunity to apply for the job. I ask the Minister: what is the cost of the relocation package? On how many occasions and how frequently is the director-general commuting between Melbourne and Brisbane? Are the taxpayers also meeting the accommodation costs of the Minister's fly-in fly-out locum director-general?

Mr FOLEY: The previous director-general had a contract which terminated with the termination of the previous Government, so the question arose as to whether or not the person who had been previously appointed on merit, and who had been denied the position very early in her term after a long and distinguished career, should be reappointed to that position. I believe it is fortunate that the Government of Queensland was in a position to be able to secure the services of such a person who had made it through a long career and through a selection process based on merit.

The continued attack on her is very disappointing. It is, of course, only because the previous Government sacked this person without reason and without explanation that we now have to go through the problem of relocation costs, which are part of a package that is exactly the same sort of package involved in the transfer of any person to a post after they have been relocated from a different position.

In terms of the number of occasions involved, I understand there have been a couple of occasions when she has returned to Melbourne. This is not surprising. It is a reasonable part of the transition period. I urge honourable members to demonstrate——

Mr Borbidge: What about the accommodation costs?

Mr FOLEY: I understand that the accommodation costs are met in respect of the transition period in the same way that such accommodation costs are met in respect of any relocation package.

Mr L. Kernaghan

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the recent announcement that popular musician Lee Kernaghan will stage a tour of seven regional Australian centres, including three in

Queensland. I also note that Mr Kernaghan——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: I am sorry that Opposition members do not want to hear. I also note that Mr Kernaghan will donate all funds raised by those concerts to a wide range of projects in those communities. I ask: has the State Government given consideration to supporting this praiseworthy initiative?

Mr BEATTIE: I think it is important that Parliament has some good news from time to time as opposed to some of the negative carping and whingeing we get from the Opposition. I heard about Lee Kernaghan's initiative through the John Laws program. Basically, what Mr Kernaghan——

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Do Opposition members not have any interest in the bush? Basically, what Mr Kernaghan is planning is a national tour but with a big difference. He plans to put the money raised from the concerts back into local projects in the regions and in the bush. That is where the money will go. These projects range from defibrillators to high frequency radio sets for emergencies in outback Australia. They are simple things, but they are obviously very important to improving the quality of life for regional Australians and people in the bush.

In response to the honourable member's question, the answer is: yes, the Queensland Government is supporting Mr Kernaghan's initiative with a \$50,000 grant to help offset the costs of travel and other incidentals. Some major Australian corporations have also dug deep, providing similar amounts. The initiative is also being supported by sections of the national media. For the benefit of honourable members who wish to show their support, I inform the House that the three concerts in Queensland will be held at Julia Creek on 10 October, Charleville on 30 October and Yaraka on Friday, 6 November.

Mr Gibbs: I think we should have a Cabinet meeting out there.

Mr BEATTIE: We are getting out and talking to everyone. Maybe that is not a bad idea, because I understand that the Minister for Public Works first taught at Yaraka. He understands those local communities. We are a Government that is in touch with the bush. We are a Government that is in touch with all Queenslanders. I understand that the final concert will be telecast live as part of the Nine Network's A Current Affair program. I encourage all Queenslanders to get behind this worthy initiative. This confirms that my

Government is a Government for all Queenslanders, regardless of where they live.

Goods and Services Tax

Dr WATSON: I refer the Premier to an article in the Courier-Mail of 18 August 1997—

Mr Beattie: I remember it well.

Dr WATSON: I have the article here, if the Premier would like to have a look at it. In that article, the shadow Federal Treasurer, Gareth Evans, said—

"The truth of the matter is that for those who get very excited about Commonwealth-State imbalances the States can redress that imbalance in a number of ways ... not only through service taxes but through the old chestnut of property and inheritance taxes."

Given the Premier's rejection of the GST to correct the imbalances in Commonwealth-State financial relations, I ask: should Gareth Evans become Federal Treasurer, will the Premier do what he suggests and bring back death duties?

Mr BEATTIE: Even though there are many members on the other side of the House who are rapidly approaching the time in their lives when such a tax would be applicable, it certainly does not apply to members on this side of the House. The answer to the question is: no. Bearing in mind that I have had some difficulty communicating with the Leader of the Opposition on complex issues, let me put it in these words: no, no, no, no and no. Having raised the issue of tax, I would like to refer to—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Is that not clear for the Leader of the Opposition? I will say it again: no, no—

A Government member: What part of "no" don't you understand?

Mr BEATTIE: That is right. What part of "no" does the Leader of the Opposition not understand?

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: That is typical. What an unruly Opposition! They are disrupting question time. Now that the issue of tax has been raised—

Mr Grice interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go again! Opposition members are attempting to disrupt question time.

I am delighted that this issue has been raised. In terms of the issue of a GST, I refer to reports that one of the architects of the coalition's GST, Professor Neil Warren, has made some interesting comments in relation to the GST. It is interesting that he said that John Howard's GST package is clearly unrealistic, indicating the effect it will have in relation to the poor. So one of the architects who is out there supporting the GST says that it is unrealistic in terms of how John Howard is assessing its impact on the poor. Not only that, he also says that its estimation in relation to how it will affect the rich has been misstated and not properly assessed.

By the way, I am delighted by this question. One of the architects of the GST has indicated that it has not been properly assessed by John Howard. What we have here is a GST that will set this State and this country back. It will set this nation back. Every Queenslander needs to understand that the Labor Government of this State opposed the GST and the National and Liberal Parties supported the GST. Let the record show that. If Mr Howard gets a chance to implement it—and I doubt that he will—then those opposite, that is, the National and Liberal Parties, will share equal responsibility for its destructive effect on the tourism industry in this State.

South Bank Parklands

Mr PURCELL: I have a question for the Premier. Anyone visiting the South Bank parklands will have noticed the massive redevelopment work taking place there. I ask: when are the parklands due to reopen, and is the work on schedule?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Bulimba for his interest in this project. With his history in the building industry, I know that he has a keen interest in jobs and development, and so does my Government.

The redevelopment is running on time and on budget. The new South Bank will be a place of relaxing parklands, good times, new squares, shaded streets, cafes and shops. An extra hectare of parklands has been provided, and 1,900 extra trees are being planted at South Bank. Grey Street will reappear as a grand, tree-lined boulevard. \$14m will be spent on an 800-space underground car park that will be ready in time for Christmas.

On my recent inspection, I was delighted to see that the work is well advanced. I have talked to the Minister about this. There are another 200 spaces for parking elsewhere.

There will be a \$20m 450-seat Imax theatre and four 220-seat cinemas, all ready for Christmas. \$4.7m will be spent on a grand arbour, eight metres high, covered in bougainvillea and winding the entire length of the parklands. It will be a spectacular icon. The works starts in November for completion by September next year. When I was at the site recently, I launched the arbour and the plans for it. It will be part of a \$12.8m horticultural enhancement of the site.

It is by considerable coincidence that this question was asked, because I just happened to be reading a file on South Bank. I am happy to table that file for the information of all honourable members. The arbour that I launched will look something like the drawing that I am showing to honourable members. It will be a considerable enhancement to Brisbane. Everyone understands what a tremendous impact South Bank has had on this State, and that is the sort of attractiveness that we will provide for the city. I have shown the House the night version, and I am now holding up the day version.

Government members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I had to explain the difference between the night and day versions for the benefit of Opposition members, but I know that Government members would have picked it up very quickly. I think it is important that all members in this House—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Opposition members have no respect for development or jobs. I do believe that it is important that all members of the House be fully briefed on how this Government is driving South Bank. I table this detailed brochure for the information of all members.

Taxation Reform; Goods and Services Tax

Mr HORAN: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: will he confirm for this Parliament a written briefing from his department about the Federal Government's tax reform package which states that—

"... tax reform will produce higher economic growth due to greater and more productive investment, with the cost of private investment projected to fall by around 7%. This combined with lower industry costs, estimated at around 3.2%, should create a favourable climate for exporters. Higher growth and the effect of improved work incentives should also lower unemployment."

Why has the Minister chosen to cover up this written advice from his department? And given his Government's election promise to lower unemployment, and his responsibility to promote State development and trade, how can he not support the benefits to Queensland businesses and exporters contained in the Federal Government's tax reform package?

Mr ELDER: I get a raft of advice from my department on a range of issues, and each of those officers may have different views about how certain fiscal changes within the taxation system in Australia may impact on one industry or another. Advice comes to me regularly. What I do though, as a responsible Minister, is look at the overwhelming benefit to the State and the State's industry.

Let me tell members what a GST will do to small business. Members opposite are turning 170,000 small businesspeople into tax collectors. The member talks about the GST having an impact. It will have an impact all right: it will have a devastating impact on the most productive sector in our economy, that is, small business. Small business is the major employer and the major job generator in this State. All small businesspeople out there know that, as soon as this tax is introduced—if John Howard is elected—they become tax collectors. They are the ones who will have to collect and administer the tax.

I read an article that appeared recently in the Townsville Bulletin. When Peter Reith was visiting that area, he was criticised by the Townsville Chamber of Commerce for not being able to adequately explain the GST to small business. When asked by a businessman about the details, he responded—

"You don't have to understand the details of the GST to know what it is all about."

That is about as responsive as saying to the wharfies, "You'll be better off without your job." How will Mr Reith ensure that small businesspeople comply with the GST? Perhaps he will put all the new Treasury tax advisers into uniforms and give them GST sniffer dogs so they can walk through individual businesses and say, "Have you or have you not sold anything today?" Perhaps that is the way he will administer the GST. Small businesspeople will have problems complying with a GST. The biggest—and I really mean the biggest—hit that will come from the GST will be that on the small business community in this State. If the honourable member would like that advice tabled, I will find that advice and table it. I get

a raft of advice from my department about the impact of a GST on a raft of industries. There may be one or two manufacturing industries that may benefit from it, but the bulk of industries in this State—the tourism industry and small businesses—will all cop an enormous whack from the introduction of a GST.

Maryborough Base Hospital

Mr HAYWARD: I refer the Premier to a front-page report in yesterday's Fraser Coast Chronicle which carried the headline "ICU threat again" and refers to the Maryborough Base Hospital. I ask: will the Premier inform the House whether that report is accurate?

Mr BEATTIE: In one word, the answer to that question is: no. It is not accurate. I am disturbed by that report. The report was commissioned by the previous Government. It was designed as a smokescreen to cover the former Government's plan to close the ICU at the Maryborough Base Hospital. The previous Government knew that the report would give it an excuse to close the ICU. It was not commissioned by our Government; it was commissioned by the previous Government.

The previous Government rejected advice from the Health Department, which said that the Maryborough Base Hospital budget needed almost \$6.2m extra in the current financial year. The previous Health Minister, Mike Horan, rejected that advice. I have already tabled the documents in this House. He added just \$3.5m to the hospital budget. In other words, he destroyed the intensive care unit at the Maryborough Base Hospital. This report was being prepared to cover up what the then Government was going to do. We know why that report was prepared, and I stress this: it was about trying to cover up the closing down of that ICU unit.

The honourable member knew what the report would say. He knew that it would recommend scrapping the ICU. Let me tell honourable members what we will do with that report. When it hits my desk, it will hit the bottom of the bin. There will be no closing down of any ICUs. We will turn back the winding back that the previous Government sought to do. The secret plan of the previous Government was to scrap the ICU by using that outrageous report as a smokescreen. The previous Minister knew that the \$17m upgrade would not cover the 130 beds that he promised. He had made another unfunded promise.

We have done an analysis. Wendy Edmond, the Minister, and I have talked about the issue at some length. It is very clear what the former Minister for Health did. He made unfunded promises from one end of the State to the other. The former Premier, the now Leader of the Opposition, used to do the same thing. They would tell people, "We will promise you this", but none of it was funded. The then Minister for Health wanted to use that report as a cover to take out the intensive care unit. As I have told the member for Maryborough and as the Minister for Health has made clear to this House, the ICU in Maryborough will remain. We will stop what Mr Horan, the then Health Minister, wanted to do, that is, close down the intensive care unit. I hope the Fraser Coast Chronicle will clarify the record tomorrow so that there is an understanding. I am happy to say that the former Minister got caught out.

Time expired.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr HEALY: I refer the Premier to his statement in question time yesterday that a GST would attack the job security of the 125,000 Queenslanders who rely on the tourism sector for their employment. I refer him also to an independent assessment of the effect of a GST on tourism compiled by Michael Knox from Morgan Stockbroking dated 19 August 1998, which I table. Mr Knox estimates that the GST will result in business costs to tourism falling by 2.8% and that this will in turn generate an extra 9,600 tourism jobs, 2,100 of which will be in Queensland. I ask: if a respected independent report says that a GST will boost tourism jobs, what factual evidence does the Premier have to back up his fear campaign aimed at Queensland's tourism workers?

Mr BEATTIE: Michael Knox has been a well-known supporter of the Liberal Party in this town and a well-known supporter of the coalition for a considerable period. If members opposite think that I will take seriously what one of their supporters is saying in relation to this issue, they are wrong. The bottom line is very clearly this: the GST will have a devastating effect on the tourism industry. One of the big questions that needs to be asked in the debate about the GST is: what does it mean for the State of Queensland? The Opposition has sold out this State when it comes to the GST. I am afraid that Mr Howard's GST package is littered with unrealistic assumptions, as Professor Neil

Warren, the architect of the coalition's failed Fightback package, said.

Mr Howard expects us to believe that, merely by introducing a GST, the economy will grow and the States will collect an extra \$400m in State taxes. That is the first wrong assumption. I cannot say that I have been knocked over in this rush of independent economists who are wanting to agree that there will be a GST-led recovery. Have honourable members heard anyone say that? I do not think so. The State coalition has assumed that John Howard can be taken at his word that no State will be worse off in the first years of his new tax system. All John Howard has offered is an interest-free loan that Queensland will have to call upon if the GST revenues promised do not materialise. What the coalition is supporting is a loan.

From the day the GST package was announced, Queensland has been warning that we will be punished for being the low-tax State. The Opposition Leader and his deputy have jumped to John Howard's defence, insisting that we will get a fair go. Richard Court's Western Australian Government is under no such illusion. In its analysis of the Commonwealth package, the Western Australian Treasury has recognised that the distribution of GST revenue will be modified to ensure that States that collect more tax at the moment do not lose revenue to States such as Queensland that collect less tax. The document states—

"... without this modification, States and Territories which have higher rates on the taxes to be abolished would lose revenue in favour of those with lower taxes."

That is us: Queensland. Queensland as a State will be worse off than Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. Research by the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation has also shown that interstate tourism to the Gold Coast and, therefore, hundreds of local jobs will suffer if a goods and services tax is introduced. That is my source of information. I would accept that over information from Michael Knox any day. The second piece of information I have to share with members opposite is this: the Western Australian Treasury agrees with us.

Time expired.

Effect of One Nation's Profile on Trade

Mr FOURAS: I draw the Treasurer's attention to continual reports in the Asian media about the impact of Pauline Hanson's

One Nation and racist attitudes in sections of Australia and in Queensland in particular. I ask: is the Treasurer aware of any instances where One Nation's profile has resulted in lost opportunities for Queensland trade?

Mr HAMILL: Indeed, I am aware of concerns being expressed about the policy impact of One Nation in Australia not only at home but also abroad. In fact, on my first occasion to go interstate with the Queensland Treasury Corporation, I was quite disturbed to find that representatives of the financial markets and financial institutions were preoccupied with the impact that One Nation's policies would have on fiscal policy in Queensland. They were also reporting on widespread concern in the region.

I would have thought that some of this alarm may have died down. Unfortunately, comments such as those attributed to One Nation's—I am not quite sure whether he is a company director or something—Mr Etridge about just printing money to solve economic problems has permeated a number of financial markets. In fact, my office has been contacted by a senior executive of one of Australia's leading financial institutions who advised that the level of concern over One Nation in Asia forced his company to cancel a planned Queensland conference for a number of high-profile Asian clients. This financial institution does extensive business with Asian investors in fixed interest securities and bonds, such as those issued by the QTC.

The executive regularly visits clients in Asia, with a recent tour occurring after the Queensland election. On that trip, this executive visited some 20 clients to 30 clients, all of whom, unlike clients contacted on previous visits, expressed serious concern about the impact of One Nation's policies. Their concerns were twofold. They were concerned that One Nation's influence could see Australia backslide in key economic reform areas, such as foreign investment and tariffs. However, they were concerned particularly about attitudes in relation to race.

This financial institution tentatively booked a conference at Coolumb on the Sunshine Coast. However, the executive advised us that clients, when told that they were going to come to Queensland, made it very clear indeed that they were not too interested. In fact, the executive advice to my office was—

"Some said to us that they would rather not come if the event was going to be held in Queensland. They drew a very clear distinction between Queensland and the rest of Australia."

Unfortunately, the conference was lost to this State; it went to the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. That is an absolute tragedy, and it is a clear demonstration that the intemperate and ill-informed comments of some persons in the One Nation Party are doing our convention business damage and are doing our country damage. We are determined to right the wrong and get the message out that Queensland will not cop it.

Time expired.

Solicitors Complaints Tribunal

Mr PAFF: I refer the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to the formation of the Solicitors Complaints Tribunal, and I ask: what precautions have been put in place to ensure those appointed are truly impartial? Is it true that five of the nine appointments have come from the previous statutory committee, one of which previously held the position of president of the Queensland Law Society?

Mr FOLEY: I thank the honourable member for the question. With respect to the numbers to which he referred, I cannot assist the honourable member, but I am happy to make inquiries and find out. May I say that, in respect of the Solicitors Complaints Tribunal, the concern expressed by Labor when in Opposition was that in a number of important respects there were inadequate consumer protections built into the legislation to ensure that consumers of legal services received a fair go when dealing with disputes. To that end, the Labor Opposition moved a series of amendments in this House, some of which were successful and some of which were unsuccessful.

It was the view of Labor in Opposition and it remains the view of Labor in Government that there are areas of concern in respect of the need for better protection for consumers of legal services. That was an issue that I agitated on behalf of the Labor Opposition at some length and was critical of in the legislation that was introduced by the former Attorney-General. The honourable member's point is well taken in expressing concern in respect of the availability or the need for that area of protection for consumers of legal services.

There is also concern expressed in respect of the position of costs assessors pursuant to that tribunal and the need to ensure that there is an avoidance of conflicts of interest. Frankly, this is an important issue because ordinary people in their dealings with solicitors, where there is a dispute as to the

quantum of the cost, would often find themselves in a position of unequal bargaining power. It is for that reason that the law needs to ensure that protections are built into the legislation. To that end, it is the intention of the Government to strengthen those protections along the lines that we set out and moved in some considerable detail when in Opposition.

Asia-Pacific Construction Industry Conference

Mr WILSON: I refer the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing to a major Asia-Pacific construction industry conference to be held soon on the Gold Coast, and I ask: what role does his department have in the conference? Can he advise of any problems being confronted by the conference organisers?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have here a brochure for that conference, which is to be held at the Gold Coast between 30 September and 4 October. It is a very important conference for Queensland, not just because of what the Premier outlined this morning in terms of the dollars that it is worth to us but, more importantly, in terms of growing the Queensland building industry in Asia. In that regard, it is very important that we forge very solid links.

Yes, that conference has run into difficulties. However, I am pleased to say that the Queensland Government and my department in particular have been able to offer sponsorship to help it through some of those problems. Of course, as honourable members would be aware, one of the problems with the conference is the Asian melt-down, which has prevented some countries from participating, and that is a shame.

However, a delegation that was to come from the Philippines has decided not to attend and instead has sent this explanation, which states—

"Due to bad publicity generated by alleged racist activities in Australia, our original group of 16 persons shall no longer participate in the Master Builders Convention in October."

Ms Spence: Shame!

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is a shame. Who can we blame for this? When we hear the term "racist", only one political leader in Australia and only one political organisation in Australia is being confronted with the racist tag. I wonder why that is occurring. This morning in

this Chamber, plenty of evidence came forward in the form of various bits and pieces of information that has been cobbled together to form a policy that would obviously convey a message to the people of those countries that they are not welcome here.

My department is expanding business into these areas. For example, we have officers working in Jakarta in Indonesia, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Recently, the Sultan of Brunei has shown some interest in us developing kitchens for him—in fact, 160 kitchens for public housing. That is very important business for us.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes, indeed, the Premier and I signed a cooperative deal with Vietnam. Unfortunately, every time we want to do business in those areas we have to "please explain". It is a shocking indictment on this country that such groups of people are giving us this bad name.

Time expired.

Meat Inspectors

Mr NELSON: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: is he aware of the current regulations regarding the quota system guiding the use of qualified meat inspectors in an abattoir that has a throughput of more than 200 cattle units? Any yard that works under that amount does not have to use a qualified meat inspector, which removes a large cost associated with the running of a plant. Therefore, there could be a slaughter yard processing 190 cattle units and an abattoir on 230 cattle units and only the abattoir would employ a meat inspector. This, of course, makes the system unfair. I ask: why can we not remove this quota and have the meat processed in a slaughter yard inspected by a qualified meat inspector, which would allow all meat processors to compete on a level playing field? It would also allow for a safer product to be distributed to consumers.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the honourable member for his question. Under the 1994 standards of the meat industry legislation of 1993, abattoirs processing more than 200 head per week were required to pay fees to the QLMA of \$80,000 per year. Because of concerns that the abattoirs had about cross-industry subsidisation, the QLMA has now made a policy to reduce those fees to \$14,100 per year. Under the arrangement, the abattoirs agreed to move to full quality assurance. The effect of this decision has been the voluntary employment by abattoirs of their own

inspectors, most of whom were the inspectors previously employed by the QLMA. A further effect has been that the domestic meat processing sector is now operating fully to quality assurance standards. Under the QLMA policy, the new fees largely remove any inequities of cross-industry subsidisation that were characteristic of the old fee structure. The fees also reflect fee for service costs of providing accreditation and are audit specific to the needs of each category of meat processing.

This also gives me the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the fact that when I was trawling through that back paddock that was left to me by the previous Government, sadly I found an Ann Street stockpile of \$1.8m that was left by the QLMA because of the inactivity of two previous Ministers, the former member for Barambah and the member for Hinchinbrook. This Government must deal with the fact that the QLMA has a debt of approximately \$1.8m. That debt has to be addressed pretty quickly. To that end, I am preparing a submission that will go before Cabinet shortly to ensure that meat standards in Queensland are maintained.

Federal Funding of State Nursing Homes

Mr MULHERIN: I ask the Health Minister: what action is the Government taking to get a fair deal from the Commonwealth coalition Government for Queensland's nursing home residents and providers?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the honourable member for the question, because I know that he is as concerned as I am about the way that aged care has been dealt several savage blows by the Federal coalition Government. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been ripped out of aged care and the health industry generally. However, we are not prepared to roll over as the previous Minister did. We are not prepared to take it lying down. We have put in a submission to the Productivity Commission, and members may well ask why we had to do that. We did it because it was put to the Federal coalition Government that the honest and decent thing to do by Queensland and other States is to merge or coalesce the subsidised rates to nursing homes.

At the moment, Queensland gets the worst deal of any State in Australia. The aged care industry in Queensland is robbed of approximately \$44m a year because the Federal Government subsidises Queensland at the lowest rate. We have said that that is

not good enough, that we should be at least at the average, and that all States should be subsidised at the same rate so that we are rewarded for efficiencies and not discriminated against. However, what happened after the Federal Government had agreed to that? Victoria started whingeing. Victoria is currently paid the highest subsidy of any State in Australia, but it whinged and the Prime Minister heard and has caved in. He has referred the issue to the Productivity Commission. Why? Just to get it on the backburner until after the election when he can continue to subsidise Victoria at the expense of Queensland.

Every member opposite should lobby their Federal members and speak out against this silly deal. Everybody should make a submission to the Productivity Commission to support the submission of Queensland Health, in order to get a better deal for Queensland. Members should not sit back like the previous Minister did and cop another slashing of aged care services to this State. Members should fight for what is rightfully ours, for a fair go and a fair deal for the aged people of Queensland.

The one solution to this problem would be to elect a Federal Labor Government, which would reverse those cuts to the aged care industry. A Federal Labor Government would put back the \$500m that the previous Government—I said "the previous Government", because that is crystal ball gazing, but I meant the coalition Government—which ripped that money out of the industry. A Federal Labor Government would make it right; it would improve the quality of aged care in Queensland.

Barkly Highway

Mr JOHNSON: I ask the Honourable Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads: in view of the Government's supposed emphasis on job creation and the issues raised in the ministerial statement that the Minister delivered today, can the Minister confirm that he is about to subject the freight, pastoral and mining industries to an additional impost of \$250 per trip for road trains using the Barkly Highway between Mount Isa and Cloncurry, despite the recent successful trials? Is he aware that this additional fee to be imposed by way of required escorts for Type 2 road trains will further penalise the pastoral industry at a time when it is suffering from the Asian financial crisis and when the mining industry is again reeling from further uncertainty arising from this Government's approach to Wik?

Mr BREDHAUER: I am happy to answer the question from the honourable member in relation to the Barkly Highway. The member knows that he should hang his head in shame at the attitude of his mates in Canberra, the coalition Government, and particularly Mark Vaile, the Federal Transport Minister, who have ignored the needs of the road transport industry and the safety of motorists travelling between Cloncurry and Camooweal—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory has asked the question and the Minister will be allowed to answer it.

Mr BREDHAUER: The member knows of the ignorance and neglect of the Federal Minister for Transport, Mark Vaile. He knows this, because he wrote to Mark Vaile—a letter that I tabled in Parliament this morning—telling Mark Vaile that for Queensland's national highways he needed to spend double the money that the coalition Government was currently spending. He identified specifically—

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister must say "the member for Gregory".

Mr BREDHAUER: The member for Gregory identified specifically the Barkly Highway as a project that was in urgent need of additional funding. The member for Gregory said that industry and the local community would no longer tolerate the neglect of the Federal Government.

In August, when I received a briefing on the trial of access by Type 2 road trains to the Barkly Highway, I made it abundantly clear that that trial had been extended previously and that I would agree to a further three-month extension of the trial, but that I was not prepared to jeopardise the safety of motorists in north-west Queensland by agreeing to further extensions of the trial unless and until the Federal Government provided \$1.5m to address urgent safety requirements on the highway and agreed with the Queensland Government to a package to upgrade the road over the coming years to allow as-of-right Type 2 road train access.

I will not back down on my decision not to extend that trial. I advised the people of north-west Queensland and the road transport industry that unless we had a decision by the end of September, I would stop the trial and that it would be the Federal Government's responsibility because of its failure to fund Queensland's national highways. The member knows that. Even the Federal Transport Minister wrote to Warwick Parer in January,

saying that he was going to give urgent consideration to a package to upgrade the Barkly Highway. Here we are eight months later and we have heard nothing about the Barkly Highway. I care about the safety of the motorists in north-west Queensland.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr REEVES: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: is she concerned that the Howard Government's GST may have an adverse impact on ambulance subscription payments and the provision of ambulance services, such as CPR and first-aid courses? If so, could the Minister advise the House of the steps that she has taken?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for Mansfield for the question. I know he shares my concern about the impact that the GST could have on all Queenslanders. There is much uncertainty about just what would attract a GST. No full details have ever been made available to let people know exactly what would and would not attract a GST.

Yes, I am very concerned that if a coalition Government is elected a GST could be imposed on ambulance subscriptions and other services, such as CPR and first-aid courses. Such a tax would impact adversely on the QAS funding base and it could be a disincentive for subscribers at a time when we are trying to encourage more people to subscribe to the Ambulance Service. A tax of this nature would be a tax on saving lives.

We cannot trust the Federal Government. Firstly, John Howard said that there would not be a GST. Wrong! Then he said that there would be no tax on health care. Wrong again! We found out that over-the-counter medicines do in fact attract a GST. We were told that there was no GST on Government services, but can we believe them? I do not think so. The Queensland Ambulance Service is an autonomous statutory authority. I am advised that services and even subscriptions might attract a GST. Several weeks ago I wrote to the Prime Minister seeking from him an ironclad guarantee that there would be no GST on ambulance subscriptions.

Ms Spence interjected.

Mrs ROSE: The Minister is right; I have not even received a reply.

I have also written to the Prime Minister asking him to clarify the situation as it applies to firefighting equipment. Firefighting equipment and fire prevention equipment is currently exempt from wholesale sales tax, as are chemicals and other preparations used

exclusively in firefighting appliances and materials used in the repair and maintenance of firefighting equipment. Under a GST, those items would attract a 10% tax. The QFRA currently expends around \$15m on services and supplies. A GST would result in a \$1.5m Federal tax bill.

Time expired.

Mr R. Attwood

Mr MALONE: I refer the Minister for Emergency Services to a recent statement by the member for Mount Ommaney in which she stated that her husband, Ron Attwood, who was subject to an internal investigation into his alleged leaking of confidential documents, was not a member of the Minister's staff. Hansard records that the member stated—

"Ron does not work for the Minister for Emergency Services. He is not on the Minister's staff. He is actually employed by the 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."

I ask: is Ron Attwood a member of the Minister's staff and, if not, why does he regularly attend Parliament, sitting just above me in the gallery with other political staffers?

Mrs ROSE: This matter was raised during the last sitting of Parliament by the member for Southport when he referred to allegations against Mr Attwood and an investigation by my department. Mr Attwood is a ministerial liaison officer. He is employed by the department. He is not on my personal staff. However, this answer gives me the opportunity to present some facts to the House in relation to the claims about the investigation raised by the former Minister for Emergency Services, the member for Southport.

At the time, I said quite honestly that I was unaware of any such investigation. Do members know why? The investigation was completed by the department in May, when the member for Southport was still the Minister. When the honourable member asked that question, he was not even aware that the investigation had been completed while he was the Minister. He thought, "I'll ask a question and I'll put her on the spot." All he did was dump himself in it, because he did not know that the investigation had been completed when he was the Minister.

A complaint was made to the QFRA chief commissioner that Mr Attwood was in possession of a document, and the matter

was referred to the CJC. On 9 April the CJC found that nothing could be substantiated. It threw the matter back to the department and said, "If the department wants to conduct an investigation, it can do so."

Mr Elder: 9 April?

Mrs ROSE: Yes, 9 April.

A departmental investigation into the allegations subsequently took place. I said that it was completed in May. It was actually completed on 30 April. I apologise. But given that I was not sworn in as a Minister until the end of June, I cannot believe that the former Minister and member for Southport asked the question.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mrs ROSE: There was nothing—no evidence, no finding against Mr Attwood and no disciplinary action. The whole department had access to the document that he was accused of—

Time expired.

Dental Services, Bundaberg

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I ask the Minister for Health: is she aware of recent media reports that Bundaberg is just one area of Queensland that has suffered from a lack of adequate dental services? What has the Queensland Government done about the situation in Bundaberg and what could an incoming Federal Labor Government do to address those shortages?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the member for Bundaberg for her question, because it allows me to highlight the problem they had in Bundaberg, where waiting lists were blowing out. We have worked very hard to solve that problem. Recently, I was delighted to announce that we have appointed a new principal dentist in Bundaberg. In addition, the three positions that have been vacant for ages and which were filled on an ad hoc basis occasionally have now been offered to a number of very worthwhile applicants. We are looking to have the problem in Bundaberg sorted out very soon. But that is only one area in Queensland where there were huge problems with dental waiting lists, which over the past couple of years in most areas have blown out to over four years.

I am not blaming that entirely on the previous Minister. However, we do blame the Federal coalition Government, which defunded the oral health program. It cut \$20m from the budget for the oral health program in Queensland. While that was picked up out of

other areas in Health by the previous Minister, there has been no increase in that funding for three or four years, and nor can there be while the Federal Government refuses to put 1c towards it. However, there is good news for Queenslanders, because an incoming Federal Labor Government has promised to restore that funding. Not only will the funding be restored; Queensland Health will be able to contribute extra and reduce the backlog.

The member for Crows Nest is obviously delighted with that result, and he, too, will be supporting a Federal Labor Government so that oral health funding can be restored to Queensland. I am delighted with his response. I urge all members opposite to put the weights on their counterparts in Canberra to match that offer by the Labor Government, because there is a slim chance that the coalition will hang on in Canberra. We want to make sure that that funding for oral health does flow to Queensland and the other States, as it deserves to. It is the constituents of the members opposite who are suffering the most.

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

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the Leader of the Opposition, I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of students, teachers and parents from Redcliffe's Humpybong State Primary School.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from 15 September (see p. 2207).

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): In responding to the Budget handed down in this place two days ago, I say at the outset that it would be unreasonable, unfair and hypocritical for me and my colleagues in the Opposition to be unduly critical of a Budget that is in large part the document that the honourable member for Caloundra presented to the Parliament back in May.

I think it speaks volumes that certainly the heart of Labor's first Budget is the Budget it was so critical of during the course of the recent State election campaign. At least Labor has been more responsible back in Government. Certainly in terms of adopting in large part the Budget of the previous Government, I commend the Treasurer and the Government.

Of course, there are some changes around the edges which I will address. I note that some \$40m in tax concessions in respect of stamp duty and land tax has been forgone and we now have instead the insertion of certain interesting new programs, such as venues for rock bands and music tuition. That is perhaps an interesting comparison between the priorities of the coalition and the priorities of the Labor Party. I will speak a little more about those concessions that this Government decided not to proceed with but which the coalition had incorporated in the May document.

The marketing of this Budget as a jobs Budget has to be debunked in the interests of social and fiscal responsibility. The jobs target for the year is 30,000. In the 12 months to April this year, under the stewardship of the coalition, jobs growth was 63,400. In the first 10 months of 1997-98, also under the coalition, it was 53,000. From February 1996, when the coalition came to office, until April this year, Queensland generated 91,000 jobs, or about 40% of all new jobs in the country in that time frame. That was a spectacular performance by the Queensland economy under the conditions that prevailed.

Thirty thousand jobs is therefore a very significant downgrading of the jobs prospects of Queenslanders in comparison with recent performances. It is obviously a disappointingly low target. There is no pleasure in stating that; I wish it were otherwise. I wish we were looking at another very good year of jobs growth and another year of strong economic growth, even if that meant some political benefit might accrue to honourable members opposite—earned or otherwise.

The cold hard reality is that the Queensland economy is now feeling the full impact of the Asian meltdown. There is evidence of that fact everywhere in the Budget. The growth forecast has been cut from 3.75% to 3.5%—down from strong actual growth of 4.75% in 1997-98, which I believe was quite an extraordinary achievement, certainly unparalleled in Australia. I note that the revised growth for 1996-97 is now 4.9%, not 4.5%—fully two percentage points in front of the national growth rate for that year, which is an outstanding result. That achievement by the coalition followed just 2% growth in the State in Labor's last Budget in 1995-96. That growth reduction for 1998-99 from 3.75% to 3.5% was the second downgrading of the forecast since May, in the face of worsening signals from Asia. Before the crisis hit, we were looking at 4.5% growth.

Employment growth has logically been revised down from 2.5% at the time of the May Budget to 2.25%. It was running at 4.1% as recently as April. Unemployment is estimated at 8.75%—exactly the same year average number we used in May—which logically would be at risk, given the downgrading since then of related forecasts. The claim that unemployment will be 8.5% in the June quarter next year therefore seems optimistic, even bearing in mind the Treasury qualifier that it might have more to do with the participation rate, with more people giving up the hope of finding work.

The full year Treasury forecasts for Asia are sadly quite pessimistic. The result is Treasury predictions for disappointing economic and jobs growth which are, as Treasury properly concedes, at the mercy to a very considerable extent of what unfolds in Asia this year: whether we see full-fledged recessions in a number of our most important trading countries or whether we see Asia quickly re-asserting its great natural vitality.

The most recent news on that score is obviously very disconcerting. GDP growth for the region is estimated at 2.4%, compared with 7.2% in 1997-98. That is already looking very optimistic indeed. The estimate for export growth of 5.75% on top of the strong growth of 11% last year would therefore also seem optimistic. The state of the dollar will help, if international monetary decisions do not complicate that forecast.

There are more positive signs among other trading partners, particularly in the United States and Europe, but there are clearly some very compelling reasons for the reduction in the jobs target. I strongly believe that the Government would do much better simply being honest about that. It would gain more respect in the community if it simply told the truth. I think Queenslanders would prefer honesty from their Government, rather than seeing the Premier trying to dress mutton forecasts up as lamb forecasts to try to protect what only he now thinks is an intact political fig leaf in relation to his target of 5% unemployment within five years. That was and is, on all the evidence before us, a cruel hoax and simply should not have been uttered, simply for the sake of a Thomas the Tank Engine act.

Determination is good. To strive is good. To never say die is good. But to come the raw prawn is to come the raw prawn, and the Premier is in the wrong part of the country to try that on. Frankly, Queenslanders deserve the benefit of the advice of the best Treasury

in the country, undiluted, rather than political spin doctoring that just does not wash and makes the proposed charter of social and fiscal responsibility sound like a very empty undertaking. Queenslanders can deal with the tough data. We can handle it. Nobody else has any illusions or delusions about the fact that we have a tough period ahead. We have come through them before and I am sure the employers and the workers of this State will do so again and will bounce back. The very serious job ahead of the Government is to set the parameters that will best enable the State to come through in that style. Other than the attempt to pull the wool on jobs, this is not a bad Budget in that regard because it is, fundamentally, the Budget that the coalition handed down in May.

The Government principally hangs its hat on its community jobs program as the major change. In that regard it is perhaps a pity that its highest priority receives just \$43m of what is intended to be a four-year \$283m program, given the circumstances that currently prevail. That amounts to just 15% of the planned investment this year. However, there has been some tinkering and I believe that some of it is quite regrettable.

We see, for instance, cancellation of some taxation benefits that would have accrued if the May Budget had stood. We had set in train some \$22m in land tax concessions.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I know that honourable members opposite have this foolish fixation that land tax concessions primarily benefit the so-called white shoe brigade and property developers. If they talked to the retailers and the small businesses in this State they would know that land tax reform is a major need in Queensland in terms of the viability of the small business sector. How disappointing it is for the Treasurer to say that the major beneficiaries are the white shoe brigade. It is jobs, it is investment and it is about the viability of small business. Talk to any small business operator in the great growth areas of this State and they will say that land tax, notwithstanding the very substantial concessions enacted during the period of the previous coalition Government, remains a major and very significant problem.

I can only assume from the Treasurer's interjection that the land tax concessions will not go ahead because the Labor Party has never supported genuine land tax reform in this State. I believe that these concessions will not go ahead and that an out of date tax will

get a new lease of life. It is interesting to note that it is expected to bring in some \$35 more than our May Budget forecast of \$193m. So, under this Government land tax will increase by \$35m in this Budget, according to the Budget papers.

The coalition Government had also set in place considerable stamp duty concessions of some \$9m this year—\$17.9m in a full year—which, according to the Treasurer, have been deferred until next financial year pending the finalisation of Commonwealth reforms. I strongly suspect that "defer" means "cancel". What were those stamp duty reforms in large part? They represented a very major boost to jobs and the viability of business in this State because we said that if a business wanted to refinance its loan to take advantage of a better interest rate climate as a result of the economic management of the Federal Government it would be able to do so without being slugged with stamp duty all over again. Struggling farmers, struggling retailers, small business operators and the peak industry groups all over Queensland supported this very important initiative. It was an initiative that, in the overall scheme of things in terms of the value of the Budget, did not really amount to much. But, apparently in the eyes of this Government, having rehearsal venues for rock bands and music tuition is considered more important. That is regrettable.

Those benefits should have been maintained. In a full year they would have been worth some \$63m to Queensland taxpayers. I am sure that if Labor had the opportunity, this Government would also have scrapped some \$7m in car registration benefits for seniors and concessions for recreational boating. These benefits were put in place by the previous coalition Government and were on a time frame which meant that this Government could not undo them. Thankfully, they were too far advanced.

Another area where there has been some interesting and, I believe, unnecessary tinkering concerns capital works. The scale of capital works remains essentially the same at \$4.8 billion but there has been a clearly politically motivated re-ordering of priorities and projects such as to suggest that this could be, if the need arises, an election Budget. Brisbane picks up \$200m more and, as a result, the share of the capital works budget spent outside Brisbane has decreased from 58% to 56%.

We see a new emphasis—in the dollars and the time lines—on areas where the Labor Party either has members or would like to have

members after the next election. Other areas have missed out. In particular, the Fitzroy region is now down well over \$100m on projected capital works spending this year. An extraordinary number of projects, large and small, have been re-ordered. A lot of it is simply unnecessary and will only lead to delays as the planning and construction process adjusts to literally hundreds of new priorities and schedule changes within the capital works budget.

The claim that the Capital Works Program will deliver 1,000 more jobs than was forecast in May, despite the fact that the program has been trimmed marginally by \$25m in the context of a \$4 billion budget, simply does not compute. We have had a marginal reduction of \$25m out of the coalition's \$4 billion Capital Works Program, but somehow it is going to deliver 1,000 more jobs. This simply compounds and adds to the Government's blatant dishonesty on the whole unemployment and jobs issue.

The Labor Party has sought to make much, from behind walls of glass, of the fact that capital works programs are typically underspent by an amount averaging some \$300m a year over the past five years. Despite attacks on the coalition by the Treasurer, he acknowledges that that is an historical issue that is very difficult to avoid in programs on the scale of the massive capital works budgets we have these days. But a very effective way of increasing that average for 1998-99 is to do what is being done by this Budget—a largely gratuitous re-ordering of the program.

Another area of variance from the May Budget, which is not particularly comforting, is in the global revenue lines. Total GFS State revenue in the May Budget was \$15.5 billion. In the new Budget it is \$16.1 billion—an increase of just over \$630m, or 4%. Under all the circumstances prevailing, that is a pretty significant increase when we consider that general economic forecasts have worsened, rather than improved, since the May Budget. We were prudent in May in the face of the worsening situation in Asia. The new Government has been somewhat less prudent in September, despite the fact that the general forecasts are now less favourable. It is therefore interesting to see where the Government has come up with over \$600m.

Just over \$100m comes from increased Commonwealth payments, principally related to health, which resulted from the negotiations conducted by my Government in relation to the new Medicare Agreement. Those negotiations were subject to criticism by the

Labor Party when it was in Opposition. About \$140m is going to come from increased dividend payments from corporatised Government owned enterprises—particularly from the Queensland electricity supply industry. This is also interesting when we take into account the criticism of the Premier when he was Leader of the Opposition. That is unsettling because it was the thirst for cash out of the electricity industry under the former Labor Government of the former member for Logan that left this State with insufficient power generation projects in the pipeline back in 1996.

Another \$150m, approximately, comes from increased borrowings, which have been increased from the \$55m allowed for in the May Budget to some \$205m in the September Budget of the Labor Party. The remainder comes from some small but widespread increases in taxation revenue and approximately \$45m that the State will keep this year by dumping the tax concessions that the coalition had announced in the May Budget. That is a significant increase in revenues in a year in which economic growth is going to be, possibly, around 3.25%. The coalition, on the other hand, was going to grow revenues at the pretty modest level of some 1.4% on the actual revenues raised in 1997-98, and by about half a per cent, or only about \$70m, on the May projection of actual revenues for 1997-98.

Queenslanders can decide whether the mandate that comes with the 40% vote that Labor received at the State election is adequate ground for such an increase, or whether they believe that the coalition's plans were more responsible. Obviously, Labor has increased the revenue take by this significant amount in order to implement its election policies and to protect a reasonable surplus. That is part of the process, of course, but the question will be, by the end of this financial year, whether that was responsible behaviour under the circumstances that currently exist and the circumstances that we may encounter in the coming months.

Perhaps the only other area of the Budget—in the broad—that is of concern relates to the cutting up of the cake. I simply observe that the pie chart on page 99 of Budget Paper No. 2—Outlays by Policy Area—is worth a comparison with the corresponding chart in the May Budget because it shows that the area of general public services—the money that the Government spends on itself—is the growth area in this Budget. We see growth in the general public service area of outlays from

8.4% of the cake in the coalition's Budget to 14% in this Labor Budget, while we see the relative share of the Budget for health, for education, and for law, order and public safety all decline marginally in percentage terms—significantly in relation to total cake dollar terms in this age of large budgets—to make way for this increase.

There really is not much justification in taking a great deal of time in speaking further on a Budget which, apart from those broad areas of concern I have raised, is essentially the Budget that the coalition delivered in May—essentially the Budget handed down by the honourable member for Caloundra. Anybody who wants to know about the coalition's alternative only has to refer to the May Budget papers for a comprehensive insight into our priorities. Shadow Ministers will express areas of concern in their portfolios throughout their reply, and the Estimates process will provide the opportunity to test some of the more interesting changes line by line.

An area of obvious interest within my own portfolio responsibilities, and one of great interest to Queensland, will be the re-emergence of a bloated Office of Cabinet which, as all the veterans of the previous Labor Government opposite know, is regarded among them as one of the principal causes of the failure of that Government. It is interesting to see the very substantial increase in the allocation to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, despite the fact that large sections of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet have been transferred elsewhere, in particular to the Department of State Development.

The word is out that an Office of Cabinet or something similar is coming back to haunt Queenslanders, to destroy this Government—an office of faceless young men in pinstriped suits, who previously stole the direction of Government—and to second-guess Cabinet. We saw that under Mr Rudd. No-one was allowed on the 13th floor of the Executive Building. It was an absolute travesty of the Westminster Cabinet system of government under the previous Labor Government. Of course, over a period, it led to dreadful problems for the Ministry and the then Premier. It is extraordinary to think that the member for Brisbane Central is prepared to repeat history in that regard—but then there are a number of pointers in this Budget to the fact that the leopard has not changed its spots.

Mr Quinn: Or its stripes.

Mr BORBIDGE: Or its stripes. They are pinstripes and, Mr Speaker, they are coming to get you!

In summary, as I said at the outset, this is overall not a bad Budget in that it so closely reflects the very good Budget put before the House by the member for Caloundra in May. There are a few disturbing trends to show up so early in the life of this new Government, and I fear that many of its forecasts will be seen quite quickly to have been overly optimistic—although through no fault of the Treasury's or, for that matter, for the most part, of the Government. Forecasts that we made in May have already had to be recast in this way. The disservice associated with the Budget has largely been in the marketing rather than the substance, and that is particularly the case in relation to employment issues, which I have previously addressed.

Finally, I would warn of a sleeper issue in relation to the Capital Works Program and the jobs issue. This Government proposes to retain a right to negotiate for native title claimants in relation to mining projects. It will logically maintain the right to negotiate that is championed in Federal Labor policy on infrastructure. If that is to be the case, then we can add months, and possibly years, to the time scales of a great range of infrastructure projects in this State. If this Government is foolish enough to enact Labor Party policy in respect of the right to negotiate, the impact on infrastructure projects will be absolutely horrendous. As I said earlier, the time that it will add could be quite momentous—certainly months, possibly years—in terms of the capital works budget. It will bog Government down, just as it has bogged down the mining industry. I warn this Government that, if it goes down this track, through unnecessary delay it will set new records for capital expenditure that is not carried out and for jobs that are not created. Now it has the Federal legislation that it can take advantage of, if it wants to, in the next tranche of native title legislation that has to be considered by this Parliament.

As this Budget is very similar to one of which I was a part architect, I do not intend to unduly take up the time of the House. I commend the Government for adopting the thrust of the coalition's Budget in May. As I said earlier, there are certain additions that we would not have had. We would have maintained the tax cuts in regard to land tax and stamp duty, which were important concessions for business and job generation in this State. We would have maintained those concessions.

Certainly sprinkled through the Budget we see examples of Labor's traditional tendency to promote and meddle in social engineering. We also see a readjustment within the Capital Works Program whereby the Fitzroy statistical region is the big loser—down by some \$100m under this Labor Government compared to the previous Labor Government. This Government is still treating the people of Queensland with contempt in respect of its job projection figures by spending \$25m less on capital works but claiming that it is going to create 1,000 more jobs than our Budget Capital Works Program that was handed down in May.

Is it not interesting that, when we handed down a Budget that forecast unemployment of 8.75%, the then Leader of the Opposition ridiculed my Government, my Treasurer and my Treasurer's Budget from one end of Queensland to the other saying that 8.75% was not fair dinkum and that he was going to get unemployment down to 5%? Then his Treasurer comes into this place. What is their unemployment forecast? It is 8.75%—exactly the same as the coalition forecast back in May! That is the political dishonesty of Labor. That is the political fraud of Labor. That is the political deceit of Labor. That is the political inconsistency of Labor. I make no apologies that my Government was frank and open with the people of Queensland in respect of the Treasury advice that we supplied to the people of Queensland in the May Budget.

Mr Hamill: Including the Forward Estimates.

Mr BORBIDGE: We all know the story. The Treasurer has interjected, so I will tell the story. Do honourable members know how the Leader of the Opposition first came to make his 5% projection in respect of unemployment? It was about 18 months ago at a press conference. The member for Brisbane Central was talking about unemployment. Members of the press gallery tell this story and laugh about it. A journalist at a press conference asked, "Mr Beattie, what do you think is a fair unemployment rate for the State of Queensland?" One of Mr Beattie's staffers was up the back saying, "No", that is, "Don't predict what it is." Mr Beattie counted 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and said, "5%". That is how the Leader of the Opposition adopted the 5% unemployment rate that he now champions. Of course, that was to be 5% achieved within three years. During the election campaign, it became a 5% target over five years. Let us not be under any false impression that the current Premier of Queensland is a financial guru. That is a standing joke in the press gallery as to how he

arrived at the 5% unemployment rate. He should have said "No, I don't want to predict it", but, no, he could not help himself. That is the problem with this Government. As members on this side of the House and, indeed, on the Government side of the House know, when it comes to talking the member for Brisbane Central simply cannot help himself.

We do not have a growth projection or an unemployment rate in this Budget that is any different from that that the coalition put forward during the course of the election campaign, which the member for Brisbane Central ridiculed from one end of the State to the other. That is where this Government has been deceitful. That is where this Government has been dishonest. Where this Government has been responsible, we will give credit where credit is due. They have been responsible by, in large part, adopting the bulk and the substance of the coalition Budget that was handed down by the honourable member for Caloundra in this place back in May.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (12.03 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to rise and speak to the Appropriation Bills. Mr Deputy Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking about the Office of Cabinet, my thoughts turned to the member who preceded you in the chair as Deputy Speaker, the new member for Logan. I could not help but think about how nice it must be for him to move from being one of the guards to one of the inmates. We welcome him.

Mr Hamill: Speak for yourself; you may consider yourself an inmate.

Dr WATSON: No, I was thinking about those who are captured on the Government side. It is nice to see him in the Chamber and elected as a member in this House.

An honourable member: Is he the one who held his hand up?

Dr WATSON: Was he the one?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! I suggest that the honourable member get on with his speech.

Dr WATSON: As the Leader of the Opposition has indicated, this is a coalition Budget. It has been updated because of recent information in respect of revenues and outlays, but basically it is a coalition Budget. However, it is a coalition Budget without the coalition policies, without the coalition's private enterprise initiatives and without the coalition's management expertise to implement it. Of course, that is one of the aspects that the people of Queensland will notice over the next 12 or so months.

Today in this contribution to the debate on the Appropriation Bills I will discuss four different aspects of the Budget. Firstly, I will discuss global economic conditions. The changing global economic conditions have represented a crutch for the current Government, a mechanism whereby it can move away from the unemployment prediction that the Leader of the Opposition so skilfully explained a moment ago. Secondly, I will discuss the State economic conditions and show how they have changed since the May Budget that was brought down by the coalition. Thirdly, I would like to remind the House and particularly the new members of the legacy that the previous coalition Government was left when Labor left Government.

Mr Gibbs: Oh, here we go.

Dr WATSON: I realise that the Minister has a short-term memory. I will help him remember the legacy that we were left. Finally, I will analyse some of the issues raised by the State Budget.

The Premier and the Treasurer want to discuss the Asian crisis. I recall the statement made by the Premier that, on election day, as he visited the election booths, a message came over his pager that Japan had fallen into recession. Members of the House should have known and anyone who has read financial papers over the past couple of years would have realised that Japan, as well other large parts of Asia, would decline some time before 13 June. Japan reached its highest point in terms of gross domestic product growth in November 1995. From then on, the figure was falling. It went negative in November 1997.

Mr Hamill: That peaking growth in 1995 was a bit of an aberration.

Dr WATSON: No, it was not. The Treasurer should look at the graphs. It was going up for some time, it peaked and then came down very quickly over the next two years to go negative in November 1997. It was not a surprise. The financial problems associated with the banking crisis have been going on in Japan for about eight years. It was nothing new. It should not have been a surprise to anybody who followed financial affairs that Japan was becoming negative, was negative and was then in recession. That was true for most of Asia. The fact that the Government is now trying to use that as a new piece of information that provides an excuse to walk away from its commitments for unemployment is simply unreasonable.

A second negative that was relevant in 1997 was weakening retail sales. From 1996

through to 1997 when we were in Government, retail sales fell quite dramatically from a growth rate of nearly 4% per annum to virtually zero. In 1998, that growth rate is picking up. The kinds of issues that the Government might use as an excuse to walk away from commitments because it has been caught by surprise have been turned around. The same applies to the volatility of the share markets. Certainly the share markets and exchange rates have been volatile, but the effects have not been all negative. I will return to that point and particularly the exchange rate in a moment. The Government wants to use those factors as negatives, but there have been some significant positives also.

Finally, we hear about declining tourism numbers and how that is affecting the Queensland tourism industry, and how the weakening of the international economy is leading to slower export growth. I am going to address both of those issues in a moment and refer to some of the items in the Treasurer's Budget papers which, far from being negative compared to where we were in May 1998, are positive. Let us look at some of the positives that are occurring in the world. There is continuing strong growth in the United States and Europe. On a trade weighted basis, that has led to a positive position for Queensland exports, and that is recognised in the Budget papers. In fact, on a trade weighted basis, the growth in exports is somewhere around 2%. When we look at the Treasury documentation, we find that most of Asia is expected to be positive, Europe is expected to be positive and North America is expected to be positive. The only slight negative is Japan.

Mr Hamill: What about the rest of Asia?

Dr WATSON: If the Treasurer looked at his documents, he would see that, in terms of growth, he has Asia as a positive. So, again, the rhetoric that the Treasurer used is simply not backed up by the facts in his own documentation.

Of course, as the Australian dollar has weakened vis-a-vis the European and United States currencies, we have started to have a shift in our export and tourism markets. The fall in tourism numbers from Asia has been compensated for by rising tourism numbers from the United States and the European countries. The interesting thing about that is that visitors from those countries tend to spend a longer time here rather than a shorter time, which is the tendency with visitors from Asian countries.

Over the past few years not only has the tourism industry benefited in that sense but

also our exports have become far more diverse. When it comes to trade with North America and Europe, the weakening dollar has made our exports more competitive. Added to that is the very aggressive attitude that was adopted by the coalition when it was in Government in terms of expanding and diversifying our exports.

Mr Gibbs interjected.

Dr WATSON: I remember the disparaging remarks that were made by the Minister who just interjected and other Ministers about the number of trips that the former Minister for Economic Development and Trade made to develop significantly our ties with China, which is continuing to be a significant contributor to world growth and to Queensland's economic position, and to the Middle East. The then Premier, the current Leader of the Opposition, re-established the Queensland trade office in Los Angeles to ensure that Queenslanders had access to the North American market. That office was closed by the previous Labor Government as it retreated from North America and put all of its faith in Asia. If the Borbidge Government had not been doing the things that it was doing, we would be suffering a lot more. The Borbidge Government beefed up the trade office in London. The former Labor Government wanted to close it down.

Mr Borbidge: Ran them down.

Dr WATSON: There is no question about that. The former Labor Government ran them down, and during the term of the Borbidge Government they were beefed up.

Mr Borbidge: We opened Shanghai, Jakarta and Semarang as well.

Dr WATSON: As the Leader of the Opposition says, we opened up a series of offices in Shanghai, Jakarta and Semarang as well. That was all part of the diversification strategy, and as we come into a period of economic uncertainty that strategy is paying off.

In addition, there has been significant growth in Australia's internal economy. Building construction continues to be high, motor vehicle sales are continuing to increase and we have had increases in household expenditure, which has been substantiated by a growth in the employment rate of 2% and growth in real wages of 1% and 2%. Of course, that has come about because the Federal coalition has helped to control inflation in Australia and its economic policies have brought interest rates down significantly—to their lowest level for 20 years or 30 years.

Those things have all added to people's disposable income and they are strong positives that continue to help the Queensland economy and the Australian economy. So what is happening in Asia is far from negative; there are a lot of positives, and they are some of the factors that would allow a good Government to reach appropriate employment targets. One should not be as pessimistic as the Government wants to be.

This morning, in his address to the House Banking Committee, Alan Greenspan was fairly up-beat about the US economy. He did not rule out coordinated efforts across the world in terms of lowering interest rates. He did not walk away from the responsibility of the United States to make sure that the rest of the world did not fall into recession. However, there was no urgency in his evidence before the House Banking Committee, because he understood that the United States economy was continuing to be robust, was continuing to develop, was continuing to be a mainstay in the world economy and that there was not any necessity right at this moment to move. When one considers the leading indices in the United States, Alan Greenspan's evidence before the House Banking Committee earlier today reinforces the view that the United States economy continues to be strong and will continue to be strong in the foreseeable future.

So there are some strong elements in the world economy, and that gives us a fair degree of optimism that the Queensland economy, properly managed, and the Australian economy, properly managed, will be able to sustain a reasonable growth rate in the future. However, I must admit that when I looked at some of the things in the Budget that was brought down by the Treasurer, I saw that, compared to many of the assumptions that were made in the coalition's Budget, particularly in the areas of private investment, total investment, public final demand and gross State expenditure, this Government tended to be less optimistic—predicted lower growth. The one area that I thought stood out as being significantly different was the area of net exports. Back in May, the coalition forecast that net exports were expected to reduce the growth in the Queensland economy by some 1%. However, three months or four months down the track, I see that Treasury is now predicting that net exports will add to our economy rather than detract—a turnaround from minus 1% to 0.5%.

Mr Hamill: So you think our growth forecasts are too modest.

Dr WATSON: I will get to that in a moment. Let me just say to the Treasurer that that is a significant turnaround and gives the lie to the rhetoric that his Government has perpetrated that it is the export area, it is the international crisis, that is going to drive Queensland down and allow the Government to walk away from its election commitments. The Government's own Treasury statements indicate that net exports are going to be a contributor to the growth of the Queensland economy rather than one that will contract the Queensland economy.

The element of the Budget that is perhaps the most disappointing for the community—and the Leader of the Opposition has referred to this matter and I am going to refer to it in a fair bit of detail—is the prediction for average unemployment.

Mr Hamill: What about the growth forecast?

Dr WATSON: I will get back to the growth forecast; the member should not worry about that. The Government's growth forecast is 3.5% and I will talk about in a bit. At the moment, I am more interested in talking about the unemployment figure.

With all the rhetoric that we heard during the election campaign and with all the things that the Treasurer has been saying before he delivered the Budget, one would have expected that the Government's average unemployment rate in this particular financial year would have been lower than what the coalition predicted. What is it?

Mr Hamill: The trend is important.

Dr WATSON: Whenever he gets into trouble, the member tries to change the terms that he is using. Let us be quite frank: the important point is that the average unemployment rate that the Government expects for this year is precisely the same as the rate that the coalition predicted, which is 8.75%. In other words, on average, the Government is not going to reduce the unemployment level one iota. Not only that, the Government expects a reduction in employment growth from 2.5%, which was a prediction of the coalition Government, to 2.25%. With all the rhetoric and with all the obsession—the Premier keeps saying, "I am obsessed with jobs, jobs, jobs"—and with all the things that the Treasurer says will supposedly have an impact on employment levels in this State, when it comes to the key elements of the Budget, average unemployment has stayed the same at 8.75% and employment growth has fallen from 2.5% to 2.25%. Of course, the Treasurer says that

unemployment growth is going down, gross State product growth is going down—

Mr Hamill: You're not saying that, are you?

Dr WATSON: I will get to what I am saying when I get to it. I presume that the participation rate is going to go up, again because the Treasurer's rhetoric states that he is trying to bring disillusioned people back into the work force yet, on average, unemployment stays at 8.75%.

Mr Hamill: The participation rate is already high.

Dr WATSON: Is it going to go higher?

Mr Hamill: I don't think so.

Dr WATSON: I believe that at the breakfast yesterday the Treasurer said that he expected the participation rate to go higher.

Mr Hamill: I did not say that. If you paid your money, you would have heard what I said.

Dr WATSON: I do not have to. I get reports back. You were saying that all of your policies were directed towards increasing the participation rate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): We have a rule in the House that members have to address other members by their correct titles. I refer to both sides of the House.

Mr Hamill: The honourable member for Moggill should not take advice from the former Treasurer's advisers.

Dr WATSON: The honourable member's rhetoric indicated that his policies were going to allow increases in the participation rate and that that was what he was trying to do to get people back into the work force.

Mr Hamill: I didn't say that.

Dr WATSON: The member can correct me at a later time.

As I have said, I will refer to some of the conditions that we were left with when we came into Government. It is worth repeating some of those things because one cannot consider where our Budget was in May of this year without considering the way in which we got to that position.

When the coalition came to Government in 1996, the first thing we did was to commission an audit of the Queensland financial position. That audit was carried out by a committee of very distinguished people, including Dr Vince FitzGerald who was the chairman. The committee made a couple of very pertinent points. First of all, the committee indicated that, if one continued with the

policies of the previous Government with respect to expenditure, over time we would run into a significant operating deficit on an accrual basis and that policy changes had to be made in order to ensure that that did not occur. In a cash sense, under the previous Labor Government recurrent expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure was continuing to rise. One cannot go on doing that ad infinitum.

The second point, which had been made by people such as Marc Robinson, is that infrastructure in Queensland was running down because the previous Labor Government had failed to invest sufficiently in economic and social infrastructure in this State during the time that it was in power. While that does not have an immediate impact, over time it has an increasingly serious and negative impact upon the ability to increase standards of living and wages, both in the State and country.

The third thing that the coalition Government was faced with upon coming to Government—and this is one of the reasons that the previous Labor Government was thrown out of office, despite its massive majorities in earlier elections and, of course, it is one of the things that the current Treasurer helped to oversee—was the massive slashing and burning of the bush. As part of our Budget strategies, we governed all of Queensland and not just particular parts of it. During that period we had to implement a major program to re-establish infrastructure in the bush.

Mr Gibbs: They didn't believe you.

Dr WATSON: They did not vote for you, either.

Mr Hamill: The trouble is, you think that Moggill is the bush.

Dr WATSON: It has more bush in it than Ipswich, but that is irrelevant. The coalition had to address those three issues.

The last Budget that the coalition Government brought down was a continuation of our first two budgets, each of which addressed those issues. First of all, we reversed Labor's trend of running the State dangerously close to a deficit on a recurrent basis and certainly on an operating basis in an accrual accounting sense. We reversed that trend in our first Budget and it had significant impacts in our second and third Budgets.

The second issue that we addressed, and it was an important issue, was infrastructure. We established a \$1.6 billion infrastructure development program. Basically, we allocated an extra \$200m in the first Budget, \$600m in the second Budget and about \$800m in the

last Budget that we brought down. That was funded by the significant changes that we made to Suncorp and QIDC, which was beneficial to the State because we started to capture all of the value that was in those entities. We were able to responsibly transfer some of that value to developing infrastructure throughout the State, including hospitals, roads, police stations and so on.

The third thing that we did and which topped our last Budget was that, as the Leader of the Opposition said, we ensured that all of Queensland was taken care of. We were starting to replace infrastructure such as the courthouses and police stations. The former Attorney-General was very strong in that area throughout the State. We started to replace basic infrastructure. Some 58% of the funds in our last Budget was spent outside the Brisbane statistical district, although not because that was our only emphasis. Importantly, there was an equal emphasis across the State to try to redress some of the things that had been neglected by the previous Labor Government.

Mr Beanland interjected.

Dr WATSON: They closed courthouses and, of course, railways and such things that they had no interest in.

Mr Borbidge: I think that at least 30 courthouses alone were closed.

Dr WATSON: My colleagues interject with some of the more relevant statistics.

The point was that that had been slashed and burned over the previous six years of the Labor Government. It was one of the issues that we started to address in Government and it was reflected in the last Budget. It has been changed in this Budget, and I will get to that in a moment.

Mr Hamill: Get back to your economic growth forecasts.

Dr WATSON: I will get to those.

When we look at the details in the Labor Budget, we see some disturbing trends that indicate that we are heading back to where we were before. For example, Table 5.4 in Budget Paper No. 2, Consolidated Fund—Forward Estimates by Policy Area, indicates that in major policy areas such as law, order and public safety and education and health recurrent expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure has risen by about half a per cent. The only large department where it has fallen is Transport. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the growth in general public services. However, I notice that Table 5.4 is different from Table 4.3 in our previous

Budget, because the Government has included the reinvestment of earnings from investments relating to superannuation. I would have thought that that was not an appropriate place to include it, because it biases the way in which those statistics are interpreted. Table 4.3 in our Budget paper explicitly excluded the reinvestment of earnings from investments related to superannuation. That is missing. I suspect that explains the substantial increase in funding for general public services.

Typically, when the Government wants to try to hide something it changes the accounting mechanisms to do so. I would have thought that that was a somewhat inappropriate mechanism. The general point—and I assume it relates only to general public services and not other areas; it may apply to some economic services—is that three of the four major departments have had an increase in recurrent expenditure. That is something at which individual shadow Ministers will have to look in the Estimates committees. That is a portent for another dangerous trend. As I said earlier, the Commission of Audit was very concerned that, under the previous Labor Government, we were going to get into trouble in those areas.

We find a second issue when we look at the Budget figures in detail. I will not go through the Budget in detail now; I realise that is the responsibility of Estimates committees. The current Government placed a lot of emphasis on its Capital Works Program and its headline spending of about \$5.1 billion. However, as we see in Budget Paper No. 3, there is an anticipated carryover of \$300m in the capital works budget. The expected expenditure of \$4.8 billion is \$25m less than that proposed by the coalition in its May Budget. This illustrates the difference between our approach and that of the Government. When we put together our capital works budget, we fully intended to spend the amount that we put forward. The mere fact that we may not have spent all of our capital works budget in the past—

Mr Hamill: Only about \$450m.

Mr Borbidge: We spent more as a proportion.

Dr WATSON: We had record expenditure in capital works. But at least when we put our documentation forward we were actually pushing the departments to spend it. The Government has a \$5.1 billion Capital Works Program, and it admits up front that it is not going to spend \$300m of it. I will be amazed if it ends up spending the other \$4.8 billion.

Table 5.5, Consolidated Fund—Forward Estimates by Department, is intriguing. As indicated in the Forward Estimates for Treasury, this year the Government is carrying over \$34.3m in capital. In 1999-2000 it will carry over \$189.5m. Footnote (v) to that table states—

"The negative capital figures in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 are due to the inclusion of a whole-of-Government capital contingency reserve provision which recognises that whilst individual agencies may budget to fully expend their capital works allocations, on an aggregate basis, there is likely to be underspending, resulting in a carryover of capital allocations."

That tells me that not only does the Government intend to underspend its headline capital works budget in 1998-99; it intends to underspend even more further out. It is building into the budgetary process a planned underspending, which will increase quite substantially next financial year by at least \$150m. What about beyond that? The Government does not even rule out underspending beyond that. The footnote continues—

"For 2000-01 and 2001-02, such a provision is considered to be unnecessary at this time, as full provision has yet to be made in Departmental budgets for new capital projects to replace projects which will be completed over this period."

The Government is not even saying that this is a short-run phenomenon. It is completely subverting the budgetary process to build in ever-increasing carryovers. To say the least, that is a phenomenon in the accounting and budgetary process. For the benefit of the honourable member for Indooroopilly—and I guess also for those members who have not bothered to read the Budget papers yet—I point out that I am referring to Table 5.5 on page 144 of Budget Paper No. 2.

The problem in the bush that I mentioned has already been covered by the Leader of the Opposition. He also pointed out the reduction in this Budget—and again it is only a small reduction, but it is concerning that we are seeing the emergence of this trend—in the amount being spent outside Brisbane, which has gone from 58% to 56%. That is not a significant amount, but it would be of concern if this represents the beginning of another attempt to disadvantage the bush—rural and regional Queensland. We hope that we do not see a continuation of this trend in future;

otherwise, when we get back into Government, we will have to try to fix it up yet again.

Mr Borbidge: The remote areas electricity trial got the axe under Mr McGrady, too, out at Boulia.

Mr McGrady: We were still the only Government to do anything at all about power.

Mr Borbidge: You axed it.

Mr Beanland: You gave it the chop—chop, chop.

Dr WATSON: The Minister axed it.

I turn now to another issue arising from the Budget papers that reflects the difference in philosophy between the coalition and the Labor Party in relation to the Budget process. In last Saturday's Courier-Mail there was a letter from a Bob Brinsmead of Duranbah, New South Wales. Bob wrote—

"Those who don't know how jobs are made are sillier than those who don't know how babies are made. To make a job for someone, I have to start an industry—a farm, a processing plant, tourism venture, service industry. If no one starts an industry, no one gets a job. Simple."

I could not have said it any better. I think there is a fundamental difference between the Labor Party and the coalition when it comes to the philosophy of job creation. We believe that the best way to create jobs is to give incentives to job makers, yet Labor believes that the best way is to create them through making the Public Service or other sectors associated with that bigger. That is the essential difference between the employment initiatives of the coalition and the employment initiatives of Labor.

If we look at the employment initiatives of the coalition, we see \$63m going to revenue concessions, land tax and reductions in stamp duty—things which were important to business, which lowered the costs of doing business and therefore allowed business to expand and hire more people. We had about \$52m going to improved economic development, again to assist small business, to the promotion of mineral and petroleum exploration and to the development of information technology and communications. We also had some money going towards new apprenticeships programs.

What do we see under Labor? We see money being directed towards additional public sector apprenticeships. We see these make-believe jobs—9,000 job placements of three to six months on community and environmental projects. This does not provide real jobs for a

real future. They are short-term jobs in order to try to meet the election commitment of the Treasurer and the Premier.

It is interesting to note that the current Labor Government predicted an extra 1,000 jobs from \$25m less in capital works projects. How will it do that? I think the answer can be found in the Budget Highlights and elsewhere throughout the Budget documentation. The coalition attempted to provide long-term jobs in the private sector. Labor has cut down the expected number of long-term jobs coming out of its Capital Works Program and is replacing those jobs with a larger number of part-time or three-to six-month jobs. I think that is a cruel hoax on people. It does not provide the basis for development and a long-term future. It provides a short-term fix for purely political purposes.

The Budget will be looked at in some detail in the Estimates committee process. We will be examining in greater detail some of the inconsistencies I have already pointed out, along with some of the implications of those things. We maintain our commitment to Queensland to provide the proper economic and fiscal environment in which to develop long-term, creative jobs in our economy, rather than short-term fixes.

I think the most disappointing aspect for all Queenslanders, despite the fact that the macro elements of the Budget are the same as the Budget brought down by the coalition in May, is the failure to address the issues which Labor made a central part of its election commitments, that is, the issues of unemployment and of trying to ensure that we have sustainable jobs.

Mr Hamill: Let's get back to the economic growth forecasts.

Dr WATSON: My prediction is that economic growth will be closer to the 3.75% that we predicted.

Mr Hamill: So you reckon unemployment will come down further?

Dr WATSON: We are talking about predictions. I said that it will be closer to the 3.75% that we predicted than to the 3.5% that the Treasurer predicted.

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (12.44 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the appropriation Bills that are currently before the House. I take this opportunity to commend the Treasurer, the Honourable David Hamill, on the excellence of his first Budget, brought down just a couple of days ago. Today I will concentrate on some of the many benefits that this Labor Budget

brings to Townsville and to the region around the city that I represent.

The State Budget brought down on Tuesday acknowledges Townsville's place as Australia's latest boom city. This Budget has backed the huge private investment now entering the region, with pledges of more than half a billion dollars in capital works in the north Queensland region. It backs up the \$550m being spent at Sun Metals by Korea Zinc. It backs up the announcement that has been made by Queensland Nickel in regard to the cogeneration plant that is being built there. It backs up the many tens of millions of dollars of private investment that is happening in Townsville and the region around it.

The Budget means a great deal for Townsville and the Townsville region. Today I will highlight some of the major impacts for Townsville to come out of this Budget. We see \$84.7m being spent in new rail projects in the city and region, \$33.1m for improvements to Townsville port, about \$40m in funding for health facilities and \$20m for roads and transport facilities. I will now outline some of the major benefits in those four areas.

The new rail projects include a \$23m contract for construction of coal and livestock wagons at the Townsville rail workshops. This Labor Government is committed to making those rail workshops an important part of rail activities throughout the State of Queensland. In that same area we see \$11m being allocated to complete the manufacture of the Great South Pacific Express. What a wonderful venture this will be for Queensland Rail and for the Orient Express partners, who have worked up that project with Queensland Rail.

We see \$22m for the upgrade of the line between Townsville and Hughenden and a \$16m commitment for a new spur line into the zinc refinery near Townsville. That \$550m investment being made in the Townsville region will be an amazing catalyst for further industrial development to occur. We also see \$9.5m allocated in this Budget for Stage 2 of the Stuart rail complex. In all, we see a major commitment to rail in the City of Townsville and the region. It shows this Government's commitment to the railway workshops in Townsville and to rail infrastructure in the region.

We also see a major improvement to Townsville port. I say this with some pride, having spent six years as the Chairman of the Townsville Port Authority. We see \$33.1m being spent on improvements to Townsville port. That includes \$11.5m for an extensive capital dredging program to allow Townsville

port to continue its activity as one of the major ports in northern Australia, \$9.8m for jetty and berth extensions, \$8.7m for reclamation works and \$3.1m for plant and equipment.

Mr McGrady: That was because of good planning in years gone by.

Mr REYNOLDS: I will take that interjection by the honourable member for Mount Isa and Minister for Mines and Energy. The planning that was carried out by the Goss Labor Government saw the port of Townsville double its tonnage in that six-year period. We saw \$300m worth of infrastructure built at the port.

Mr McGrady: Who was the chairman?

Mr REYNOLDS: I know I am very modest, but I must say that I was very pleased to be in the situation of overseeing this project in conjunction with the Goss Labor Government. The Minister for Transport at that time, of course, was the Honourable David Hamill.

Mr McGrady: Go back a few more years.

Mr REYNOLDS: I am aware that the honourable member for Mount Isa was a board member of the Townsville Port Authority and made a great contribution to the port. One of the major commitments in this Budget that assists Townsville is the increase in the funding for health facilities. This Budget contains an allocation of \$40m for health facilities. Included in this allocation is the amount of \$15.6m towards the \$170m Townsville Hospital which is being built at Douglas. Another \$2m has been allocated towards the \$10m commitment to establish a medical school in Townsville. Recently the Federal Government committed itself to this project and I welcome that commitment. I also welcome the commitment to this project by the Federal Labor Opposition, because we want an autonomous medical school at James Cook University in Townsville. We have worked tremendously hard towards the school's establishment.

Mr Reeves: It is a good university, too.

Mr REYNOLDS: It is an excellent university. I have been very proud to be associated with the university over the past 30 years. We have also seen two very important new commitments in the area of health. The first is an allocation of \$1.6m for the bone marrow transplant unit at the Townsville General Hospital. This is only the second unit to be established in Queensland and I commend the Minister for Health for this very important initiative. I also welcome the allocation of \$300,000 for the establishment of a national unit for multi-disciplinary studies of spinal pain at the Townsville General Hospital. I visited that unit with the then shadow Minister

for Health and we were able to see the worth of that unit to the Townsville General Hospital. Unlike the previous coalition Government, this Government is willing to put our money where our mouth is and commit ourselves to the establishment of that unit.

We have also seen an important commitment made to Palm Island, a very important part of my electorate. This Budget contains an allocation of \$3.6m for new health facilities on Palm Island. We have also seen a \$20m commitment for roads and transport facilities. This allocation includes \$6.4m for the construction of a four-lane, divided carriageway on the Townsville Port Road. This road is a very important component of the Townsville arterial road system. I welcome the construction of this road. We have seen \$4m allocated for the construction of the Hervey's Range Development Road, \$3.8m for the Elliott River Bridge and its approaches on the Bruce Highway and \$1.4m towards providing four lanes on Thuringowa Drive. As the member for Thuringowa would be very much aware, this allocation represents an important commitment to the Townsville region. We also have an allocation of \$2.5m for Shaws Road, \$300,000 for the upgrade of public transport infrastructure and, importantly, a \$400,000 commitment for the Stockland intermodal interchange facility.

This is an excellent Budget for my City of Townsville and, indeed, for north Queensland generally. The Budget allocates \$9.5m towards the correctional centres in Townsville; up to \$10m for school building projects in Townsville; and \$4m for modifications to the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. This latter allocation includes \$2m which will go to a pilot community-based juvenile justice centre. The sum of \$2.5m has been committed to the key area of development projects in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We also have an allocation of \$300,000 for the construction of a disability respite centre in north Queensland. The Labor Government has seen fit to commit funds in an effort to assist people with disabilities who live in various communities throughout Queensland. It is a major commitment.

Mr Reeves: About time.

Mr REYNOLDS: It is about time. For far too long coalition Governments in this State have ignored the real needs of people with disabilities. If we look at the trend in regard to disability services, we will see that this money will be allocated to the unmet needs of people with disabilities.

In this Budget we also see important commitments in regard to national park facilities around Townsville. I am delighted to see \$50,000 being allocated towards the Magnetic Island National Park. Under coalition Governments this park has been starved of resources. The Budget also contains a commitment of \$200,000 for the redevelopment of facilities at Alligator Creek in the Bowling Green National Park. Those are key areas where money needs to be spent in the Townsville region.

I welcome the \$150,000 allocated towards new ambulance communications centres at Townsville. These are much needed facilities. The Budget also ratifies recent announcements of State funding of \$15m for redeveloping The Strand. The beachfront at The Strand, which had been badly affected by Cyclone Justin last year and the record 10 January floods this year, will be repaired and we will eventually have a world class vista in this area. The former coalition Government would not commit funds to this project. It is a major \$24.7m project. I take this opportunity today to call on the Federal Government for assistance in this area. The Federal Government has been too lousy to commit even \$1 towards this project. The Townsville City Council has asked—

Mr McGrady: What has Peter Lindsay been doing?

Mr REYNOLDS: Peter Lindsay, the Federal member for Herbert, has done nothing to help the people of the electorate of Herbert. I call on the Federal member for Herbert, who is currently seeking re-election, to get off his backside and do something for the people of Townsville. I ask him to use his endeavours to obtain money from the Federal Government towards this important redevelopment of The Strand.

In this Budget we see the allocation of \$6m for the Nelly Bay safe harbour development. I put on record that that development must go ahead as soon as possible. I want to see the scar at Nelly Bay disappear. The allocation of funds in this Budget is necessary for construction of the public facilities associated with the Nelly Bay safe harbour.

I also welcome the \$7.5m allocation to upgrade the Willows Sports Complex. This is a world-class facility for Rugby League and other international events that are held in Townsville. This allocation will allow us to update the Willows Sports Complex and make it into a modern facility. The complex is jointly managed by the Townsville City Council and

the Thuringowa City Council. The complex has urgent needs in regard to drainage. Eventually, we will have a sports complex which will be the envy of other sports complexes throughout Australia. This Government has made commitments towards attracting athletes to Queensland for pre-Olympic training and I believe the Willows will play a major role in that regard.

I also welcome the \$3m that has been, at long last, allocated for the Garbutt urban renewal scheme. This scheme was a victim of the capital works freeze which was brought in by the former Treasurer, the member for—

Mr McGrady: Caloundra.

Mr REYNOLDS: Caloundra. This commitment of \$3m restores the Garbutt urban renewal scheme to where it should have been. It was severely neglected by the previous Minister for Housing, who is with us in the House today. It was a forgotten scheme. The people of Garbutt were forgotten. We saw the enrolment of the Garbutt State School, preschool and day care centres drop dramatically, and that was all because of those 90 families being lost to the suburbs.

Dr Watson interjected.

Mr REYNOLDS: I know that the former Minister for Housing does not want to listen to this, because he is ashamed of the previous Government's efforts in terms of Garbutt. We have also seen new Police Beats in Garbutt, Rasmussen, South Townsville and Kelso, and I warmly welcome those as part of this Budget.

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

Mr REYNOLDS: Before the luncheon adjournment, I highlighted the Budget delivery for Townsville, and I commended the Treasurer on the Budget that he delivered just two days ago. I conclude by saying that the Townsville electorate will be a great beneficiary under the Cooler Schools program. Twenty schools in the electorate will now be eligible to apply for funds under the \$40m Cooler Schools program. The subsidy arrangement, of course, will also be boosted. School communities will now receive \$4 for every \$1 that they raise. This is twice the amount provided by the former coalition Government. Students should not be forced to take classes and sit exams in stifling hot conditions. The extension of the Cooler Schools program will be a major boon for Townsville and, indeed, for north Queensland and central Queensland.

This is a Budget which recognises Townsville's role in developing Queensland. The Beattie Government understands that

creating employment in regional Queensland is the way to boost our economy and alleviate the likelihood of being hit hard by the Asian financial crisis. As well as the tremendous capital boost that the City of Townsville is receiving, we will also attract a hefty component of the 27,000 new apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements which will be created in Queensland by the Beattie Government over the next four years.

Finally we have a Government in power which understands that north Queensland counts. More than half of the State's population lives in regional Queensland, and it is great to see the Beattie Labor Government move beyond the Brisbane-centric mentality of former coalition Governments. Again, I commend this Budget to the House. It is a great Budget for Townsville and north Queensland.

Debate, on motion of Mr Foley, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Air Fares, Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (2.32 p.m.), by leave: Provision for reasonable air fares between Melbourne and Brisbane was made to cover the initial transition period of the appointment of the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. This provision was made in the formal offer of appointment to cover the period until the director-general's family relocated to Brisbane. This was part of a relocation package which involved savings in other areas of relocation expenditure normally incurred, such as the selling and buying of residential property and a relatively short period in board and lodging—19 days—instead of the usual entitlement of up to four months.

The quantum of reasonable travel costs for family reunion has been agreed at six standard economy return fares. This morning, I informed the House that I understood that there had been a couple of occasions when the director-general had returned to Melbourne. I can inform the House now that the actual number was four. With respect to the 1996 termination payment to the director-general following her sacking by the previous coalition Government, arrangements have been made for the pro-rata repayment of the appropriate sum.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
APPROPRIATION BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed (see p. 2345).

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.33 p.m.): I rise to join in this debate and, in doing so, underline words spoken by the Opposition Leader and the Leader of the Liberal Party. This Budget really is the coalition's Budget with a few minor changes. The two previous speakers from this side of the House outlined the dangers that they see in projecting the Budget forward. Subsequent speakers will be concentrating on various portfolio areas. I said before that, by and large, this is the coalition's Budget. On that basis, of course, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

In relation to the Education portfolio area—apart from additional funds being allocated, there is really not much change to this portfolio area in terms of policy direction and much of the detail. Of course, the devil will always be in the detail, and that will not be fully open to scrutiny until the Estimates committees are in progress. However, on first reading of the Budget documents, there seems to be very little change in terms of the direction of Education in Queensland over the next 12 months under this particular Government. As I said, some additional funds have been put into some policy areas. By and large, those are policy areas that the previous Government—the coalition Government—put in place. They were groundbreaking policy areas.

The previous speaker mentioned the airconditioning of schools. The coalition bit the bullet and decided to put in place the Cool Schools program. Previously, nothing at all had been done in north Queensland in relation to the airconditioning of schools, both State and non-State. There had been some programs in western Queensland, but nothing in northern Queensland. The coalition recognised that fact and allocated some \$73m over four years to commence the airconditioning of schools in north Queensland. This Government has allocated additional funds to extend the zone further south, as I understand it, and to adjust the subsidy program for P & Cs and school communities in the northern zones. So by and large, it is an extension. I recognise that it is also a welcome extension to the program. I agree with what the previous speaker said. Students should not be forced to work and study in oppressively hot conditions. That is why the coalition initiated that program several years ago.

Other programs which have received additional funds were also groundbreaking programs. For instance, the behaviour management programs that the coalition Government put in place have received some additional funds in this Budget. That will be welcome news in our schools. I see no mention of pulling back on the legislative underpinning of those programs. I believe that they were accepted by members on both sides of the House. Over the past 12 to 18 months or so, the schools and the parents themselves have accepted those new discipline regimes that school communities are putting in place within their schools.

I also mention the additional funds for students with disabilities and what this Government calls its Education For All program. That is wrapping up funds for students with disabilities and learning difficulties into a new program and rebadging some of the money. But to be fair, additional funds have been provided, and I welcome those funds because I believe that they will be targeted at students who most need them in our schools, both in terms of additional teachers and additional support services, whether by teacher aides or other professionals, such as physiotherapists, speech therapists and so on. Schools can always use those additional areas of expertise, and I am quite sure that those funds will be put to good use within the schooling system.

Several other areas received additional funds. The maintenance of school security is one area in which additional funds have been targeted. All members should realise that our schools have a large maintenance backlog. I understand that it is something in the order of \$100m. So any additional funds to eliminate that maintenance backlog will be well received in our schools. In the couple of months prior to the election, we were moving to substantially boost the maintenance funds to schools. All members of this House would be aware that they received some letters from the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing about additional maintenance in schools. My understanding is that \$6m was spent in that particular burst of funding. It is good to see additional funds being allocated for that purpose. There is no doubt that a \$100m maintenance backlog is a fair backlog to overcome. It will take ongoing increases in funds for quite some time to overcome it. That is also a welcome addition.

I am glad to see that there have been no changes made to the Youth Action Program. When the coalition launched that program, it was heavily criticised as being some sort of

stunt. I am glad to see that cooler heads have prevailed, that the benefits have been recognised, that the Government has continued to fund it and, indeed, to expand it as we indicated that we would do. Another program that has received additional funds, although not within the Education portfolio, is the Police in Schools Program. Again, that was criticised by the Labor Party when it was launched. Now its benefits have been recognised and the Government has continued its funding. Additional funds have been allocated to literacy and numeracy. That is a key component of this portfolio. More money has been allocated to that project to build on the good work done by the previous Government. Of course, everyone is aware of the critical importance that these programs have within our schools. Any additional funds that we can find to support those initiatives are always welcome.

I am glad to see that funding has been maintained for the Connect-Ed program, which I believe is one of the most far-reaching programs to be put in place in the schooling system. Under that program all schools will be connected to the Internet and the departmental network. Access will be provided to students across Queensland. Funding has been made available for local area networks. We will explore the details of that during the Estimates committee hearings. Other noteworthy aspects of the budget are the additional funds that have been allocated to key areas of the non-Government sector, such as the provision of funds for airconditioning, students with disabilities, additional capital works grants and so on. I am sure they are welcomed also by the non-Government sector.

Overall, as I said before, this Education budget is the coalition's Education budget with a few welcome additional funds attached to it. One can understand that having additional funds available to the Government through the Commonwealth Medicare agreement, through the increase in electricity dividends and through forgone tax reductions allows the Government to provide those funds. It appears that education got its fair share of those additional funds, which I am glad to see.

Mr Hamill: You would expect that.

Mr QUINN: I would definitely expect that from the former Education Minister. Indeed, we will be looking forward to additional funds being provided through his personal generosity.

The capital works budget of some \$220m is not as high as it has been in the past. In the previous two coalition budgets, we had a

higher Capital Works Program—some \$260m to \$270m to start with, tapering down to \$240m or \$250m. Under the previous budget, the figure fell back.

Mr Hamill: Some was an advance.

Mr QUINN: Some of it was. It fell back again to about \$206m. This Budget allocates some additional funds to bring that up to \$220m. That will be used well within the portfolio area, because the demand for additional accommodation, refurbishment of existing accommodation and new works within the schools is always greater than the Budget allocation. The schools will greatly appreciate any funds that we can put towards that.

By and large, we are pleased to see that the Government has kept the coalition's budget for Education intact. It has allocated additional funds to crucial areas. During the hearings of the Estimates committee we will be examining whether there have been any reductions in funding to any of those programs and other programs that are not mentioned in the Budget papers to ensure that the good work that the coalition has done over the past two years in getting education on track in Queensland is maintained. That fact that it is on track has now been recognised by this Government, because there is no major change in policy directions. There are no major reductions in the funding formulas for any of the key initiatives. It is all the same. Where money has been available, some programs have been enhanced. That is a ringing endorsement of what the coalition did in terms of education over the past two and a half years. We put education on the map, turned it around and got it doing. Now this Government is providing some additional funds to keep it on track.

Ms Spence: No-one believes it.

Mr QUINN: The Minister should read her Government's own document. She will see that everything that we had in our Education budget is exactly the same.

Mr Hamill: And more.

Mr QUINN: And more—I have already said that. I have already made that acknowledgment. In terms of the policy direction, this document is our policy direction. It is exactly the same. It is disgraceful that a Minister does not know exactly what is in her own Government's Budget.

I will mention Leading Schools, because it has been raised.

Mr Hamill: I have just been trying to defend you.

Mr QUINN: I appreciate that.

The move to school-based management cannot be stopped. Even though there is now a consultation period occurring within the school communities about the funding formula and the details, when one talks to school communities one discovers that they do not want to go back to the old system. They have had a taste of Leading Schools and the freedom, flexibilities, authorities and the additional resources that have been transferred to them. They do not want to go back to the old ways. There may be some changes made around the edges. There may be a new name. There may be some bits and pieces, bells and whistles, added or subtracted from it. However, by and large, this is a movement that cannot be turned back. Interestingly, this budget also recognises that. It allocates discretionary grants to schools on that basis. All this nonsense that the Government and the ALP have been going on with about Leading Schools for the past six or 12 months is just that: sanctimonious claptrap.

By and large, this is our Budget. It would be churlish if we were to stand here and criticise it. We do not seek to do that. We understand that the Government has maintained the general direction of education policy of this State. It has added additional resources where necessary. We will only too gladly recognise that fact.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the member for Barambah, I advise that this is the member's first speech. I ask that members afford her the courtesies of the House.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—ONP) (Deputy Leader of the One Nation Party) (2.47 p.m.): The Budget papers hold very little for the people of Barambah. The Labor Government has shown its contempt for those in the rural sector. Mr Speaker, as you are aware, I am here to represent the electorate of Barambah. The word "Barambah" is Aboriginal for wind, or place where the water ripples. Barambah when spoken sounds like music and the place it brings to my mind is my kind of heaven.

The people of Barambah are ordinary, honest, hardworking people. I feel their joys; I share their pain; I feel their frustration. My presence in this House is the culmination of their frustration. The people of Barambah are aware that I am not a polished politician. That is perhaps another reason I am here. They do not expect miracles. Being fair people, they expect me to take a little time to learn. I am their messenger. The message they send to this House is, "We, the people, have had enough."

The people of Barambah are a fair people, as are most Australians. We are known for giving people a fair go. But the people of Barambah ask the question: how long is a fair go? At every election we are asked to believe the promises that shower us with money, only to find that we hold peanuts afterwards. Time after time we are asked to give the established parties another go, and time after time we ask the same question: they could not possibly do the dirty on us again, could they? History shows us that, yes, they could and, yes, they would. For years we have been told by both State and Federal Governments that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Quite frankly, almost a quarter of Queensland's population cannot see the tunnel, let alone the light. That is why 11 One Nation members are sitting in this Chamber.

It was my desire not to speak in this House until I had opened up communications with all the people and communities of the Barambah electorate. We have a community consisting of Australians of all backgrounds. We endeavour to live together in an egalitarian way. There are exceptions, but the majority care, respect and are willing to work in their community's best interest. I continually hear the words "multicultural communities". I prefer the word "egalitarian". Barambah, I am proud to say, is working towards being an egalitarian community. To be an egalitarian community, it is necessary to communicate, for communication brings understanding. Understanding breeds tolerance. Without tolerance there is segregation. With segregation comes racism.

I find it abhorrent that people are judged on their colour, race, religious or political beliefs. Time and time again, history has shown that persecution has taken place based on these things. It is only right that each and every one of us condemn those who would seek to persecute minority groups because of race, colour, religious or political beliefs.

One Nation falls into the category of a minority group. Thousands of members had their names published and were opened up for and subjected to persecution for their beliefs by, of all people, some misguided members of a community who should have understood and respected the rights of others. I do not rate a man by his birth, his social position or his income. Quite often, the greater the income, the higher the position, the more arrogance displayed and the less I find to respect. A man's heart is his measure.

Ten years ago, the people of Kingaroy took me to their hearts and, more recently, so

did the people in the other areas of Barambah. I would like to introduce to this House all the wonderful people of Barambah. However, as that is not possible at this time I will introduce only three. Marg Chapple is a courageous lady whom I have known but a short time. At this very minute, death is tightening its grip on her and I can only pray that she can know that her name will be recorded forever in Hansard. Her loyalty, her patriotism, her courage and her belief in her convictions is an example to all who know her. I first met Marg when I received a call from her daughter who asked if I could spare five minutes to visit her dying mother. On arriving at Marg's home, I found a woman wasted by the insidious cancer that pervades her body, but she was refusing to succumb to its final demand. Her motivation for living was her belief that her vote was too important not to be cast. Marg believed that she was fighting not for her own future but for that of her grandchildren who would have to survive in this country when she no longer has concerns.

The egalitarian spirit that exists in Barambah is in the mother who came to me, speaking in faltering English of the years she endured and the scars she bears on her back, which were inflicted upon her under a foreign dictatorship. She came to Australia and embraced our way of life because she recognises the true value of freedom—a freedom that she lost once and is terrified that she may lose again.

The third person I would like to mention is a gentleman by the name of Tom. Tom is an Aboriginal, and he has been by my side since the day of preselection. He came to me and offered to protect me and my family from those who would try to take away my rights and freedoms. Tom's motivation is his belief that, despite the media barrage to the contrary, One Nation has only the sincere desire to help his people stand on their own two feet and regain their pride and dignity.

These are three of the people in Barambah. They are not exceptional; they are the norm. They have courage and they are an inspiration. These people have varying backgrounds and origins. These people are Australians and they are prouder to be Australian than many other Australians who were born here. These are the people whom I am here to represent. These are the people to whom I have a responsibility. These are people with heart.

Barambah itself has a big heart but its life is slowly being squeezed from it. Whilst meeting and talking with the people of

Barambah, three phrases continually come to the fore: "They don't see", "They don't hear", and "They don't care". The people who spoke those words were reflecting the feeling of frustration that rural Queenslanders have when referring to politicians. Politicians do not see the death of communities when services are gutted, they do not hear the final closing of the door on another small business, they do not hear the fall of the auctioneer's hammer on yet another forced sale, and they do not hear the shot that kills unsaleable stock.

I have heard the shots that kill unsaleable stock—stock that cannot be given away. I have seen the devastated families when banks foreclose on not only one lifetime's work but on two, three or more generations of effort. I have seen the consequences borne by the people of decisions made in Parliaments, and I have helped pick up the pieces. I have heard other members speak of unemployment rates in their electorates of 10% and 12%. I agree that those figures are horrific. However, the unemployment rate of the Wide Bay/Burnett area, where Barambah is situated, is up around 21.2%. That is a statistic of which any Government should be truly ashamed and a situation that a concerned Government would be addressing. We have abattoirs in Murgon, Kilcoy and Kingaroy. In excess of 1,600 workers live day to day with uncertainty as to whether or not, at the end of the day, they will be another statistic. Workers in the pork industry, the logging industry, the dairy industry and the tourism industry all bear the brunt of the decisions made by both State and Federal Governments. The lack of visible concern for rural Queensland by this Government is a frightening prospect for all who live beyond the coastal fringe. It horrified me to hear so little in the Governor's Speech in relation to small business and the rural sector when we all know, and the Government admits, that these are two of the biggest job-creation areas.

My husband Tony and I are familiar with the trials of operating small businesses. The success of business in Barambah is directly related to the viability of the rural sector. The Premier has continually stated a target of 5% unemployment. With that in mind, I ask the Premier to support and push the Tarong Power Station expansion and the SUDAW consortium project. The Surat Basin resource runs to 2.65 billion tonnes in 35 deposits with only one currently being mined. It is prime coking coal. The coal export potential is estimated at 20 million tonnes. What is more, the coal is ours: a guaranteed supply, on Australian soil, in Australian hands. I have heard other members speak in favour of this

project. We are all talking jobs, job security and the provision of infrastructure and water. That really boils down to giving life to areas and towns that are in desperate need. Job creation in the electorates that would benefit from these projects would go a long way towards helping the Premier meet his pre-election promise. The promises given prior to the election are the Government's responsibility.

I would like to speak about responsibility. Where does it start and where does it end? I believe responsibility starts with oneself and it never ends. With regard to oneself, responsibility starts at birth, albeit responsibility born of instinct. Nonetheless, it is still our responsibility to make sure that our demands for food, warmth and care are met by those responsible for our existence. As our lives unfold, we are confronted with difficult situations and at times we will make mistakes. Mistakes are a part of learning and it is necessary to take responsibility for our mistakes.

As the member for Barambah, I realise that my responsibility is to represent all the people of my electorate—not only those who voted for me or the party, but every man, woman and child who resides within the boundaries of the Barambah electorate. I also believe that I have a responsibility to everyone who resides in the State of Queensland. To do that, I feel I must now be apolitical in this place—not only in the electorate but also in this House.

I have a major difficulty accepting the view espoused by the party system that it is necessary for all members to vote as a bloc. The 89 members of this House come from varied electorates. All members were elected to come together, to work collectively, for the betterment of Queensland. I find it difficult to believe that the members of the Labor Party agree unanimously on all things and that their 44 electorates always agree. I also find it difficult to believe the same of the coalition. I have to be honest and say that I do not agree with anyone, and not even my husband, more than 50% of the time. Therefore, I wonder how the other members of this House justify their actions with their consciences and the views of their electorates.

My responsibilities are to the people of Barambah, to the people of Queensland and to One Nation. I will represent the people of Barambah and endeavour to obtain for them the basic desires of any community. The people of Barambah want jobs, safe streets to walk down, security in their homes and the right to protect themselves and their families.

The gun issue is and will always remain a major thorn in the sides of many. How long is it since people could walk down the street at night, or leave their cars unlocked, or leave their doors open on hot sticky nights? When did we pass a law that says that it is all right to take something because it is not under lock and key? Why are decent people locked away in their homes? Why is everyone else responsible for other people's actions? When did passing the buck become mandatory? When crimes are committed, we hear constantly the excuses, "It's not their fault; they had a terrible childhood", "His parents are divorced", and many others. These excuses are pretty poor reasons for people to go out and steal, destroy or maim.

Excuses are not reason enough for someone to put a child through a lifetime of trauma just because something did not go his or her own way. It is not reason enough to divest a man of his lifetime's earnings or to destroy a man's life through aggression and unreason. What a selfish attitude. How self-centred and sickening. We all know right from wrong and we must start to take responsibility for the terrible things that are done. We must start protecting the innocent.

Too many times we see the inequities of the law. Government and Corrective Services personnel suffer triple jeopardy in performing their duties. It is time to allow them to have the power to do the job that we employ them to do. The law must be applied, justice must be done and the victims of crime must be defended.

Recently I attended the inaugural graduation of the Proactive Support Group. I was impressed by the dedication and precision of the training that the professional personnel displayed. Knowing this expertise is available to attend to disturbances and riots in our prisons should be a comfort for residents of areas with established prisons and those where prisons are proposed. Privatisation and corporatisation have caused understaffing in our prisons. Profit has been put before security—profits that often go to foreign-owned corporations.

One of the greatest responsibilities of all is the seeking of the truth. As a child I was told to question all that I hear and half of what I see. Those who print the spoken word and those who broadcast the news have the greatest responsibility of all: to convey the truth, not their interpretation of the truth. It must be remembered that it takes more than saying it is so to make it so. The media has been judged and found wanting by the Barambah

community. Truth has become the sacrificial lamb to the headline.

When we speak of responsibility I think of the saying, "A penny earned is a penny saved", which shows how old I am. The Government handout has taken away people's responsibilities to each other and to their communities. Nowadays, it is not even necessary to get out of bed to obtain money. It is too easy. Nothing in life should be so easily attainable that it lacks value. Work for the dole has recently been brought into play, but in the Barambah electorate one community has insisted that those who receive the dole work for it. The Aboriginal community of Cherbourg has been operating work for the dole since 1993. Until 12 years ago, Cherbourg was still an Aboriginal reserve. Twelve years ago, the boom gate was lifted and the town became self-governing. Like all people, they have made mistakes, but they have also achieved. It is through recognition of achievements that individuals and communities learn to take responsibility.

What of the children—the generations to come? What are our responsibilities to them? Are they the provision of food, shelter, education, a secure future in the work force? That is not a lot to ask, is it? What do we give our children? We give them a diet of drugs that leads to death and a recycled clothing bin for a bed. We protect the paedophiles who prey upon their innocence and teach them to fill in dole forms before they leave school. How shameful that that has become so accepted that life on the dole queue is an acceptable career option. Does the proposed establishment of boutique brothels represent another acceptable career option for our children?

I would like our schools to teach the meaning of the Constitution and the rights that we have as Australians and Queenslanders. I would like our youth to be taught responsibility. When I hear a young person say, "I'm bored, what can I do?", my answer is, "Go home, wash the windows, mow the lawn, learn to cook, read a book, assist the poor, do something for someone else. Take charge of your own life and become responsible." Our communities owe us absolutely nothing. Our country owes us nothing. The world does not owe us a living. We owe our communities, our country and the world our time, our energy and our talents to ensure that no-one will have to experience war, poverty, sickness or loneliness. All people must learn once again to take responsibility for their own lives and actions. We must all pay the piper.

I take my responsibilities seriously. I will not make decisions to change the status quo if I am not fully cognisant of the full ramifications of that change. I stand here today to take my share of the burden of responsibility for the state of the economy, the state of lawlessness and the perversions that are allowed to exist in our communities. No Governments seem prepared to say, "I bear some responsibility for the mess and despair that pervades the very core of society." I stand here today to take responsibility because, until now, I did not care enough to say "enough is enough".

The people of Barambah did not elect me to denigrate, humiliate, scorn or condemn fellow members of this House. They did not elect me to dismiss out of hand the ideas of other members simply because they belong to a different party. They elected me to work for the betterment of themselves and Queensland. When all is said and done, perhaps there is too much said and not enough done for the people we are here to represent. I have heard many good words spoken in this place, but they have been lost amongst the waffle. My words are for those with the will to listen, the ears to hear, and the desire and commitment to answer the call of the people to work for all Queenslanders.

I rose today to claim this seat for Barambah. "Barambah" is Aboriginal for wind. The word "Barambah" sounds like music and the country that comes to mind is my idea of heaven.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (3.05 p.m.): In rising to speak in this debate I shall highlight some of the aspects of the Budget that will be particularly welcomed by those in Cairns and far-north Queensland generally. I note that the honourable member for Barambah misunderstands the agreement of Labor members. She does not appear to understand the elaborate and extensive mechanisms that are behind Labor Party consultation in the regions. Over recent years in Cairns I have participated in a number of activities to make our presence and opinions felt by those in the Labor Party in Brisbane. I can bear witness to the fact that that long process has, in fact, influenced the very Budget that we welcome here today.

I particularly recognise that this is a Budget for all Queenslanders. Sometimes those of us who live thousands of kilometres from Brisbane feel that we are not understood or heard by the centre of Government but, according to this Budget, that is not so. This Budget truly supports regional development. The Budget is responsible and balanced, and I

support the Treasurer's objectives of delivering cohesion, stability and financial stimulus at a time of economic uncertainty. Most importantly for those of us in the far north and, I dare say, for people throughout the State, this Budget will deliver jobs.

I would like to highlight several important elements within the Budget, because I think they bear repeating. Despite the drain that will be created by increasing the quality of services, and despite our wish to provide employment assistance and to generate employment in the private sector, in GFS terms the Budget is still in surplus this year. There are no new or increased taxes or charges in the Budget and the Budget fulfils Labor's election commitments. Commitments worth \$380m are fully funded in the Budget. It may well be the perception of some who are not experienced in the world of politics that when in Opposition Labor members made promises willy-nilly. Of course, that is not so. The promises and commitments that are reflected by the provision of \$380m are the outcome of many regional meetings and consultations that placed the Treasurer and other senior members of the Government in a position to make those commitments and now to follow through on them.

I particularly drew attention to some of the important employment initiatives that are part of this Budget. Over four years, \$283m will be provided for the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle package. This is the first exciting year in which we can implement that package. There has been a 4.8% increase in the budget of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, which is, of course, essential if we are to implement our Breaking the Unemployment Cycle package as well as possible. We must have the staff to implement that package.

I reiterate that this Government places great importance on its policy to create 6,500 apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities in Government departments, local government and statutory authorities. The previous State coalition Government and the present Federal coalition Government were mistaken in their belief that the private sector will create employment if it is left alone by Government. That is not so. Government has to lead the way. It is appropriate that the Labor Government is leading the way in sending the message to the private sector that we want to generate jobs and build a level of confidence in the private sector that will lead to increased employment. In particular, I welcome the \$144m that will be spread across the State so

that Government authorities generate employment.

The other part of the employment budget to which I wish to draw attention is the \$109m to be spent on creating 9,000 job placements for the long-term unemployed. Unlike the previous State coalition Government and the present Federal coalition Government, I believe in giving another chance to those who have had a hard time to date and who have not found their way into education and employment. It is the Government's job to look after those people, to open the door and to provide programs targeted towards meeting their needs and giving them a chance. Should we reach the levels of success of Working Nation, which had a success rate of about 30% with respect to long-term unemployed job programs, we can be proud. It may well be that we will achieve a higher success rate.

I am pleased that that \$109m plan targets not only youth but also those people of mature age who for some reason have been unable to continue in their previous areas of employment or skill. It also targets young people who have offended under our criminal justice system and gives them another chance to establish a good and healthy life in which employment adds to their self-esteem and sense of membership of the community.

For far-north Queensland in particular this translates to 2,400 apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements. As the member for Cairns, I look forward to working with local industry, Government agencies and educational facilities to make sure that those 2,400 placements are filled in one form or another as soon as possible. One of the ways in which those jobs will be generated is through the Government's Capital Works Program. I reiterate that this Government is spending billions of dollars on capital works. Some \$608.7m will be spent on hospitals and other health infrastructure. Cheers should be heard from the electorate. Nothing matters more to constituents than their health and that of family members and friends.

\$2.2 billion will be spent on transport. In this modern world, unless we can travel by air, sea and road by public transport, we cannot undertake the projects that will lead to a prosperous society. Some \$830.9m will be spent on mining, energy and electricity infrastructure. That is a proper budget allocation from a Government that is looking to the future. \$372.3m will be spent on law, order and public safety infrastructure. Some of us may wish that such a large allocation was not necessary, but it is needed, and with it will flow

the jobs and lifestyles that will keep our constituencies healthy.

This Government is bringing down a record Health budget—\$3.722 billion. That figure is up 8.4% on the previous Government's Budget last year and is 3.6% more than the previous Government had planned for this year. That translates to 600 new jobs in the delivery of health services and 9,000 construction jobs. It translates to an extra \$11m for mental health services. It is not before time that our society recognised that hiding away from mental health problems was limiting not only for the people and the families concerned but for our society. It is appropriate that at this point in history we recognise the importance of mental health and fund services for it.

\$18.05m will be provided for extra elective surgery and other measures to cut public hospital waiting lists. When one is in pain and threatened by illness, it is important that one is treated in our public system as quickly as possible. This \$18.5m allocation will contribute to a reduction in some of the waiting times that have caused distress for families around Queensland. An additional \$2.5m will target waiting times in particular in public hospital accident and emergency wards.

It is unfortunate that we need to spend an extra \$1.5m on drug and alcohol-related services. Again, we wish that was not the case. However, it is necessary. Public education and promotion of the management and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse is an appropriate priority in the Health budget. One initiative in particular of this Government under the Health budget that I welcome is the \$1.5m allocated for providing free parenting courses and support for families. It is time that we assisted those who through whatever experiences are finding difficulty in raising their children; that we show them in this difficult, modern, busy world with so many pressures upon us how they can guide their children wisely into adulthood.

I note, too, that \$700,000 has been set aside to combat hearing loss caused by middle ear infections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children—children who have not had access, as have many of us from a European background in Queensland, to good health services over the many years of their own and their parents' history. Those extra funds will contribute to addressing the imbalance between the health services available to indigenous people and the broader community. \$2.3m has been allocated for palliative care. When little is left that can be done to prolong people's lives, we should

assist older people as well as those struck down by terminal illness to move from this world in as little pain and with the most dignified care possible. I welcome the \$2.3m in funding for palliative care.

I turn to what this House knows already to be my favourite topic—Cairns, which should be pleased with this Budget. Unfortunately, our local newspaper has dubbed the Budget as fair. I think that shows a lack of recognition of the broader Statewide Budget and how well Cairns and far-north Queensland have done. This year, \$26.4m—an increase of \$5m—is to be spent on the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital. Over this three-year period, the budget for the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital has increased by \$17.9m. When we take the further commitment to a CT scanner worth \$1.2m into account, we see that the redevelopment is fully funded with that additional amount of \$19.1m. There is no issue of greater concern to the public of far-north Queensland than the completion of the hospital—something Labor promised at the time of announcing the redevelopment. It is an indictment of the former Government that Labor has had to find in this Budget the additional \$19.1m to complete it to standard. It will be welcomed year in and year out by all of us in Cairns who will have occasion to go to the Cairns Base Hospital.

I particularly welcome the announcement of \$28.5m for the expansion of the Cairns Convention Centre and the establishment of a basketball centre in Cairns. This project was negotiated, and somewhat poorly so, by the previous Government. It allowed variously \$20m, \$21m and \$22m for the Cairns Convention Centre expansion. Our own study of the figures indicates that \$28.5m is necessary, so we have upped the amount in the Budget by \$7m—\$24m to be spent this year and the additional \$4.5m to be spent in 1999-2000.

A particular amount of money that will be welcomed in Cairns is the \$10m for the revitalisation of the city centre. This \$10m has not yet been targeted into specific projects, which is welcome. Rather than Brisbane deciding for the people of Cairns in what ways this money should best be spent to revitalise our city centre to integrate the functions of residents, recreation, business, tourism and retail, the decisions will be left to the people of Cairns and in particular to the leaders of organisations associated with the city centre.

There is \$5m in the Budget for the beginning of the Cairns esplanade project. The esplanade is a very important landmark in

Cairns. There is \$1.2m in the Budget to complete the lighting of Cazaly's AFL park, a multi-user sports facility. With that, this year we will see the transfer of a stadium from the Gabba to Cazaly's AFL park in Cairns.

There is \$1m for initial work on the Cairns-Brisbane tilt train project, another form of tourism for the tourism hub that is Cairns. I particularly welcome the \$3.5m allocated under public housing targeted towards the community renewal program in the Manoora public housing area. This is money not just for housing, streetscape revisions and changes to roadworks, but also to assist the community to come together and develop its own action plan, to provide community facilities, to provide recreation facilities and, in the process, to offer employment for all those living in the area—an area that is regarded in some ways as less than salubrious, as less glamorous than some other parts of Cairns. The area has high unemployment figures and considerable indication of social dislocation. It is the ambition of this Government to achieve—and we will work to achieve it—in three to five years from now a community that is integrated and proud, and equal to any other in the Cairns area.

Mr Schwarten: And thank you for the role that you're taking in that.

Ms BOYLE: Thank you, Minister. In particular, I recognise the \$750,000 to be spent by the Department of State Development over three years in the Cairns region on economic development initiatives established locally—the clustering program of bringing together groups of like industries and encouraging them to collaborate instead of compete, to pool their resources, to pool their planning efforts, to pool their export marketing and in that way develop economic initiatives beyond the size of a small city, as Cairns really is.

In conclusion, I give clear recognition to the benefit that people in Cairns and far-north Queensland will derive from this Budget. I send my congratulations to Treasury staff for the clear way in which the Budget documents have been presented—for the easy cross-reference for those of us in regions to discover the funding regionally, as well as to discover funding under different departmental headings.

Particularly, my congratulations go to the Treasurer, who had to work within the framework of the previous Government's Budget and stand by the commitments made by that previous Government. Yet at the same time he managed to adjust the Budget to

meet Labor's promises and to stamp the Labor ideology of employment creation and service delivery, while maintaining budgetary integrity, firmly on the front cover.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (3.24 p.m.): I rise to speak in the debate on the appropriation Bills. I say at the outset that the Labor Government has adopted the Budget presented by the Borbidge/Sheldon coalition when in Government. There is no doubt about that. A couple of adjustments have been made here and there. A little while ago I heard the member for Crows Nest say that a couple of areas, such as Fitzroy and Toowoomba, have missed out. No doubt the local members of those areas will make reference to that. I know that the member for Crows Nest certainly will.

I will speak mainly about the issues of transport and main roads. I am somewhat pleased, to the extent that I can be pleased, that the member for Ipswich is the Treasurer. I know that he was a Transport Minister for five or six years in the Goss Labor Government.

I know just how hard it is to extract money from Treasury. I think everybody who holds a ministerial position will know just how difficult it is. I ask the Treasurer to have a soft spot for Transport and Main Roads. I hope his memory is not too short. I know that we have to be responsible about how we manage the finances of the State but, at the same time, I think every portfolio has to be treated fairly. It is all about addressing the needs of every citizen of this State. People may talk about pork-barrelling, but I can say honestly that that is something the Borbidge Government never did.

Mr Sullivan: Oh, come on. You took funding out of our areas and stuck it in your own.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Chermside knows that it never did that. There could not be a more appropriate person to interject on me than the honourable member for Chermside. He should remember the days when he was in Government under Mr Goss. What happened in relation to the Nundah bottleneck? It was the same old situation. Funding was spun over, Budget after Budget. It was never signed off on. Who signed off on it? It was this little old mate here. Who put it into the program? It was this little old mate here, and the coalition when it was in Government.

Mr Sullivan: And who ripped it out of the RIP in February '96? That little old mate over there!

Mr JOHNSON: Did we ever get a thankyou for the Nundah bottleneck money?

Mr Sullivan: You ripped it out in February '96 in the RIP update.

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Chermside should get a hold of himself. He does not understand the situation. Transport and Main Roads is probably one of the most important portfolios in the State.

I heard the member for Cairns speak of a budget of just over \$2 billion—just over \$1 billion for Main Roads and the same for Transport. This morning I heard the ministerial statement of the Minister for Transport. He quoted me as saying that we need an extra \$300m straightaway for the upgrade of roads. We certainly do. To see that we need only look at the expansion of the sugar industry in north Queensland, on the Atherton tablelands, near the electorate of the honourable member for Cairns. There is also expansion south of Cairns.

Mr Mickel: The Logan Motorway.

Mr JOHNSON: We need \$70m-odd for the upgrade of those roads. We have a situation now in which the cattle industry is going out of that area and the sugar and fruit industries are developing there. It is absolutely paramount that we have the associated road infrastructure in place as soon as humanly possible to cater for that heavy transportation.

There are small, wooden bridges in that area, and mums and kids in cars do not mix with B-doubles and semitrailers. I urge the Government, the Treasurer and the Transport Minister to pay particular attention to that. Not only is it an issue that impacts on the future viability of that part of Queensland but also there is a safety factor for the people of that part of Queensland who want to travel on the same roads on which goods are transported, whether it be mum taking the kids to school, kids travelling on school buses or whatever. We understand fully that, owing to weather conditions, there are only about four or five months of the year in which roads can be built in that part of Queensland. It is paramount that these programs are put in place. It is something that I worked extremely hard on when I was Minister. I know that the department is ready to go on it. I hope and pray that the Minister and the Treasurer can put together a program to assist those shires in north Queensland.

The member for Cairns mentioned the tilt train concept. The \$122m that the member mentioned will certainly cover the rolling stock, but has anyone considered the \$1 billion that

will be needed to put the associated infrastructure in place? I was in the chair only a couple of months ago and I can now produce the document from Queensland Rail that will tell those opposite of the costing for that project. It is not \$122m. To fix up the unprotected crossings alone on the way to Cairns is going to cost \$33m. We must remember that we have passengers travelling at 160 km/h in this train. It is not a freight train. We are talking about human lives. There has to be a lot of infrastructure upgrading as the project is progressed.

There is one thing we should remember about trains in Queensland. Our passenger train network in Queensland is very unique. We are the envy of many people in the Western World and in Eastern Europe. We have the Queenslander and the Sunlander which run to Cairns, the Spirit of the Outback which runs to Longreach, the Inlander which runs to Mount Isa and the Westlander which runs to Charleville.

We talk about high-speed trains. The people who travel on our rail network to the north mainly do it for the romance and for the spirit of the occasion. The Government is talking about taking 15 hours off the trip to Cairns, making it a journey of some 21 hours. I give credit where credit is due and acknowledge that the former Labor Government put in place the \$600m upgrade of the railway line from Brisbane to Cairns. When the coalition was in Government we completed that project.

However, the point I make is that we have freight trains travelling on that artery at a rate of 100 km/h. If we are going to have passenger trains travelling at 160 km/h on that network there will be a cost factor. We have to look at the people who are paying for the service. Tourism is alive and well in this State. I know that the former Minister, the member for Noosa, Bruce Davidson, paid particular attention to marketing the Traveltrain concept in Queensland. International tourists will want to participate in a trip on a long distance train which will give them the spirit of the occasion.

The Government has talked of expenditure of \$1m this year and \$12m next year for the tilt train. I realise that no tenders have yet been called. I understand that Walkers of Maryborough will get the contract. What happened to Goninans in Townsville? What happened to the railway workshops? We have the National Competition Policy now. What happened to the tendering process? Is it Kelly's rules again and we simply hand out contracts willy-nilly to whoever wants them?

These are the questions that the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer should answer. The Government is probably hoping to stretch the project out so that, come the next election, the people will have forgotten that promise—another broken Labor promise. I say to those opposite that they are not going to pull the wool over people's eyes. Those of us on this side of the House understand how business works. We understand how important it is to get the figures right. The Government is deluding itself if it believes it is going to build such a network for \$122m.

I remind the Minister and all Queenslanders that a daily service between Cairns and Brisbane is something that will not be utilised in the way that the Government desires. Bearing in mind the distance involved, it will probably be cheaper to take an aeroplane, anyway.

The Minister will have no option but to hide the necessary safety upgrades. I have exposed them here in the House this afternoon. If the Public Works Committee wants to undertake an investigation into something, this is probably a good subject.

I want to remind the Government of some promises on which it has reneged in relation to my electorate. My electorate of Gregory is a very remote electorate. I realise that the Minister for Transport, the member for Cook, and the Minister for Mines and Energy, the member for Mount Isa, also represent remote electorates. We talk about energy, we talk about electrification and we talk about the grid power scheme to some of the rural properties in those remote areas. I remind the Minister for Mines and Energy of just how disappointed are the people in the Shires of Barcoo and Boulia that the Government reneged on the power grid deal.

Today I spoke to Ron McGlinchey, the Mayor of Boulia Shire. I have not spoken to Peter Douglas, the Mayor of Barcoo Shire, but I can hear from here exactly what he is saying and thinking because my ears are usually burning when Mr Douglas is on the phone fighting for something for the Barcoo Shire. Mr Douglas and Mr McGlinchey are champions for their shires. For those members who do not realise, I might point out that Boulia Shire is in the electorate of the Minister for Mines and Energy. So that is the type of lip service that the people of Boulia received from their local member.

In the House earlier today I mentioned the upgrade of the Drummond Range crossing west of Emerald. The Minister paid lip service in relation to that and tried to do me over on radio 4QL this morning. The important fact—

Mr Sullivan: We heard he succeeded.

Mr JOHNSON: The important fact of the matter, my friend, is that I do not take trivial interjections.

Mr Sullivan: You just did.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I do not take them. This is about upgrading the associated arteries and the necessary infrastructure that carry the goods produced in the west to the east. The member for Chermside probably does not understand that every bullock brought in from the west provides a job for three people for one day in the slaughterhouses, whether they be in Brisbane, Ipswich, Townsville or Rockhampton. If the member for Fitzroy was here he would understand that. I know that the member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, would understand that as well because he has knocked around in the bush. However, there are not too many members opposite who understand the importance of rural Queensland. It is the old adage: the minority provides for the majority. That is why it is paramount that we upgrade these arteries.

In relation to the Drummond Range crossing, the \$14m was spent but the project was not completed. I urge the Treasurer—the gentleman in charge of the chequebook here in Queensland—to find the funding so that McDonald and Sons can get on with the completion of the project. In that way we will have a first-class crossing of the Drummond Range which will have an effect not only on the safety of freight and cattle trains but also on the safety of the Spirit of the Outback which travels through that opening every couple of days. It is of paramount importance for the safety of all people who use that line, including the drivers of the locomotives.

I want to return to the question of the north-west mineral province. This morning the Minister mentioned what I had already said about the \$300m shortfall. We need about \$150m immediately in the north-west mineral province to upgrade road infrastructure. Today I heard somebody talking about the rail infrastructure between Townsville and Mount Isa and the importance of interfacing with the jobs we have created in Townsville. The Borbidge Government spent considerable money in upgrading the Townsville Railway Workshops and other associated infrastructure to interface with the north-west mineral province. This allows us to provide jobs at both ends of that artery. It is important to remember that, while we are putting in that infrastructure, we are growing and we are developing the important strategic regions of this State. That

is something that this Government should remember because those opposite got into trouble for their pork barrelling when Wayne Goss was Premier. The Goss Government tried to close down that associated infrastructure. The Government tried to close down one third of the State's railway lines but Rob Borbidge and I led the charge of members on this side of the House—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! The member for Surfers Paradise!

Mr JOHNSON: He was the leader—the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, the honourable Leader of the Opposition and the former Premier, Mr Borbidge—whatever the member likes to call him. And he will be the new Premier before too long—just see if I am not wrong.

The Government had to be shamed into this, just as it had to be shamed into reneging on the Maryborough Hospital last Sunday night. It is all about listening to the people. That is something that members opposite do not seem to have learnt in their two years and four months in Opposition. This Budget is about the whole of the State, not just the south-east corner. I will come back to the south-east corner—

Mr Sullivan: You forget about the south-east corner.

Mr JOHNSON: I never forget about the south-east corner. I refer the honourable member to the \$750m upgrade of the Pacific Motorway, which is a very important strategic artery in this part of Queensland. That project created something like 2,500 jobs and had wide-ranging effects on production.

Mr Sullivan: You cut the funding for the northern busways.

Mr JOHNSON: I will come to the northern busway, you clown!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr JOHNSON: I withdraw that, Madam Deputy Speaker, if that would make you happier. I feel sorry for the Government when it has members of that calibre in its ranks.

The flow-on effects of the Pacific Motorway reached as far north as Hervey Bay and as far south as Coffs Harbour, with the manufacture of concrete construction units for that highway, which also created jobs. I want to mention the \$120m which the Treasurer, the Transport Minister and the Premier say was not in the coalition's Budget. It definitely was in our Budget papers. It is an old trick of Labor Governments to fudge the figures and say that things are not there. They did that

with emergency services—claiming that there was a deficit when, in fact, there was an \$18m credit.

All of these things create jobs. The coalition Government created the necessary infrastructure and put it in place, whereas members opposite procrastinated. They are taking the glory for the \$16m Budget which Mrs Sheldon brought down as Treasurer. They might have changed the colour of the cover of the Budget documents from blue and yellow to red, but that is about the only difference. I notice that the member for Archerfield is wearing a maroon tunic. Perhaps she might have had something to do with the design of the cover.

Mr Schwarten: What about the toll road on the north coast?

Mr Lucas: What about the port road?

Mr JOHNSON: The toll road was one of our election promises. We gave a commitment to that. We honoured that commitment. The member for Lytton asked about the port road. The port road is something from which he and his Government walked away.

Mr Lucas: Would you build it?

Mr JOHNSON: We will be back there to build that port road. This Government has procrastinated. That road represents a very important artery to the development of this State. It is important that we get those heavy trucks through to the port of Brisbane so that business there can grow. We need that infrastructure.

Mr Mickel: What about the lifting of the toll on the Sunshine Coast?

Mr JOHNSON: I have just addressed that. Was the honourable member for Logan asleep?

As the Government undertakes its job creation program, it is absolutely paramount to recognise the importance of making absolutely certain that the associated infrastructure in rural and remote Queensland and regional Queensland is looked after while those jobs are being created in the far north, the far north-west, the south-west, the central west and everywhere else. After all, it is for the future generations of this State that we are building this infrastructure—for my kids, your kids and their kids. If we are going to make this State great as we progress into the 21st century, we have to do it collectively together.

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (3.44 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in the Budget debate. As other members have said, much of this Budget mirrors that of the

coalition. For those parts where it does, we welcome it; and for those parts where it does not, I will deal with those issues later.

Firstly, I want to make some general comments. Many Government members, and especially the Premier, have said that this Government intends to govern as if it has a majority of 10. This is where the issue of arrogance comes in. Members have seen that before. Those statements certainly sent a chill down my spine, because I remember when the Labor Party had a majority of 19 in this House between 1989 and 1996. That was when most of rural and regional Queensland was shut down. The arrogance of Government members came through at that time. They thought that they knew best. But that was when the railways and the courthouses were closed, the DPI was virtually shut down, and almost every other Government service west of Ipswich was withdrawn. It has taken an enormous battle to try to put those services back in place. I give a warning to this Government: it does not have a majority of 10, and to say so is not speaking the truth. This is a minority Government, just as we had. This arrogance is the sort of thing that people do not want. They want healing, mending, repairing and putting things back in place.

I now wish to quote some statements which I believe are very relevant to this debate. The person who made them said—

"Events in the past year have strained many family farms to the breaking point. You know what they are: flood, drought, crop disease have wiped out entire harvests. Plummeting prices at home, collapsing markets in Asia—where our exports are down 30 percent in one year because of the economic crisis in Asia—these have threatened the livelihood of entire communities.

Many farmers this year will see their net incomes drop by more than 40 percent below what they've earned on average for the last five years ... the drop is much, much steeper"—

elsewhere. He continued—

"If we don't do something and do it now ... we could literally lose thousands and thousands of family farmers this year."

He went on to say—

"So let me say—I don't know how else to say this: There is suffering on the farm. There is agony on the farm. This is a horrible affront to everything we have worked so hard to achieve to lift the

economy ... And we cannot afford to walk away from this session of Congress—I don't care if there is an election; I don't care what else is happening—we can't afford to walk away until we do something to stave off the failure of thousands of productive family farms ... We cannot do it.

Now, let me leave you with one beautiful quote. Franklin Roosevelt once said that American farmers ... 'are the source from which the reservoirs of our nation's strength are constantly renewed.' "

Whatever members might think about President Clinton, that is what he said about American farmers today. That statement could easily apply to Australian farmers, and Queensland farmers in particular. I do believe that there is some feeling amongst members opposite that we have a lot of work to do. I suggest that we do it together. I believe that, in many respects, we can adopt a bipartisan approach. When things get bad, I believe that we can put aside a lot of differences in order to work together to put things right.

I want to mention one issue that has caused a lot of pain and agony in rural and regional Queensland and rural and regional Australia, apart from arrogant Government. I welcome the Budget in that it has more or less mirrored the coalition Budget, 58% of which was to be spent outside the metropolitan area. I welcome that, because that is exactly what has to happen if we are to repair the damage that has been done. We must never let that happen again.

I also mention economic rationalism, about which other members and I have spoken at length in this place. It is something that we are going to hear a lot more about in the future. I believe that it has gone too far, and I think that most people in this House believe that it has gone too far. The damage that it is doing is simply not worth the pain and agony that it is causing out there in the community. One of the people who was responsible for introducing and implementing the Hilmer report has been heard to say that they could not believe that anything could have got so far out of control. That is what has happened. I believe that it is out of control.

Economic rationalism has created a devastated wasteland of jobless people and towns and lives that have been shattered without any satisfactory explanation as to why we are doing it and what good it will do us if we can continue to suffer the pain. I believe it is a scorched-earth policy that, at the very least,

must be reviewed by all the parties concerned—including those south of the border—so that we can get back on the rails and decide whether we want humanity or sterility. I will choose humanity. I want to see throughout Queensland those small country towns, regional towns and cities bustling again, with their economies moving and their people in jobs enjoying the satisfaction of a life worth living. I do not want to see more of the same that they have been putting up with for the last five, six or eight years. I believe it has gone too far. To that end, I commend the Budget.

I also commend the previous Ministers for Primary Industries. I commend the former member for Barambah, Mr Perrett, who I believe began the repair work of putting services back into the DPI: the soil conservationists, the stock inspectors and the forestry workers. He got things going again. That takes time, but he got it well on its way. Similarly, I commend the previous Minister, Mr Rowell, the member for Hinchinbrook. I acknowledge the current Minister for Primary Industries—so far, so good. We are working together. I believe he has the right approach. He is certainly getting around the State. I remind him that it is not just a matter of travelling around the State and gladhanding people, saying g'day, everyone saying, "Oh, what a great fellow", and then saying, "See you later." Eventually, the Minister will have to deliver and ensure that he keeps on delivering so that what is done is seen to be fair dinkum. In many respects, people have felt let down because many times we have not followed through sufficiently to give those people the satisfaction they need to get through the pain that they are suffering. I believe we can do it. It is a massive job, but I know that we can do it if we have the right attitude.

I place on the record a number of issues that I intend to fight for. In the past, others have been fighting for those issues, but they have not fought hard enough. One issue is country-of-origin labelling, especially on food products. Many members will realise that that is done in other countries, including Britain and other European Common Market countries. Using the example of pork, because the importation of pork is causing some strife in Queensland and Australia currently, overseas pork is labelled according to whether it is Danish pork, Swedish pork, Canadian pork or British pork. People can please themselves. If they are feeling like a bit of a change and they want to try pork from another country, they can go ahead and buy it; however, if they are feeling a little patriotic, they can also buy their own pork and know that it is their own.

Honourable members will probably be amazed to learn that recently the Health Ministers threw out the concept of country-of-origin labelling, saying that it was un-Australian. I can hardly believe that, because I think of the reverse as the truth: it is very Australian to be able to identify Australian product and buy it if one wants to. If one cannot identify it, how on earth does one know what one is buying?

Mr Schwarten: On the Darling Downs they sold the rights to that tin away, but I think they bought it back again. Madness.

Mr COOPER: I know what the member is talking about. It is madness. The madness is there for us to handle. The madness is there for us to fix. No-one else will do it. No other country would call orange juice from Brazil their own. Brazil sends in a bit of powder; we add water to it and call it a product of Australia. That has been going on for so long. Why it has taken so long to do anything about it is beyond me. I believe we can make a concerted effort. If people knew that their product was labelled so Australians could choose it, that would make a big difference to them.

Mr Schwarten: I agree.

Mr COOPER: I know the member agrees. I believe that that is the sort of issue about which we can make a concerted effort. People in the community are sick and tired of our fighting and their getting hurt along the way. They would start to respect us again if we were able to demonstrate to them that we were going to put them first for a change and stop the squabbling. There are many problems—and that is one—that we can work together to make right, especially when people are hurting so much.

I turn now to some Budget items outside of the Primary Industries portfolio. It is nice to see the police station proceeding at Lowood. I thought that would get knocked on the head, but it has not. It appears to still be on the capital works list. In 1983, when I first became the member for Roma, it was necessary to start work on obtaining a new police station for Roma. I have been in Parliament for 15 years and it still is not built.

Mr Schwarten: In Roma?

Mr COOPER: Yes. I still have the press release sitting on the wall: Cooper to fight for police station for Roma. They will not let me forget that, and I do not blame them. A member starts to work in that direction, gets it on the capital works list and then it gets knocked off and the member has to fight. Members opposite will find that out if they do

not already know what is involved to win through. In 1989, just as some pegs were to be banged into the ground, Labor took office and knocked it off the list. So the fight had to begin again. This time, Labor left it on the list. I commend that, because the people of Roma will be the beneficiaries. Quite a few police stations have been left on the capital works list. I ask the Minister to please ensure that they go ahead. As many members opposite have said, it is time to forget about where an electorate is and who its member is; capital works should go where the people need them.

I will reiterate a couple problems on which we can work together in a bipartisan way, because if we do not people will be hurt. The deregulation of the dairy industry—another case where thanks are due to Mr Hilmer—is coming along. That will happen whether we like it or not due to pressure from the south. The Victorians are going to move in. Out of the 1,650 dairy farmers left, another 600 will go. We cannot stop that, but we can alleviate their pain.

Mr Swarten: They've done the right thing, those farmers.

Mr COOPER: They have; they have done it well. They have eased that down and done it themselves. They have recognised the problem. They have looked ahead. They are doing that again now. We must recognise that we will lose another 600. That is tragic.

Mr Swarten: Madness.

Mr COOPER: It is the usual madness. They recognise that. It is important for us to try to carry them through to ensure that they can be productive. I know that the member for Logan has been interested in this issue. We have to demonstrate to primary producers that there are other things to do; that if one product fails there is another product for them to move into. In my electorate I have had the experience of seeing many diverse industries. I have spoken about them before. The export market for cut flowers is massive. So many people are starting to move into that field. I have mentioned a number of other products that people can turn to. We have to demonstrate that there are options and that people need not suicide because their industry has collapsed. There are other things to do. We can point them in the right direction and indicate that other people have been there and done that and that they can follow suit.

I do not know that there are too many people around who can fix the wool industry. That is a tragedy, because most Australians have ridden on the sheep's back for a long time. There are other products that people are

starting to look at, from goats to a number of other products, including Australia fauna and flora. We should not have to lose the entire Australian wool industry, but it requires the efforts of better minds than mine. I believe we need to be able to work together to boost that industry and get it back on its feet.

The same applies to the pork industry, which has suffered enormously. There is something that a Government can do. It is no use Governments saying, "There is nothing we can do. You just have to wear that. That is the market forces at work." Someone once said, "There are only about 240-odd pork producers on the downs, so what's it matter?" I explained that that figure has to be multiplied by four to cover the families and children involved.

Mr Swarten: At least four.

Mr COOPER: Yes, they are pretty good breeders. There are produce agencies, vets and other spin-offs. It would be easy for that figure to reach 1,000. They are all important, regardless of number. There is always something Governments can do.

We are trying to get the Atkinson water pipeline from the Wivenhoe Dam to the Atkinson Dam in the Lockyer Valley, which serves a large area. That area is really the salad bowl of south-east Queensland. People in that area are short of water, and not just because of the drought. Even if the dam is filled, they will still be short because the irrigators use that water to produce food to feed the people in the cities and to provide exports. Howard Hobbs commissioned a scoping study. I want the current Minister, Mr Welford—

Mr Swarten: Is that the grey water?

Mr COOPER: No, we want a pipeline from the Wivenhoe Dam to the Atkinson Dam first. The grey water is involved as an adjunct. Again, that is something that we are going to proceed with, as we must. I want to make sure that Minister Welford funds the feasibility study of that pipeline. It has to happen. The last thing that we want is for these people not to have enough water. We have to be able to fund it properly. Of course, they are prepared to contribute.

Mr Swarten interjected.

Mr COOPER: Hopefully not, if we move to fix it instead of waiting for those sorts of things to happen.

I welcome a number of things in the Budget. One of them is Northwatch, which was created out of all the work that was done to get rid of the papaya fruit fly, which occurred recently. There is funding for that of \$3.1m

over four years. That was retained from the coalition's Budget, and we welcome that.

I refer to the development of the Centre for Dry Tropics Agriculture in Bowen. I suppose most members have been to Bowen and would know that it is a dry area. However, it is a very productive area and it would be amazing to see what those farmers could produce if only we could get the water to them. So the idea of siting a Centre for Dry Tropics Agriculture at Bowen is sensible. Thankfully, the \$3.5m over four years that was allocated to the project is continued by this Budget. That is particularly welcome for the horticultural industry between Bowen and Townsville.

The coalition welcomes the funding for the Northern Fisheries Centre and the Green Island Reef Fish Aquaculture Facilities. Again, the coalition Government initiated this funding and would like to see that development proceed. The sugarcane yield improvement initiative matched the coalition's commitment of \$300,000 over three years. Funding for rural employment generation, which is a four-year program for the employment of cadets and trainees in the DPI service delivery centres located in rural communities, will give heart to young people. Of course, we can never create enough such positions, but that initiative is so desperately needed in rural areas. It enables young people to focus on a service delivery job in the Department of Primary Industries. It is a good initiative, and I am pleased to see that it is being continued.

Funding for the Queensland food industry strategy matched the coalition's commitment of \$2m over four years for the development and implementation of safe food and food quality systems across the food supply chain. I am pleased to see that initiative is continued. The funding for the beef industry recovery strategy matched the coalition's commitment of \$500,000 in 1998-99 to assist the recovery of the beef industry from the effects of drought and market changes.

I have to point out where the changes to funding have been made, because that funding was vital to rural producers. One change has been to the stamp duty exemptions on crop insurance and loan refinancing. Throughout the State, primary industries leaders welcomed that concession. It was a tremendous initiative by the coalition. In fact, those industry leaders said that it was the best initiative and the one that they have been battling to receive for a long time. So the discontinuation of that exemption is a massive kick in the guts for battling primary producers. A producer would have saved \$1,200 when

refinancing a loan of \$300,000, or \$3,000 when refinancing a loan of \$750,000. The benefit of that initiative to Queensland primary producers was about \$1.3m. If one says that quickly, it is not a hell of a lot of money. Yet that initiative has been left out of the Budget. That is a tragedy, because it would have helped primary producers enormously, especially the exemptions on crop insurance.

The western Queensland freshwater aquaculture initiative was a million-dollar project aimed at encouraging producers to diversify into freshwater aquaculture in areas where such opportunities have been limited. Western Queensland freshwater aquaculture does not relate to areas way out of Cunnamulla; it relates to the entire western Queensland area. In this Budget, that scheme has gone. I know that funding is allocated for aquaculture in Cairns and Green Island, but both of those schemes were necessary. I would not have dropped that \$1m funding initiative out of the Budget because it would have contributed enormously towards job creation and employment and development opportunities, which is the very thing that we are trying to achieve. We have to seek to make other opportunities for people in those areas and give them a hand, point them in the right direction and give them that support. That is why I think it is a tragedy that that initiative was knocked out of this Budget.

Another significant project to which the coalition made a commitment was a \$20m forest plantation strategy. It was intended to establish up to 10,000 hectares of hardwood and softwood plantations in 1990-2000 to ease the pressure on Queensland native forests. Quite a number of things have been done in this Budget. For example, the heliothis funding was cut from \$4.5m over five years to \$2.8m over four years. That does not reflect the threat of the pest. Members can ask any primary producer about the effect of heliothis and he or she will tell them exactly the same thing. These are funding initiatives that are important for primary industry.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (4 p.m.): It is a pleasure to speak to this Budget, which concentrates substantially on job creation. I will mention some of the objectives of that Budget. In relation to job creation, it makes provision for over 27,000 apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements to be created over the next four years and 6,500 traineeships and apprenticeships to be created within Government departments, local government and statutory authorities. In effect,

the Government is setting an example for the private sector which, to some degree, has let us down significantly in some areas over the past 10 years or so with respect to training, particularly of apprentices.

Another initiative that deserves mention is the cash bonus of \$2,000 that is to be offered to employers and group training schemes that employ additional apprentices in areas of skill shortage, such as tourism, building and construction, and in metals and engineering trades. Of course, all of that is backed up by a very sound Capital Works Program, with a real commitment to spend the money that has been allocated. I think it is important also to note that, in terms of unemployment, this Government has a target. That target has been derided somewhat by members of the Opposition. But we have a target, it is something to work towards, and with respect to job creation it certainly focuses the mind of the Cabinet and indeed the entire Labor team.

I want to take the opportunity in this debate to mention a number of local issues in my electorate and also outline some specific Budget initiatives that affect my electorate. I have spoken about a number of these issues on other occasions, but today I am pleased to say that I can report some significant improvement since the last time I spoke. The first issue that I mention is the Northgate Railway Station car park. At the moment, the former Minister for Transport is not present in the Chamber, but he would be aware that, during his time as Minister, on numerous occasions both through Queensland Rail and through the Minister's office I raised the need for significant funding to be applied to upgrade parking facilities at Northgate Railway Station. The problem was that local residents, particularly on the western side of the station, had been experiencing up to 150 vehicles parking in streets outside the allocated parking areas at that station. I was pleased to note in the coalition's Budget that was tabled earlier this year that money had been allocated for that upgrade. I thank the former Minister for that. He took notice of the representations that I had made. In fact, on one occasion he visited the site. I was very pleased to see that that money has been retained in Labor's Budget, which we are now debating.

There is a difference in the outcome with respect to what was originally proposed under the coalition's Budget and what is now proposed to happen at Northgate. The original proposal was to construct a multilevel car park, which would have significantly encroached onto parking areas on the western side of the station. On behalf of my constituents in that

area, I have made very strong representations that any increase or expansion of car parking facilities should occur on the eastern, non-residential side of the station. I am pleased to report that after extensive lobbying and discussions with Queensland Rail's infrastructure engineers, a decision has now been made to construct that facility on the eastern side of the station, much to the delight of my constituents.

Mr Sullivan: That would have been a great eyesore, that multilevel one on the western side, too.

Mr ROBERTS: It would have been a terrible eyesore, and it would not have solved all of the problems in that area. In fact, it would have exacerbated the traffic difficulties that would have been experienced. It certainly would have got the cars off the streets, but the traffic problems would have increased.

Mr Lucas: You are well known as a great advocate for your local constituents, and that's another one of your victories.

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for Lytton for that observation.

The other issue relates to Zillmere Railway Station. Again, I raise this matter. I acknowledge that the member for Aspley has also raised it on a number of occasions. Indeed, at the last election the Labor candidate for Aspley campaigned very strongly on this issue of improving access both to the station at Zillmere and across the station, particularly for the many elderly residents who live in the area and mothers with young children in prams. During the implementation of an upgrade program to provide a third track, Queensland Rail money was allocated to provide lifts to that station. I will be following that matter through to ensure that that access is provided as speedily as possible.

The other issue that I make particular mention of with respect to this Budget is the welcome reintroduction of the Community Recreation Facility program. A figure of \$35m has been allocated to this program, which essentially is targeted at providing needy communities with much-needed community sport and recreation facilities. It is crucial that that money be allocated to communities of most need in this State. I have made a particular claim with the present Minister, as I have with previous Ministers, for the community of Zillmere.

The community of Zillmere is in dire need of an injection of substantial amounts of money to improve facilities. In 1995, Zillmere was identified in a Department of Sport and

Recreation report as the area most needing community facility development in Brisbane. It was ranked number 10 in Queensland as an area in need of community recreation facility development. I have already contacted the new Minister, Mr Gibbs, in relation to this matter and have received at least a favourable response in terms of recognising the need in that community. Next week I have organised meetings with local sporting clubs and representatives of the police citizens youth club to discuss possible partnerships to tender an expression of interest when that program is formally launched by the department. I look forward to a recognition by the Government, the Minister and his department of the special needs of the Zillmere community and, hopefully, the signing of the cheque at some stage so that that facility can go ahead.

I have mentioned the community of Zillmere a number of times in debates in this place, because it is an area that I feel very strongly about. If there was an area in my electorate or, indeed, in Brisbane that deserves particular attention from Government departments, it is that community. Under successive Governments in the past 20 or 30 years, not a great deal of money has been spent there. Since I have been the member, I have taken every opportunity possible to draw the needs of the community of Zillmere and the surrounding area of Boondall to the attention of the Government.

Zillmere is a well-established suburb, consisting of large areas of public housing that was built in the heyday of the 1950s and 1960s when a lot of public housing suburbs were built. As I have said, a significant injection of funds is needed to lift the community. Zillmere has a number of social problems that can be dealt with only by concentrated action—not just by bricks and mortar but also by the implementation of programs to develop the community infrastructure and the social networks that are required to make communities healthy.

I notice in the Budget that quite a significant amount of money has been allocated for urban redevelopment. The Minister for Public Works and Housing is in the Chamber and I have brought the needs of Zillmere to his attention. Refurbishment programs will be undertaken in the next 12 months in that area, and I will be certainly asking for a lot more on behalf of my constituents.

Mr Schwarten: Those electors should be very proud of the efforts that you are making on their behalf.

Mr ROBERTS: They deserve it and I will continue to raise their needs as often as possible.

I do not want to spend my entire time talking about the community of Zillmere, but I feel quite passionate about it. Up until about 12 months ago, Zillmere State School had a groundsman. However, due to the grounds-care policy, when the school fell below the magical figure of 200 students, under the coalition Government it lost its groundsman. With a number of other people in the community, I raised significant protest about that and about the fact that other schools had also lost their groundsmen.

Mr Lucas: Wynnum Central.

Mr ROBERTS: There are a number of others. To his credit, former Minister Quinn examined what I believe was quite an unfair grounds-care policy and he upgraded the school. Zillmere received some increase in funds, although not to the level that was required. Whereas I and the school community were appreciative of the extra funds that were received, a full-time groundsman was not reinstated. I have given a commitment to the community that, on its behalf, I will continue to lobby to hopefully get a full-time groundsman reinstated.

The difficulty with communities such as Zillmere is that when their small schools lose their full-time groundsmen, it is one more disadvantage factor that compounds the other disadvantage factors that exist. It is important that we give those communities a bit more consideration. I intend to continue to raise this matter with the current Minister. Hopefully, one day we will have some great news for the community in terms of the facilities and the groundsman support that we can provide to that school.

With respect to policing issues, the Budget allocates \$2m for the commencement of the construction of a new 24-hour divisional police headquarters at Hendra to house the Clayfield police division. Currently, both the Clayfield and Boondall police divisions are housed in the suburb of Boondall within my electorate. That is not the most efficient or effective way of operating police divisions. This money was allocated under the coalition's Budget and I am pleased to see that it has been retained. The location of the new police divisional headquarters in Hendra, which is just outside my electorate in the electorate of the member for Clayfield, will provide significant benefits in terms of local policing in my electorate, particularly in Toombul, Nundah

and Northgate. That initiative will be well received.

Another matter that I have raised a number of times in this place is the needs of the Banyo Police Station. No specific Budget allocations have been made for the Banyo Police Station, but I am pleased to report that after persistent lobbying, knocking on doors and talking to whoever will listen, I have managed to negotiate some improvements to the way in which policing services are operated out of the Banyo Police Station. Ultimately my objective is to badger whichever Minister or commissioner I can lock in a room for a few moments—

Mrs Rose: And you do. You have chewed my ear on many occasions.

Mr ROBERTS: I have met with the Minister for Emergency Services on a number of issues. My objective is to hopefully receive support for the proposal that Banyo become a fully fledged Police Beat station. It has not got that far yet and I have indicated to the local inspector, the assistant commissioner and, indeed, the Minister that I will continue to pursue the issue of the upgrading of Banyo Police Station.

However, we have agreed on a significant improvement, which is that new operational guidelines will be developed over the next few weeks for the Banyo Police Station. The first point of those new operational guidelines is that we will reduce the pool of police who are rostered to work in the station from approximately 60 police down to 15 police. Therefore, it will be more likely to have an officer with more local knowledge on the roster, which is a significant improvement. Also, the operational guidelines that we will negotiate will provide for a core time when officers will be in the station, and another core time when officers will be out in the community, mixing with local businesses and residents and visiting local schools. Banyo has moved from a situation where officers were substantially tied to the station. They were stuck behind desks, waiting for people to come off the streets to conduct business. Now, officers will be moving out into the community and will be conducting more community-based police activities. That is a significant step forward. I thank the Assistant Commissioner and my local inspector, Dennis Houston, for their cooperation.

During a meeting that I had with Assistant Commissioner Honor, he made a commitment to maintaining the satellite stations that exist under the clustering system, particularly in the Boondall division. I welcome that commitment.

The Banyo Police Station is one of three that falls within that category in the Boondall division. I am very pleased with the assistant commissioner's commitment to maintaining those stations and also with his desire to improve the use of resources as they become available.

Briefly, I wish to mention a couple of other items in the Budget that affect my electorate. \$380,000 has been allocated to purchase land for a new ambulance station in Nundah. The relocation of this station is justified. The current location is restrictive in terms of access to arterial and main roads. That Budget allocation, which has been maintained by the Labor Government, is welcomed. Also, \$900,000 has been allocated to provide a new site for the amalgamated Hamilton and Nundah Fire Stations. Although I welcome the upgrade, there are some issues relating to that amalgamation and relocation that I have been taking up with the Minister. Hopefully, those matters can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Finally, I note that the Budget maintains the \$35.2m that was allocated under the previous Government to rectify the Nundah bottleneck. I note also that the decision to go ahead with that work on the bottleneck was announced by Jim Elder in Nundah prior to the changeover of Government in 1996. Over the past few weeks there has been quite a bit of uncertainty and some mischievous rumours in the Nundah community about the funding for this project. I was very pleased to see that for this financial year \$3.6m has been allocated for that project. For the benefit of those who might have been a bit mischievous in respect of the information being spread in the community about this matter, I note that the coalition's Budget allocated only \$2.8m this financial year for that project. That should put the matter to rest. The project will proceed. More money has been allocated this year. We look forward to that matter being resolved in an appropriate time frame. With those few points, I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (4.21 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill, which is an extremely important piece of legislation. At the moment the world economy is very unstable. Many of our trading partners are experiencing great difficulty. We are very dependent upon the soundness of the economies of our Asian trading partners—the Indonesians, the Koreans, the Japanese and so on. In the future we may have to look more to other countries—for example, Europe, the US and so on—for export opportunities.

Our exports are critical to the growth and the development of the State. Mineral and agricultural exports are major contributors to the Queensland economy. Currently, the share market is experiencing volatility; it is just like a roller-coaster. Just when people think there is some stability, the volatility returns. Over the past six months or so, billions of dollars have been written off the value of shares. That instability poses a major problem for Queensland and its economy which, as I said, depends heavily on exports. If jobs are to be created, our industries have to remain productive. Although we have growth in the State in a number of areas, our export economy is particularly important.

During 1997-98 we saw growth of 4.75%, which was a major plus. The former coalition Government played a major role in enhancing the wellbeing of many people throughout the State. Achieving economic growth takes time. The fact that we have one good year does not mean that the economy will necessarily continue to grow and create further job opportunities. These things take time. During 1997-98, employment growth was about 3.2%. Maintenance of that growth is extremely important for our future. However, irrespective of whichever side of politics is in power, I believe it will be difficult to maintain the growth rate that we had in Queensland over the past year.

There have been minimal changes to the coalition's Budget. That just goes to show that this Labor Government recognises that what we proposed was reasonable and fair. Certainly, there have been some adjustments here and there, but generally speaking the concept put forward in relation to growth and job prospects was by and large adhered to by the present Labor Government.

I wish to address a few areas of significance to my electorate and to speak about the support that it has received in the Budget. For example, schools need to be built in the electorate. The school at Goondi, which is in the northern part of the electorate, will benefit from the provision of a new building—a full general learning block—the total cost of which was about \$592,000, of which about \$430,000 will be provided in this financial year. The principal, Arthur Sclipa, will be pleased about that. I visited the school only a few weeks ago, towards the end of August. They were certainly ready to move to that block. I believe most of the money has been expended. That school now has a more solid footing. The existing temporary accommodation was very difficult for teachers and students to contend with.

I thank the former Attorney-General, Mr Beanland, who was involved in the allocation of \$750,000 for the provision of a lift at the Innisfail Court House. The external painting of that building has been completed, which is a great achievement during this wetter period of the year. I believe the internal painting will be completed over the next five to six weeks. The former Attorney-General recognised the needs of Innisfail when he made provision for the painting of that courthouse and the installation of a lift.

Mourilyan Harbour is a very important area on the coastal strip. A lot of sugar is produced from the mills from Babinda right down to Tully. Some of the mills in the Hinchinbrook Shire area send their molasses up to Mourilyan Harbour. The boat passage was dredged some years ago. The harbour itself is now being dredged. We will be able to provide additional wharves and generally improve the port so that other business can be conducted there. Some \$710,000 is being spent on that work, which was supported by both the coalition and the current Government.

Low sugar levels are causing desperate problems. The c.c.s. level in the northern region of the State is such that many farmers are doing it tough. When I was the Minister for Primary Industries, I was able to allocate \$300,000 over a three-year period to do something about that problem. I notice that the current Government has provided \$300,000. Just how that money will be expended is somewhat unclear. One set of documents speaks about north Queensland yields, yet another speaks about Queensland in general. Some confusion exists as to where that money is intended to be spent.

It is important that this problem of low sugar yields is recognised. It will be difficult to combat. We are currently experiencing low world sugar prices. Up till now we have been insulated through the single desk seller arrangement and our ability to sell our sugar on a forward basis. The prices that we are receiving for this year's crop are probably comparable to those we have received in the past. However, that will not be the case next year, because of the current extremely low prices. At present the harvesting conditions are terrible. It has been raining particularly heavily. Some areas have had up to 50 millimetres of rain in the past week to 10 days. Some northern areas have had up to 16 and 17 inches overnight. It is phenomenal weather. The farmers are certainly not unaccustomed to wet weather, and having it at this time of the year is making things extremely difficult.

Not only will it interrupt the sugar level and the harvesting, which is so critical, it will also cause major problems for next year's crop. When I was in the area recently, I saw fields totally inundated with water. It is highly likely that the germination from those fields will be particularly poor. With reduced prices, low sugar levels and so on next year, I think the area will do it particularly tough. It is hard to understand that areas with such good soil and rain levels can have such great difficulty in providing enough income for many families.

The Clump Point boat ramp is another initiative. To date, \$29,000 has been spent. A total of \$311,000 will be spent on this boat ramp in the very picturesque area of Mission Beach. From it you can look over to Dunk Island. It is probably one of the prize areas of the State in which to live. It boasts the islands, the reef and the hinterland, with rainforest and so on. It is an extremely popular area. The provision of these facilities is important for tourism. A lot of people come from the inland and spend a great deal of time at these locations. People from the mining industry come over when they are on leave. These types of facilities will certainly enhance the area and give an opportunity for many people to take advantage of this very pretty area of Queensland. Also, \$1m will be spent on a power feeder line to Mission Beach. The area is growing quite rapidly. It has a lot to offer, as I have said. We need those resources.

I fought for a long time for the Ingham TAFE facility. It dropped out of the Budget in the early 1990s, but we got it back on again and it is very pleasing to see that some \$3.7m will be spent by the State. \$800,000 is coming from the Hinchinbrook Shire Council. Of the State's funding, some \$2.715m will be spent in the next financial year. The foundations are being laid at present. Work did not stop, despite the wet weather. They have been digging the foundations out, pumping the water out of the trenches. I expect the pouring of those foundations to start very shortly.

Yanks Jetty on Orpheus Island is a pontoon with a walkway on to it. The jetty has been there for some time and, unfortunately, some of it has rusted out. It is now being reinstated by the Hinchinbrook Shire Council. I understand that on Monday tenders will be called for the reinstatement of that jetty. The area is certainly very picturesque. A lot of fish swim around that jetty. It is good landing point for people who just want some recreation. Instead of going on to the island, they can go to the jetty and sit on the benches and in the shade. It is a great facility for the boating public that uses those waters.

Roads are a major problem throughout the electorate. I have talked about the very heavy rain we have had recently, but early January was also quite wet. The roads are breaking up due to saturation. It is very difficult to keep any road in a reasonable condition with these enormous amounts of rain right throughout the year. Great difficulties are being experienced in relation to both council roads and the main highway. In fact, the shire had to increase its rating to the rural community to make sure road maintenance was covered.

The Tully area has similar problems. Massive expansions are occurring there. B-doubles and semitrailers are travelling something like 100 kilometres along the highway to bring sugarcane from the southern area around Cardwell right through to Mourilyan mill and South Johnstone mill. I note that there are problems with the road around the El Arish area. A road that looked to be in a very good condition last year is starting to break up. The coalition provided something like \$20m in a sugar package to address this situation, but because of the rapid growth of the area, and considering its valuable contribution to Queensland's economy, I think it needs extra recognition. I believe we need a good road system there. I do not think we have an alternative. There are B-doubles travelling on the same roads as school buses. There are wooden bridges that do not have the capacity to carry the loads. Very often when a cane harvester loaded on a low loader has to go over a wooden bridge, the cane harvester has to come off while the semitrailer and prime mover drive across the bridge and then the harvester is walked across and reloaded. It is a situation that might be expected in the Third World. It is very disappointing that this sort of thing is happening right throughout north Queensland. The Johnstone Shire has something like 40 wooden bridges. A lot of those bridges were built a long time ago. Suddenly we are seeing a massive change in harvesting practices, and the mode of transport used for the cane crop.

Another important issue is the SIIP package funding. This was brought in during 1993-94, during a Federal election. Some \$40m was provided for that package. I recall that \$19m came from Queensland and \$19m came from the Federal Government. That was to do a great deal of work in sugar growing areas right throughout Queensland. Believe it or not, there is a lot of design work to finish. Areas such as Loder Creek, Mandam and Ripple Creek need this work done. The recent heavy rain has made it particularly difficult for

those farmers to get their crops off and to plant next year's crop. There is a similar situation in the Riversdale/Murray area. We want to get that project up and running because of much the same problem that I am talking about in the Ingham district.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier in North Queensland, Mike Reynolds, was in my area the other day. I wrote to the Premier about the problems we are having, which have been exacerbated by an unnatural season. There is little question about that. With the sugar industry, there is a cycle. Growers do not simply plant a crop and plough it out the next year. If that cycle is interrupted, substantial losses can occur. That is exactly what is happening at present. People cannot harvest; they cannot plant. It is too late to plant now. The crops have been inundated. Production in the next year and beyond certainly will be severely impeded.

We need to address the situation where a package has been provided but is being held up by the planning and design work and the rigmarole of advertising, and letting every man and his dog have an opportunity to say whether they like the scheme. We get a lot of criticism from the green movement over what we are doing. I think it is important for the State that we get those projects to a point of completion and deliver the type of relief that they were originally designed to provide.

I will go quickly through some issues relating to the Department of Primary Industries. As mentioned by the member for Crows Nest, there has been a reduction in the heliothis funding program. It is down to \$2.38m from \$4.25m. There are major problems throughout the cotton and grain growing areas of western Queensland. If we cannot stem the problem of heliothis—there are a number of measures that DPI can look at—there is a prospect that the \$600m crop could be severely affected. There is a range of other grain crops that are severely affected by heliothis. The Dry Tropics Research Station, which the coalition announced in the last Budget with an allocation of \$3.5m, is going ahead. The area has enormous potential. Bowen is an area that is ideally suited to growing a range of horticultural crops.

I would like to go on very quickly to some of the things that the coalition was doing in Government. The Callide/Dawson Centre, which is an extension of the Biloela Centre, was opened at a cost of \$2m. It is very important to the cotton, wheat, barley and sorghum breeding program. Midge resistance was one of the key projects undertaken by the

centre. I also turned the sod at the Wacol Tick Fever Research Centre. That project was worth some \$5.3m. The vaccination process has a benefit of something like \$20m. I believe it is very important that we have such a facility for animals to which ticks are attracted. It is important that we create some resistance by way of vaccines.

The Mareeba Conference Centre was established at a cost of \$1m. This was established in association with AQIS. That centre is vitally important to the north. We were working very well with Northwatch. The Federal and State Governments worked in conjunction on that program. I was also involved with the Climate Control Centre, which was established at a cost of \$15m. Some \$7.5m will be provided to this centre over three years. The live cattle trade—

Time expired.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (Leader of the One Nation Party) (4.41 p.m.): I am grateful for the opportunity to rise in the House to speak about the Budget. The Beattie Labor Budget is well-named as the yawn Budget—the ho-hum Budget—partly because of two Government backbenchers who fell asleep during the Minister's reading of the Budget Speech. This proved a better vote of no confidence than anyone on this side of the House could have ever mounted. The Budget also appears to be a part plagiarism of the previous coalition Budget.

It is pleasing to see that some of the funds that were earmarked for Caboolture are still there. The funding is still there to complete a 24-bed mental health unit at the Caboolture Hospital. The funding of \$24.8m for the co-located private hospital is still there. Thank you very much. The funding for the Tullawong State School of \$1.2m is still there, thank you. The upgrade of the Mayne-Caboolture railway line is also welcome, as is the replacement of the Redcliffe watch-house, which the police and residents of Redcliffe have been waiting for for such a long time. It is great to see.

My concern, though, is that this Budget is not going to be the great job creator that it professes to be. I cannot see how it is going to keep our unemployed youth off the streets. This is probably the best Liberal Budget that Labor could have managed. This is a Budget that has been put together by the same bureaucrats who put together the previous Budget. We can read their stamp all over it. All the Beattie Labor minority Government has done is snip the figures around the edges and, consequently, the results are primarily the same.

This is a Budget put together by the bureaucratic mandarins intent on building bureaucratic castles at public expense. This is a Budget where tinkering around the edges is done under the cover of applying Labor election promises. What boggles the imagination is what the Beattie Labor minority Government hoped to get away with by its deception. The Government has been caught out by both the media and the coalition, the latter having put together the original set of figures.

There is nothing really revolutionary about this Budget. It is a ho-hum Budget, a yawn Budget, a Budget that is really going not too many places. It is a Budget built on tax and the wishful hopes of Labor that the Queensland economy will generate its own momentum and that, somehow, its Capital Works Program will work the miracles that the Government needs.

To the extent that this Budget is a big spending Budget, it is also a big taxing Budget and therein lies the major problem. Taxation, as promoted by both Liberal and Labor, has reached such an impasse that it is actually depressing job creation and working against jobs. Added to this tax problem is the Federal Government policy of exporting our industries overseas and cancelling the jobs they create. Put these failures of policy together with the normal job shedding caused by the growth in technology, and this Beattie Labor minority Government is facing a major problem in delivering on its policy of jobs, jobs and more jobs. Unless there is some dramatic and fundamental economic reform in Canberra, Premier Beattie's pledge of jobs, jobs, jobs is about as plausible as the achievement of Bob Hawke's pledge that no young Australian would live in poverty.

The tax element of the State Budget is already alarmingly high and will have a massive undermining effect. This should be obvious to members opposite. Before Premier Beattie again drafts up a Budget for his Government, it would be wise for him to take a serious look at the extent of taxes taken back by the Federal Government. Indeed, the Beattie Government should note the amount of Federal tax money taken back from the State by the Liberal/Labor club in Canberra—the amount of fringe benefits tax, superannuation tax, PAYE tax, and all the other taxes that a State Government must pay. The amount of tax paid by State and local governments is depressingly high, especially now, and is a measure of the inefficiency, the double taxation and the tax

mess that the Liberal/Labor club has inflicted upon all Australians.

It is also a measure of the failures inherent in this Beattie minority Labor Government Budget. Seen in this light, the Budget could be only tinkered with around the edges by Labor, ostensibly to honour its election promises which, it must be remembered, were rejected by more than 60% of the present voters of Queensland. Under the Beattie minority Labor Government the people of Queensland are receiving what they voted against because of these fundamental problems built into the Budget.

The Beattie minority Government has only tinkered around the edges with this Budget. No wonder the Beattie minority Government does not want community based referenda—the people just might get the change they want. The extent to which the Federal Government is ripping off the State Government and local government is the same as that to which our State's sovereignty has been eroded by the Liberal/Labor club in Canberra. This is an erosion that has been opposed and attacked by the Liberal/Labor club in this House: yes, attacked with a feather; opposed with a ritual of defeatism; opposed with only feathers and froth.

This should be a major issue in the current Federal election, but there is only silence from the Liberal/Labor club. They are presently shadow boxing about how they will hammer Australian voters with more tax slugs. This week Prime Minister Howard has exposed Labor's plan to increase taxes after the Federal election. But, unfortunately, Mr Howard does not come to this election with clean hands either. His GST is just another tax proposed during pressing economic times and has the real potential to overturn his best intentions by keeping old taxes as well as imposing new taxes upon all Australians.

The new tax schemes dreamed up by Labor's Evatt Foundation are proof that Labor is not fair dinkum. When taxes rise, the result will impact on what we do in this Parliament. How effective will our Budget planning be? If the Australian public allows, or votes for, increased taxes now or in the future and allows the old parties to get away with raising taxes yet again, future Budget planning will be more difficult than it is today. Creating jobs will be more difficult. The entire tax mess that the old parties got us into must be addressed.

Even the Honourable the Premier has raised the importance of regressive taxes on unemployment, but he did so to lambaste the Opposition and score political points, not to

solve the problem of overtaxation. This Budget is built upon taxes taken from Australians. The Labor Party in all States, when in Government, is expert at throwing other people's money at other people's problems but takes all the credit to itself.

This is a Budget that throws money at people. If any credit is forthcoming from this exercise, the credit is due to those who worked long hours to earn the money which was taken from them for redistribution to others so that Labor could take the credit. There is no pledge in this Budget to support innovative change to the tax structure so as to gain relief for Queensland Budgets of the future. There is no pledge to electors. With these points in mind—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. There is also crossfire. The member deserves to be heard.

Mr FELDMAN: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker.

With these points in mind, where then is the Premier's challenge to members of this House to get out into the community to fight for a fair tax system by opposing the GST of the coalition—to fight the GST to help out tourism? His challenge is worthless and without substance. There is no challenge, because the Premier and his Budget have already fled from the field of a fair tax system.

The Budget confirms the importance of trade in introducing funds for jobs, jobs, jobs. With that in mind, one would have to wonder why the Labor Party continues its efforts to convince our Asian neighbours and trading partners that there is a racism problem in Queensland. Let us settle once and for all Labor's involvement in the hate campaign to smear One Nation in Asia. This has boomeranged back to Labor and caused disinformation and misinformation to be spread in Asia to advance Labor's domestic hate campaign and to marginalise One Nation for crude political advantage in Australia. They have done this for so long and so often that the leopard just cannot change its spots.

If one believes Labor and Labor's mates within some tourism factions, including some academic and multicultural factions, this distorted and misconceived concept canvassed in Asia is causing a loss of business in Australia because of an Asian backlash. This conveniently ignores the disaster that has crippled the tiger economies. The truth of the matter is quite different. The

fundamental cause of the alleged problem is directly tied to Labor and its organised program to vilify One Nation. This program is directed at preventing issues being properly addressed, because Labor cannot and will not address issues such as immigration and multiculturalism. This includes the massive abuse and waste involved in its long-term policies of denigration. Labor has resorted to name-calling and smears. Labor itself is primarily responsible for any problems in Asia, because it is an agent of its own misfortune. Labor's organised vilification program is ably exposed by the best-selling author of *Among the Barbarians*, Mr Paul Sheehan, who accuses Labor of squandering billions of taxpayers' dollars to build up a sinister anti-Australian apparatus in the multicultural, Aboriginal and associated industries. He exposes Labor as viewing these areas as Labor Party preserves and thus recipients of huge Federal largess.

Only recently, this industry spent most of its time swearing at Pauline Hanson on ABC radio. It got so bad that selective monitoring revealed that some 15 vilifying news blurbs were aired in just three hours—and some 25 in four hours of air time. And all they did was badmouth Hanson and One Nation. Never, ever did they get down to the policies. All the foreign language critics said exactly what Labor told them to say. But the Prime Minister says that the ABC is biased. He thinks he is hard done by. One Nation supporters, after monitoring the ABC radio programs, would not be upset by his revelations about the ABC, but they would certainly consider that he got off reasonably fairly when it comes to being vilified by a biased media.

The conclusions reached by Mr Sheehan have been confirmed by the local media in recent days—by no less than a former Minister of the Hawke Labor Government, who identified millions of dollars spent on Labor. He questioned if such money was well spent. He revealed that the beneficiaries of public funding were spending their time badmouthing Australia and Australians as racists overseas and channelling this untruthful denigration of Australia into the foreign language media. And this is where the Premier will find his problems. This is where the Premier must direct his attention. The Premier was prepared to spend public money on an Asian misadventure, but this adventure will be a total waste of money unless he roots out the problem which lies deep in Labor and its well-funded dirty tricks division of deliberate hate, fear and smear.

The economic problems hurting Asia will eventually hurt Australia. But One Nation

members in this House have had a gutful of Labor blaming everything and anything on Pauline Hanson. We have heard the blame on the GST, we have heard the blame on One Nation, on Pauline Hanson and on the economic problems in Asia itself. One would think that perhaps no industry could exist in Australia after hearing such bleatings.

The Asian economies are in big trouble, and their problems will not go away quickly. One Nation volunteered to join the Premier's delegation to Asia, but the Premier had left and rejected that out of hand. Instead, he used a public-funded push to continue the Labor campaign of denigration against One Nation. People in Asia are not getting the message. They are not getting the facts. They are not getting what they are asking for, which is the truth. They are getting Labor misinformation. Asia is suffering because of international economic troubles. Australia could fall into the same hole if our Federal Government does not put its house into better order. This is a fact of life: One Nation will join any—I repeat: One Nation will join any reasonable and honest push to assist the Queensland economy as long as that push is bipartisan and not just another Labor Party hate trip.

This Budget is not a particularly good Budget, but it is probably the best that the Beattie minority Labor Government can do. One Nation has pointed out some of the problems. The Premier knows now where those problems are, and I ask him now if he could come clean and really clean up those problems where they exist within the Labor ranks and within the media. I say to the Premier: give us something better; give us something to deliver. If he is fair dinkum about delivering a good Budget, we would be pleased to help him in any way with respect to the Asian problems that he is facing. And we will join and assist in any way possible to correct the misinformation that has led to the overseas problems—or the perceived problems.

I ask members to listen and to ensure that the Premier gets the message that One Nation will assist, One Nation will help, as long as the misinformation, the denigration and the vilification finish, because that is the only way that it can help. That is the only way that things will change. One Nation is prepared to help. As has been said before, I say to members here: vilify, degrade, detest One Nation at your own peril. Listen to the 438,000 people who voted this way. Listen to them. Listen to those people who are not racist in any way, shape or form. Let them assist you in

your endeavours to create employment opportunities in this country, to return a sense of normality and a sense of respect to this great State of Queensland and to Australia. I again say: listen. Listen to what One Nation has said today to assist in raising the prospect of employment in this great State. Listen.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.57 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise in this debate to speak to one element of the Budget that is a great love of mine and, indeed, the source of great interest and passion for many of my constituents, that is, music and, in particular, contemporary music. There is certainly debate about what is meant by contemporary music. Some people regard it as just pop music or rock and roll. However, I believe that a wider definition is music that is simply being played, created and primarily transacted commercially today.

In terms of the Budget papers, I refer specifically to the initiatives under the heading Community Culture in the Budget. The Treasurer outlined the \$3.5m that is to be allocated over four years, particularly for youth initiatives. The Treasurer outlined the idea of a venue concept to provide young bands with substantial rehearsal space and facilities within which to create video clips, a music mentor program to improve access to contemporary music tuition—

Mr Hamill: You know the former Premier criticised that program in his speech.

Mr FENLON: I am sure that the former Premier would not appreciate this program. He is probably one of those people whom the great bard Shakespeare would have been considering when he said—and I paraphrase: the man who hath no music in himself, let no such man be trusted.

Mr Hamill: And we don't trust the Leader of the Opposition, do we?

Mr FENLON: Indeed, if the man does not have music, he should not be trusted.

I continue with those initiatives. They also include a youth entertainment initiative, which will offer affordable live entertainment, particularly in provincial cities and rural areas, and further radio traineeships to enhance skills and opportunities for young people in the media and broadcasting industry. I welcome those initiatives in the music industry. However, I wish to address those very welcome initiatives not only in the cultural and artistic context but also within the overall context of this Budget, in particular with regard to its emphasis upon job creation. I hope to place firmly in the consciousness of all Government Ministers the

significance of the music industry. That is what it is: a very substantial industry. As an important generator of economic prosperity and employment, especially for the young, it is a very significant industry.

For too long, Governments have ignored those economic realities and treated the music industry as it treats areas of the arts industry that require subsidies, such as the opera and the ballet. They are viewed as arts that must be provided as a public service. The full economic import and job-creation import of the music industry has been ignored. It has been seen as a soft area. In an industrial sense, how the music industry works is viewed by some as a mystery. That is not surprising, because it is a very complex industry. It is time to turn that apprehension on its head. It is time for all arms of Government to treat the music industry seriously and to treat it as an industry like all others.

The music industry is substantial. The ABS business of music estimate confirms that the music industry in Australia is at the level of \$1.2 billion per year. Australia has a 2% share of the international marketplace. The \$1.2 billion is not to be scoffed at. One realises that that is a very substantial figure when one considers that the mining industry is at the level of \$19 billion. We see entire departments set up to deal with the mining industry. We see whole arms of Government directed at securing infrastructure for the mining industry. We see the Office of the Co-ordinator General in this State having an auspicious history in terms of developing and securing the mining industry; however, nothing comparable is provided for the music industry. The cultural/recreational services industry is \$11 billion. The accommodation, cafes and restaurants industry is \$10 billion. Again we have Government departments that are entirely devoted towards promotion and industry development of those sectors. Where is the music industry represented within Government? It is time that such a place in Government was created to drive job creation, especially for young people.

The music industry is a very significant industry by any measure; however, Queensland's share is extremely low. Therefore, our potential to create jobs is substantial. If we expand our share of the Australian market and the international marketplace there is an enormous potential for job creation and economic wealth generation. A calculation that has been provided to me indicates that \$87.5m has been lost to the southern States because of the loss of just five acts that have gone south. That list includes

Savage Garden, which, I am proud to say, came from Queensland. That is an enormous tragedy in terms of job creation prospects and economic wealth for this State. We have ignored the prospects that are right before us—those fine young people whose skills are a result of the enormous surge of musical creativity and disciplined training in our primary and secondary school system. That is something of which we should be very proud. However, at the end of the day, the outcomes of that training are being vaporised. They are going to other States and overseas. There is one simple reason for that: Queensland has not developed the proper infrastructure that is necessary to support our Queensland domestic music industry. In particular, the intellectual property that is a crucial factor has been allowed to pass out of the State. Along with it have gone much of the associated economic activity and many of the jobs. The intellectual property is a very crucial factor and must be retained in this State.

What are those infrastructure elements? They include record companies, music publishing companies, recording studios, radio stations, management divisions, training divisions, live sound stage divisions, and artists and repertoire departments to source industry-viable Queensland recording artists. Those are elements of the industry that need to be created in Queensland and supported. How that is done needs to be the subject of much further policy development in this State to complement the very worthwhile initiatives in the Budget.

Unless those very worthwhile initiatives are complemented by policy—which I hope is being developed within the Government—I fear that those very worthwhile moneys could be wasted. We might as well take the young artists in question to the New South Wales and Victorian recording studios with a case full of money and hand it over to those States. That is all we are doing in terms of giving our young artists grants along the lines of the traditional arts model and sending them off to their counterparts in the other States. Unless we link that policy very substantially with a policy to develop infrastructure, we run the very real risk of wasting that money. It needs to be spent in conjunction with a very strategic approach to industry development.

I am very grateful for the briefings that have already been provided to me and the very positive reaction that I have received from the Minister for The Arts and also the office of the Minister for State Development and their departmental representatives. I know that those intentions certainly are at the heart of

those Ministries, but I believe we have a way to go in terms of coordinating that approach to ensure that those moneys are properly spent on building infrastructure.

One way of providing that infrastructure is via some form of Government owned enterprise that may be set up to be an industry incubator to nurture those young musicians to further development. I hope that the Music Mentor Program is also developed to provide good training opportunities that do not exist in isolation. Those opportunities should not be allowed to vaporise with the young performers and be wasted. I hope that the Music Mentor Program provides some training opportunities that are articulated with the other opportunities for training through other training institutions and opportunities both in Queensland and other parts of Australia.

I hope that consideration is given to the Music Mentor Program so that musicians can be provided with assistance and not left isolated and so that there is a progression from practising the guitar in the garage through to managing a business both at a national and indeed an international level. A good artist, with potential, can go that far. We need to provide the articulated progression that will allow these young artists to move from the very basics of their performance right through to selling their products at a national and international level. I believe that we have a long way to go and I hope that these moneys will be spent very wisely in coordinating the various elements of this industry. We need to build this industry from scratch. We are losing these young artists to other States. Although we have some very worthwhile people in the Queensland music industry, the industry is not well coordinated. We need to put together those disparate parts, with Government assistance, to drive the appropriate infrastructure base that will take these young artists forward. Many young artists are coming through our school system. The contemporary music school at the South Bank Institute of TAFE has been operating for some years. I believe that those young people have been frustrated in terms of developing their careers in Queensland.

I also believe that the music industry is at the threshold of a great era of expansion. Technologically, we are on the verge of a new era both in terms of the digital development of musical production and Internet access. If we address this market properly, we can take advantage of being able to sell Queensland's product directly into households via the Internet. That can be done by downloading musical products to a facility that some

households are now developing to cut, to burn, their own CDs. So we can sell the musical product directly from the Internet down to a CD, and even provide a CD cover and associated promotional paraphernalia, to households. We are on the threshold of this revolution in the music industry both nationally and internationally. The music industry is a great industry and we need to take full advantage of it so that our young people can create jobs.

I will finish with a very inspired statement on behalf of all musicians in my electorate and throughout Queensland by Arthur O'Shaughnessy, who lived from 1844 to 1881. In his ode he said—

"We are the music makers. We are the dreamers of dreams."

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (5.13 p.m.): I rise to speak, firstly, about the postponement of the further concessions on stamp duty for refinancing, the postponement of further concessions on land tax and also to introduce a concept to this Parliament called social capabilities. In relation to the postponement of the further concessions on stamp duty, I refer to a speech made on 14 May this year by the then Treasurer, Joan Sheldon, who stated—

"... a stamp duty exemption will be provided on refinancing of loans and other financial instruments.

...

For small businesses, there is an indicative saving of \$1,200 on refinancing a \$300,000 loan ... implementation date of 1 January 1999."

She went on to state that this initiative would have a cost of \$16.5m in a full year.

That initiative was contained in the coalition's Budget. It is not in the Labor Government's Budget. This initiative was extremely important in the current volatile financial environment. Following the South-East Asian currency crisis, the volatility on the world capital markets has spread to Russia and Latin America. Therefore, it is important in this financial environment to have the maximum amount of flexibility to take advantage of the interest rates that are available. It is also important to keep the pressure on financiers to ensure that our capital markets and our interest rates are as competitive as possible.

Unfortunately, refinancing stamp duty acts as a buffer to reducing the competitiveness between different financiers. In giving an example, I will use the example indicated in the then Treasurer's speech of a small

business with a loan of \$300,000. I will just use indicative interest rates for ease of percentage calculation. Let us say that the interest rates were 10%. A person with a \$300,000 loan would be paying \$30,000 a year in interest. Suppose an alternative financier is offering a 9% loan. Under normal circumstances, all things being equal, a small businessperson would apply for the lower interest loan to receive a saving of \$3,000 a year—from \$30,000 to \$27,000 a year. However, there is the cost of the writing up of the new contract and the \$1,200 cost of stamp duty which are impediments to refinancing. Let us suppose that it costs \$1,000 for the writing up of the new contract and a further \$1,200 in stamp duty. That makes a saving of about only \$800, and that is only after 12 months. It is hardly worth while refinancing. The small businessman or businesswoman would have to consider the feasibility of undertaking that refinancing because, in that 12-month period, interest rates could move again. Therefore, the stamp duty cost is a real impediment to the ability of a small businessperson to refinance and it is an impediment for financial institutions to have proper competition. As I said, in the current volatile economic environment, it is of crucial importance that Australian business is as competitive as possible.

I turn to the postponement of the land tax concession. This is also of crucial importance to the business community. This concession was part of a total phase-out of land tax over a 10-year period. I might add that it was a recommendation of McKinsey & Co, who were consultants to the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, and that if there was a 10-year phase-out of unpopular or unfeasible taxes on business, Governments should give the maximum amount of indication to business of that phase-out so that business can plan in advance. Of course, the idea was that such a phase-out would have a minimum amount of impact on the Budgets of State Governments—or any Government, for that matter—while at the same time give a clear direction of where we are heading.

The postponement and probably dumping of this land tax concession and eventual phase-out has sent some very unfortunate signals to the business community. It is saying that promises of the long-term phase-out of taxes are pie in the sky and that they cannot be relied upon. Although the postponement of such a phase-out may have only a minimal effect on the bottom line of the Budget, it sends very bad signals to the business community that long-term commitments on tax reform cannot be relied

upon. I suppose that is nothing new; but, even so, the phase-out of land tax was a long-term commitment following a recommendation of McKinsey & Co to the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating. It was contained in a consultant's report called "Think Global, Act Global".

As I mentioned earlier, I shall introduce to the Parliament the concept of social capability and its meaning. I will look at it in the Queensland and Australian context, and also from the point of view of the information rich and the information poor. Before I introduce the concept, I give a comparison of two individuals who, let us say, are both on the pension. They are the same age and have the same general circumstances and, according to current ways of measuring poverty, would be considered to be in a similar position. However, suppose one of the two is an alcoholic. That person obviously has a lower level of wellbeing than the person who is not an alcoholic. The alcoholic will obviously spend a great deal of their income on alcohol, will make incorrect decisions and will require a greater amount of welfare and medical services. Obviously, two such people are in very different positions as far as prosperity and poverty is concerned.

I give credit to Mark Latham, the Federal Opposition spokesman for Education, as I first read of this concept through his work. I went on to read the work of a sociopolitical economist, Amartya Sen, who I understand developed this particular measure of poverty. Sen proposes that rather than look at the outcomes of poverty as a measure, one should look at what causes poverty. I commend highly the work that has been done on this issue. I do not necessarily agree with all the outcomes that Mark Latham is proposing, but I certainly agree with a lot of the analytical work that he has done.

In one of his recent journals, Amartya Sen states—

"Capability ... the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another ... a person's freedom to buy commodity ... The well-being of a person must be thoroughly dependent on the nature of his or her being, i.e. on the functioning achieved the freedoms that different people respectively enjoy to achieve well-being."

What really sums that up—and I concur fully with this—is the statement, "how good a 'deal' a person has in the society". Obviously that will vary from society to society. Someone in India who earns a very low income may have quite a fair deal from society. A similar income earned

in the United States would be a very poor deal. Poverty needs to be measured in context, bearing in mind the capability within a particular society.

Sen further states—

"Choosing may itself be a valuable part of living, and a life of genuine choice with serious options may be seen to be—for that reason—richer ... making one's life richer with the opportunity of reflective choice."

He goes on—

"... the capability approach clearly differs"—

and this is important—

"crucially from the more traditional approaches to individual and social evaluation, based on such variables as primary goods ... resources ... or real income ... Capability reflects freedom to pursue these ... elements ..."

That is not the actual elements themselves. In summary, by social capability Sen means: a capacity to use resources, the overall freedom to pursue wellbeing, the skills of social and economic participation, the freedom to achieve in society and lifestyle and, of course, we need to bring security into that equation. Skills of economic and social participation are things such as education, a profession or trade, one's ability to articulate, one's credibility and respectability within society, one's mobility and flexibility, one's perceived social acceptability—for instance, one's race, sex, illness or disability. Intelligence and age also will have an impact on one's skills of social and economic participation.

As we move into a globalised society, it is absolutely crucial that we look at measures of wellbeing from a totally different perspective. For example, suppose someone with a great deal of social capability—someone who is intelligent, the right age, well educated with good professional skills and the like—moved into a grass shack because that was the lifestyle that they wanted to lead. According to traditional methods, that person would be measured as being very much in poverty, yet that person has chosen that lifestyle. Should that person be measured in the same way as someone who is forced to be in that position but wants something better in their life? Obviously not. That is the difference.

If we start looking at poverty or prosperity from this perspective, we need to start looking at the way that social benefits are put together—things such as pensions and public housing. Poverty needs to be more accurately

measured and benefits need to be targeted according to a real level of poverty that has been measured in a much more appropriate way. Alternative measures of poverty and prosperity need to be pursued. The work of Amartya Sen and Mark Latham should be looked at more closely, because we need to put together policies and outcomes that more properly reflect social capability.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (5.26 p.m.): It is a pleasure for me to reply to the Budget. As many speakers have already indicated, this Budget really mirrors the Budget that was introduced by the coalition Government in May this year. I make the point that imitation is the highest form of praise. I record my congratulations to the original authors of this Budget, which was put together in the early part of this year. I also congratulate the Labor Party, and I do not do that very often. There is a tendency to change things simply for change's sake, no matter how good they are, and I believe that the Labor Party and the current Treasurer deserve some congratulations for recognising that this was a good Budget for Queensland and for keeping most of it in place.

A few changes have been made, one of which causes me some concern. I will deal with it in some detail. As members know, in my electorate of Callide in central Queensland, a major project, the Callide C Power Station, is under way. Obviously one of the first points of interest for me in the Budget was the amount of money that had been allocated to the Callide C Power Station. I found the answer on page 50 of Budget Paper No. 3. I will table both of these documents, one of which is page 50 of the Labor Party's Budget Paper No. 3, which is before the House at the moment, and the other is page 50 of the coalition's Budget Paper No. 3, which was tabled in this House in May.

The coalition's Budget Paper No. 3, page 50, states—

"\$128 million for another two coal-fired generating units on the existing Callide Power Station site

...

\$2.6 million to improve the environmental performance of the Callide Power Station and, in particular, to reduce the flue gas emissions."

A little over \$130m was allocated. Members can imagine my concern when I read the corresponding page in the Labor Party's document, the second dot point of which states—

"\$27.9m on the construction of an additional two coal-fired generating units ... at Callide Power Station and reduction of flue gas emissions."

The amount went from \$133m to \$27.9m. The project has been stripped of about \$103m.

A Government member interjected.

Mr SEENEY: As the interjector opposite said, there have been some changes. \$103m has been stripped from a project which is very dear to the people of Callide, very important to the economic wellbeing of the electorate and long awaited by the communities of Biloela, Gladstone and Rockhampton, all of which will benefit from the construction work and new permanent jobs that it will bring.

We have to ask ourselves why this has been done. If one casts one's mind back to some of the contributions that have been made in this House over the past couple of months, one could be forgiven for becoming somewhat suspicious, for reaching the conclusion that there is something about this whole deal that is a bit smelly, something that is not quite right, something that does not sit properly and something that is not fair dinkum.

I remind members of the apology in advance from the Minister. I am sure we all remember when Minister McGrady apologised in advance to the people of Queensland for the expected blackouts this summer. How does that reconcile with a decision to take \$100m from the project that is closest to producing more power for Queensland? How does that sit with what must be a great go-slow in relation to the Callide Power Station?

We have heard much talk about the Chevron gas project. The Minister and the Premier have been questioned at length about that project. It would be fair to assume that the Labor Party in Government has adopted a rather unhealthy emphasis on the Chevron gas project to the almost total exclusion of every other option.

Mr Hayward: Are you opposed to it, are you?

Mr SEENEY: I am not opposed to it. That is an accusation that is made every time a question is raised. I am not opposed—and I do not think anyone on this side or the other side of the House is, either—to a major development project of any sort anywhere in the State. However, I am opposed to the fact that it is becoming increasingly more obvious that a fair deal is not being dealt here. Members should cast their minds back. The Chevron gas project was granted a special

exemption from the native title requirements. This project was championed in Opposition by the now Government. Questions were raised about the fact that staff were provided to the now Government when it was in Opposition by the company behind this project.

Mr Hamill: Are you smearing people?

Mr SEENEY: I am not smearing people. I am raising concerns about what is happening in my electorate. In my electorate we have a project that the Labor Government tried hard to stop.

Mr Hamill: What's that?

Mr SEENEY: The Callide C Power Station is the project that the Labor Government tried hard to stop. It reviewed the contracts the very first day that it was in power and it tried desperately hard to stop it. Yesterday the Minister for Mines stood up in this House and made a point of telling the people of Queensland that the Callide C project would proceed. I thought that was great. Then we read the Budget papers and we find that it is going to proceed to the tune of \$29m instead of the \$130m that the coalition intended to advance it in the coming year. In my experience, \$29m will not mean that much work is done on the ground at all. I suspect that most of that money will be swallowed up in design, planning and all of the pre-emptive work. In reality nothing will happen.

Mr Hamill: Is that the total project cost?

Mr SEENEY: The total project cost is about \$700m.

Mr Hamill: Has that changed?

Mr SEENEY: What has changed is the speed at which the project is advancing. It is fair to ask why it has changed. What possible benefit is there to the people of Queensland in slowing down this project? Who will benefit by slowing down this project? How does slowing down this project reconcile with the apology in advance that we heard from the Minister for Mines and Energy for the blackouts that are coming? How does it reconcile with the constant talk we hear about the transmission losses that we are all going to have to get used to? It just contributes to the suspicion that something is not right here. Something is going on here that does not sit square. It is a fair question to ask and it is a question that will be asked continually through the Budget Estimates process until we get to the bottom of what is happening.

What is the relationship between the Government and Chevron? Why is there this unhealthy emphasis on Chevron to the exclusion of everyone else? Why is there such

a determination to import gas from the highlands of Papua New Guinea, when we as a State are renowned for our resource-rich coalfields throughout the Bowen Basin? We have extensive deposits of gas of our own. In other parts of Australia there are extensive deposits of gas. Where is the justification? Why is the emphasis being placed on Chevron? Why is favouritism being shown to Chevron? Why is the same emphasis not being given to bringing Callide C on line?

I will take members back to another thread in the weave—another part of the tapestry. When the Premier was asked about this issue on 5 August, he said—

"One of the legacies that we inherited was that because of the decisions made by the coalition Government in relation to Callide C and the proposed decisions in relation to Tarong, the Chevron gas pipeline proposal was put at risk."

How does one put the other at risk? Mr Beattie went on to say—

"This whole matter relates to the price of electricity and the price of natural gas. That is the key link between Comalco and the Chevron gas pipeline. Those opposite know that the decisions they made in relation to Callide C and Tarong directly affected the price of electricity."

That says to me that the previous Government is being criticised for taking decisions that "directly affected the price of electricity". I find it unusual that anyone would criticise the Government for taking decisions that directly affect the price of electricity, obviously in a downward fashion, except those who have an inappropriate interest in another electricity supplier—a supplier that would presumably be in competition with these projects that this Government has tried hard to stop. I believe it has stopped Tarong, even though that has been denied. I will certainly be pursuing the issue of Tarong.

I know without any doubt at all that a lot of effort was put into stopping Callide C. This Government would have scuttled Callide C. It would have done so quickly and without a second thought. The contracts were signed and it could not stop it, so now we are going to see death by strangulation. We are going to see a major go-slow on Callide C. In the Minister's words, "We are going to proceed with Callide C". But the Government is not going to allocate any money to it. It is going to spend \$29m instead of the \$130m that the coalition had budgeted for Callide C.

Mr Hamill: Where's that?

Mr SEENEY: I tabled copies of the documents. It is page 50 of Budget Paper No. 3.

Mr Hamill: Of what?

Mr SEENEY: Of both this Government's Budget documents and the previous Budget documents, tabled in this Parliament in May. Both figures are on page 50 and both sections are headed "Mining, energy and electricity". In your Budget it is the second dot point in the middle of the page.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member to speak to the Chair.

Mr SEENEY: My apologies, Mr Speaker, I thought I was responding to the interjection. I am sure that the Treasurer will be able to find the relevant clause on page 50 of Budget Paper No. 3—

Mr McGRADY: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Callide once again is not telling the truth. I explained to him this morning where the money was.

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

Mr SEENEY: I have tabled these documents. Perhaps the Minister for Mines and Energy might like a copy. The second dot point on page 50, under the heading "Mining, energy and electricity" states—

"\$27.9 million on the construction of an additional two coal-fired generating units projects at Callide Power Station and reduction of flue gas emissions."

The first dot point under "Mines, energy and electricity" on page 50 of the corresponding Budget document states—

"\$128m for another two coal-fired generating units ..."

Also, \$2.6m was allocated for the corresponding flue gas emissions controllers. This represents a difference of over \$100m. This House was assured that this project would proceed.

Mr HAMILL: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The honourable member continues to mislead the House. I draw his attention to page 130 of Budget Paper No. 3.

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

Mr SEENEY: I have tabled these documents. I hope that the Treasurer can get a copy. As I was saying—I will say it again for the benefit of the Minister, as he has come to the Chamber; and I am gratified by that—there is something about this whole thing that is just

a bit smelly. Something is not quite right. There is an inappropriate emphasis on the Chevron gas project at the expense of every other project that could possibly produce electricity for this State. There is something about the way this deal is being done that is not right, and those opposite know that it is not right. Every time the issue is raised, you do your best to bully and control and—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member to refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr SEENEY: I apologise, Mr Speaker. Once again I was responding to interjections. Given the Hansard record on this matter, it is fair to ask what on earth is going on here. Why is there such a priority on the Chevron gas project?

For the record, I am not opposed to the project. I am not opposed to the jobs it will create. I am not opposed to the benefits it will bring. As soon as any concerns are raised, the first reaction is to accuse the person raising the concerns of somehow trying to stop the job-creation benefits.

I know that I am repeating myself, but I am doing it for the benefit of the Minister, who has taken his time to come into the Chamber. Everyone in this House would like to see the economic development take place and everyone in this House would like to see the jobs created, but everyone in this House should also want to see every proponent in the field of power generation given a fair go. The record of the handling of this issue indicates to anybody who looks at it logically that they are not being given a fair go. One proponent in the field is being given inappropriate priority.

The project I am concerned about, the project in my electorate which the community of Biloela and all central Queensland communities have waited so long for, has been denied the funding that is necessary for it to proceed. An amount of \$102m has been stripped out of that project, at the same time as the Minister stands up in this House and assures us that it is proceeding and at the same time as he stands up in this House and apologises in advance to Queenslanders for the blackouts that are coming. How does any fair-minded person reconcile those two actions? How does it stack up? How is it fair? It smells. There is something wrong. There is something fishy.

No doubt this issue will be pursued through the Estimates committee process. I look forward to that. I suggest that it is appropriate that I, representing my electorate, and those on this side of the House, in the role

of Opposition, will pursue this issue with the utmost vigour through the Estimates process. We will get to the bottom of it.

Time expired.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP)
(5.46 p.m.): Mr Speaker—

Ms Bligh: It is a hard act to follow.

Mr BRISKEY: It certainly is. I ask the honourable member for Callide to go back to his office and read his copy of the Budget papers. I would then expect him to come back into this place and apologise for misleading the House.

Mr Hamill: It is just a shame our literacy and numeracy initiatives weren't around when he was at school.

Mr BRISKEY: It is a shame. They are around now, and that is a great benefit for the people of Queensland. I hope that the honourable member for Callide will go back and read the Budget papers more carefully.

The Beattie Government was elected just four months ago on a commitment to job security and job creation. We are committed to getting Queensland working again. This Budget begins the task of reducing the State's unemployment rate to 5% within five years. This target is a major challenge but one we believe to be extremely important. I am personally proud of this goal to reduce unemployment to 5% within five years. It is something that only a Labor Government would aspire to. It commits this Government to not just reducing unemployment, but reducing it dramatically.

Every decision of the Beattie Labor Government will be made in the light of our commitment to reduce unemployment to 5% within five years. With the current unemployment level at 8.8%, we cannot afford to delay the implementation of our employment programs. That is why we believed it absolutely necessary to bring down this Budget—so that funds could be directed without delay to the most important issue confronting our State: unemployment.

The 1998-99 Budget is an employment Budget, a jobs Budget. It lays the foundation for the creation of more jobs and greater job security in the future. It is encouraging to see that, as a result of the measures taken in this Budget, the unemployment rate is forecast to trend downward over the year to be 8.5% in the June quarter of 1999. At the centre of this Budget is the Government's \$283m over four years Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative. This initiative will create 24,500 jobs over the next four years. Through this program

the most disadvantaged in the labour market—the young unemployed—will be given hands-on experience and a chance to enter the work force, in many cases perhaps for the first time.

The Government's package to drive down unemployment consists of—

Firstly, a subsidy program to provide an extra 7,500 apprenticeships and traineeships in industries where there are skills shortages or in regions with poor employment prospects. A \$2,000 cash bonus will be offered to employers or group training schemes which employ additional apprentices in skill shortage areas such as tourism, building and construction, and metals and engineering industries.

Secondly, a public sector traineeship and apprenticeship initiative creating 6,000 trainee and 500 apprentice positions throughout all State Government departments and agencies, and local government.

Thirdly, implementation of the Government's community jobs plan to break the unemployment cycle for 9,000 long-term unemployed people by providing jobs for three to six months on public works and environmental projects.

Fourthly, strict enforcement of the 10% training rule on Government public works projects to provide 900 additional apprenticeships in the building and construction industry.

Fifthly, expanding the Housing Industry Trade Training Program to create 600 new building and construction industry apprenticeships.

Sixthly, granting \$1.3m a year to fund a start-up allowance of up to \$300 for apprentices and trainees requiring specialised equipment for their industry, such as tools or protective equipment.

In addition to the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives, a \$5.4m industry training fund for the building and construction industry is to be established to employ an estimated 800 to 1,000 additional apprentices a year, helping to ease skills shortages in the industry.

This Government is about providing real training opportunities through apprenticeships which equip Queenslanders with the skills needed to compete in the global economy. This goal is a part of the Government's employment strategy and a central part of this Budget. This Budget provides \$56m or a

10.8% increase in expenditure for vocational education and training bringing total spending, including TAFE capital works and user charging, to \$572m. Included in this additional TAFE capital works spending is an additional \$8m for the Bayside campus of the Moreton Institute of TAFE at Alexandra Hills. This funding is long overdue. It had been allocated by the previous Labor Government but then scrapped by the coalition. Robbing Redland Shire youth of this important education funding was one of the many examples of the short-sighted and petty approach members opposite brought to Government.

As a local member, I fought hard to get the Bayside TAFE campus back on the Capital Works Program after it was axed by the coalition and I am delighted that \$700,000 is allocated in this Budget to begin the construction of \$8m worth of state-of-the-art education and training facilities in the Redland Shire. This funding means better education and training facilities for Redland youth while also enabling the creation of local jobs and provision of on-the-job training in the highly important building and construction industry. This funding demonstrates the Government's commitment to job growth and training for the future.

The 1998-99 Budget includes a \$4.8 billion Capital Works Program to build State assets and underwrite employment growth. As the Treasurer pointed out on Tuesday, it is important that during a period of global economic instability Governments take the initiative and introduce programs that will stimulate demand and also provide a strong foundation for future economic growth.

The Capital Works Program in Labor's 1998-99 Budget will provide more than 65,000 jobs, including 17,800 new jobs and ongoing employment for another 47,800 workers. The Capital Works Program provides communities with essential infrastructure while also enabling the creation of jobs and the provision of on-the-job training in the highly important building and construction industry. The 1998-99 Capital Works Program represents an increase of 26.3% on 1997-98. Major spending programs include: \$1,039.8m for roads, creating 4,729 jobs across Queensland; \$830.9m for the mines, energy and electricity industry; \$732.1m for the Queensland Rail network; \$608.7m for hospitals and other health works; \$299m for new police, justice and correctional facilities; and \$222.1m for Queensland schools.

Labor's Capital Works Program means better facilities and better services for local

communities. For example, the Beattie Labor Government's first Budget provides \$23m of capital works spending in the Redland Shire. These funds will provide local communities in my electorate and the neighbouring Capalaba and Redlands electorates with job-creating programs that also build first-class facilities.

I am particularly delighted with the \$1.6m provided to construct new commerce, music, amenities and staff buildings at the new Victoria Point State High School. These new facilities will further enhance the excellent work being done by Dr McKennarney and his staff at the Victoria Point State High School. The new school buildings, plus the additional \$8m for the Bayside TAFE campus, demonstrate the Beattie Government's commitment to providing our students with the finest education and training available in the State.

Other new projects to receive money include over \$700,000 for replacement jetties at Lamb Island and Karragarra Island and \$305,000 for dredging Canaipa Passage and \$356,000 for roadside infrastructure in the Redlands. Ambulance services in my local area will also be boosted by over \$500,000 for new ambulance stations at Macleay Island and Redland Bay, and \$409,000 for the completion of Cleveland's replacement ambulance station. Funding is also provided in this Budget for the continuation of capital works funding for projects that were already under way. These include nearly \$15m for the Redland Hospital redevelopment, \$2m to complete Cleveland's new courthouse and \$2m to complete the new police station and watch-house in Cleveland. I look forward to attending a function in a couple of weeks' time to say goodbye to the old police station. It should have been demolished many years ago.

This Budget does more than just set in place the policies and programs to drive down unemployment. It is also a Budget that reflects the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to providing local communities with the resources needed to function effectively. The Government understands that unemployment creates hardship not only for unemployed people but also for their families, friends, and the wider community. The Beattie Labor Government is committed to working in partnership with the general community, groups and organisations and all levels of Government to help alleviate the social problems associated with unemployment by improving community facilities and putting people on the ground to service community needs.

Specific community initiatives in this Budget include: \$7.5m in 1998-99, and \$15m a year from 1999-2000, for a community renewal program in Waterford, Eagleby, Beenleigh, Leichhardt, Riverview, Garbutt, Manoora and Inala; \$5m in 1998-99, and \$35m over four years, to develop and upgrade community, sport and recreation facilities; and an additional \$1.6m in 1998-99 and in 1999-2000 for the rural communities infrastructure program to be known as the Rural Living Infrastructure Program to assist local governments to build or upgrade community, recreational and tourist facilities and to help create jobs in smaller communities.

Debate, on motion of Mr Briskey, adjourned.

MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That this House recognises the valuable contribution being made by the Board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority; and

That this House condemns the Minister for Emergency Services for the unjustified attacks that she has made on this Board."

I have moved this motion tonight because I believe that all Queenslanders have found the Minister's performance in recent months, in attacking the QFRA board, to be nothing short of a disgrace. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority itself is bracing for a return to the bad old days of low morale. It is bracing itself for a return to the days when its employees were treated with such contempt and scorn that Hansard would not allow me to use the words that the then Labor Minister, Tom Burns, used publicly to describe them.

In recent weeks, we have seen from the Minister what can only be described as the most appalling, dishonest performance of any Minister in this Government. The performance has either been dishonest or it has been a worrying sign of the Minister's inability to come to grips with her portfolio. Her claim that the Fire and Rescue Authority will be in debt to the tune of \$118m within five years is highly questionable. The Minister has quoted from a report prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers. I ask: where is this report? It is nowhere to be seen. It is obviously hidden. It has not been released to the public. As a matter of fact, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, which I believe has to pay something like \$49,000 for the report, has not even seen a copy of it.

I challenge the Minister to table a copy of that report, put it on the public record and let everyone read its entire contents—not just read selected lines that she may wish to use in her press releases. If she wants to make these claims, let us see the report in its entirety. I ask: why should it remain hidden? There is a reason why the Minister does not want this report released. She does not want it released because she wants to be able to selectively quote from it, and she wants to selectively quote so that she can paint a misleading picture of the board, and particularly the QFRA, to enable her to discredit them. Why would the Minister want to discredit the board? Is it because she wants to remove the board—the entire board structure—and perhaps return the Fire and Rescue Authority to the complete control of the Public Service? Does she want to do away with community and firemen's input into Queensland's now very highly regarded Fire and Rescue Authority?

The time has come to expose the Minister's fictitious claims, and I will use the words of her ministerial colleague to do that. For weeks now, the Minister has made some fictitious and particularly outrageous claims that the coalition Government left a so-called black hole in the Fire and Rescue Authority. She has insinuated that this has been the fault of the board. My colleague and former Minister for Emergency Services, Mick Veivers, has gone to great lengths to point out that the only debt that remains is an inherited debt—a debt which is totally serviceable from the trust fund, and the trust fund is not in debt. But the Minister will not listen to this. The Minister has continued to deny this. The Minister has continued to deny that there is an inherited debt.

I refer to Hansard of 31 October 1996 and will quote to the House the words of the then shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Robert Schwarten, to see where this debt really came from. When speaking to the Fire Service Amendment Bill, he made the following confession—a confession that all members will be interested to hear. This is where the debt came from. The then Labor shadow Minister said—

"The Labor Government bit the bullet and on 1 July 1990 amalgamated the 82 boards throughout the State and put them all under the control of one authority."

Now here comes the good bit. He went on—

"Regrettably"—
and I will say that again—

"Regrettably, the other thing that the Labor Government amalgamated was the debt, which ended up being around \$60m."

The then shadow Minister continued—

"The amount was made up of an operating debt of around \$29.6m and an overdraft of \$27.7m—about \$56m"—

in total. He repeated—

"I am the first to admit that that was an enormous impost to throw onto the back of the Fire Service."

There we have it once and for all. The debt was an inherited debt that was imposed on the fire service by the Labor Government. That was something that the Labor Party regretted in 1996, but now it claims to have no knowledge of it.

When the coalition took office in 1996, the fire service debt to Treasury was \$17.5m. When the Beattie Government took over only three months ago, the coalition had reduced that debt even further to \$13.5m. That represents a reduction of \$4m in just over two years. Let me make one thing very clear: the trust fund is not in debt. Payments are being made to service that debt to Treasury. Those repayments are being met, and they have not put the trust fund in debt. In fact, as the former Minister pointed out this morning, this year's trust fund budget came in at \$18m in the black—in the black—resulting from an \$11m carryover and \$7m in savings through good management, that is, the good management of the QFRA board. I believe that the board members must be congratulated on their efforts in those two years.

It is very interesting that the members of the board—the very same board that has been given a bill for \$49,000 for this report—have not even been allowed to see the report. They have no idea of the terms of reference of the report, and they have no idea of the scope of the report. They have no idea what the report was supposed to look at, and they have no idea whether the supposed projected black hole is a result of having to factor in Labor's pre-election promises. In fact, no-one has any idea about what the report is or what it says, because no-one has actually seen the report. It remains under lock and key.

It is important for everyone in the Chamber to be aware that the deliberately provocative actions of the Minister are threatening to undermine the morale of the Fire and Rescue Authority. Everyone would recall the disgrace that all Queenslanders had to witness when the former Goss Government

treated the firefighters with such contempt that they rallied—in uniform—outside this House. I notice that the former Opposition spokesman on Emergency Services has entered the Chamber. Everyone would recall the exact words that the then Minister, Tom Burns, used to describe those firefighters—unfortunately. If the current Minister continues on this path of misinformation, perhaps we will see those same protests again.

Firefighters across Queensland know that this Minister is not doing her job properly, and her Cabinet colleague the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing obviously knows that better than anyone else. The insinuations being made by the Minister are very clear. They are an unjustified attack on the board and a very grubby attempt to undermine the credibility of its members—members whose standing in the community is of the highest order.

The Minister's comments have been part of a sly and slimy attempt to discredit the board of the QFRA before implementing perhaps her ultimate plan to abolish it. But let me remind the Minister that the board cannot be abolished without a change to the legislation. And before the Minister even entertains the thought of abolishing the board, let me remind her again of the words of the former Labor spokesman for Emergency Services in 1996. He said—

"I reiterate that the Opposition"—

that is, the Labor Party—

"does not have any real difficulty with the concept of creating an authority to oversight the fire service."

Tonight's motion not only condemns the Minister for her unjustified attacks but it also recognises the contribution of the QFRA board. Not only has this board reduced the debt that it inherited—

Time expired.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA)
(6.10 p.m.): I have pleasure in rising tonight to second this motion. I support the motion because I am committed to ensuring the strength and effectiveness of the Queensland fire service. Unfortunately, the Minister does not share this commitment. Ever since the minority Beattie Labor Government came to office, the Minister has sought time and time again to undermine the board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. That board has made a valuable contribution to the management and operation of the Queensland fire service. It has helped turn the fire service around and restore some dignity to

the men and women who risk their lives on a regular basis to protect the lives and property of Queenslanders.

Listening to the speech delivered by my colleague the shadow Minister I was reminded of the disgraceful way that Tom Burns, a former Labor Minister for Emergency Services, treated officers in the fire service. The comments by Mr Burns were a great embarrassment to the Goss Labor Government. Now this new Minister is following in his footsteps. Aided by her Labor Party friend and accomplice Ron Attwood, the husband of the member for Mount Ommaney, the Minister has used every opportunity to try to discredit the QFRA board. We have already heard today that Mr Attwood is a departmental officer who is paid to work in the Minister's office. What we have not heard is the way Mr Attwood is trying to push the Minister into disbanding the statutory authority status of the QFRA in order to return control of the fire service to the Department of Emergency Services. We know that Mr Attwood is behind this move because we know that the Minister is having difficulty in coming to grips with the challenges of her portfolio.

In spite of the fact that he is a public servant and that his wages are paid by the QFRA, Mr Attwood acts as a political adviser to the Minister. Nearly every day this week and in previous sitting weeks he has been sitting in the public gallery observing question time. He does not sit on his own. He does not try to appear as an impartial public servant. He sits right smack in the middle of Labor ministerial staff. Perhaps he is there so that he can rush down to the Chamber and assist the Minister with complex questions about the fire service. Perhaps he is there so that he can give signals—thumbs up, thumbs down—to the Minister. Perhaps he is there because he is a proud husband and wants to look at his wife. Or perhaps he is there because he has to be, because he is a political adviser to the Minister. I think that is more likely the rationale for Mr Attwood's presence in the gallery. Why else would he need to be in the Chamber during the most political part of the day's proceedings? I think Mr Attwood has had the opportunity to view the PricewaterhouseCoopers report to which the Minister so often refers. By comparison, I point out that the QFRA board has not seen the report. However, I think there is every chance that Mr Attwood has. After all, why else would Mr Attwood need to sit through question time?

We have an interesting scenario here. On one hand, we have the board of a statutory authority not being afforded the courtesy of

viewing this report while, on the other hand, we have an employee of the board, Mr Attwood, who in all likelihood has seen a copy of the report. I hold grave concerns for the ability of the Minister and the motivation of Ron Attwood. There is something fishy about Mr Attwood's involvement in this process. I urge the Minister to stop undermining the QFRA, to start listening to board members and to get on with the job of strengthening the Queensland fire service. The Minister ought to be condemned if she continues with her actions to date. I urge members of this House to support the motion for that reason alone.

The former Minister, the member for Southport, built up the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. It would be a detrimental step for all the citizens of Queensland if the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority were to revert to its previous position prior to the reforms that were initiated by the member for Southport. I am sure that when he speaks to this motion tonight he will be outlining some of the great steps that have put the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority in the position that it is in today. It is a leader in the provision of fire services in Australia. I would hate to see any detrimental stepping back from the sound footing that it is now on and from the commendable job that the board has done to date. It should not be undermined; it should be supported in every way possible. I urge the Minister to do so. I urge members of the House to support this motion and vote against the deplorable way in which the Minister has handled this matter to date.

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP)
(Minister for Emergency Services) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'by' and insert the following—

'Members of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority in the vital service they provide to Queensland communities and their dedication in performing that duty.'

Over the past 10 weeks, I have taken the opportunity to visit a number of fire stations throughout the State and to meet with firefighters on the ground. I have been very impressed by their dedication, commitment and loyalty to the people in their communities. I have lost count of the number of time fires have told me how good it was to see a Minister at their station. The fires in Caloundra bestowed a great honour on me recently when they made me an honorary firefighter for the north coast region, complete with a plaque and a lapel badge that I am wearing with pride tonight.

Barely a day goes by that we do not hear or read about the deeds of this State's firefighters. Whether it is in response to structural fires or wildfires, rescuing people trapped in blazing buildings or cutting victims from the tangled wrecks of roads accidents, firefighters save lives. All too often we see dramatic television footage of roaring flames engulfing buildings. Often we see the human side, the firefighter cradling the young child who, moments earlier, has been plucked from the seat of the blaze. Recently, emergency service workers were shown knee-deep in foam as they responded to a fatal accident involving a tanker on the Bruce Highway north of Gympie. There they were, doing their job. On that occasion, the job was to ensure that there was no massive explosion.

Firefighters and other emergency service personnel put their lives on the line to save the lives of others and to protect property—yours and mine, Mr Speaker. Each year their actions save insurance companies many, many millions of dollars in fire damage payouts. In Queensland, we know that if a fire breaks out in our homes, there will be a big red truck there within minutes to douse the flames. We also know that, if there is a bushfire, scores of local volunteers will activate to protect life and property in their communities. It must be very frustrating for the volunteers who turn out to fight fires to find that often they have been deliberately lit by a small group of people who do not give a damn that their actions can cost lives or cause millions of dollars in damage. But they still respond; it is their job, a job they do so well, a job they do every day of every week.

Only last week we had firefighters cast in a different role. They were called in to remove from a Brisbane city building a canister believed to contain the deadly legionella bacteria. It was suspected that the canister had been placed in the building deliberately in a crude but nevertheless potentially deadly attempt at sabotage. Airlie Beach man Tim Stilwell owes his life to local firefighters, who earlier this month dragged him unconscious from his burning apartment. Rockhampton toddler Ayden Renes will be able to tell his own children about how two local firefighters saved his life. His mother Kelly heaped praise on the firefighters after they gave him medical assistance early last month. The youngster began convulsing, then stopped breathing. Ayden stayed in hospital overnight. He was back home the following day none the worse for wear. It is all in a day's work for our fires.

Just as important is the proactive fire education and fire prevention work done by

the QFRA, both urban and rural divisions. Firefighters and volunteers take pride in preventing fires through activities by visiting schools to preach about taking precautions against the dangers of fire, the need to install smoke detectors in homes and the worth of plain commonsense in and around the home. They want people to minimise the risk of fire. That can be as simple as clearing the area around our homes. In the bush, the rural fire brigades ensure that Queensland does not face the same annual bushfire threat that plagues other States. Thankfully, we have not had a disaster of the magnitude of the Ash Wednesday or Black Friday tragedies. A constant program of strategic hazard reduction burning is performed by hundreds of brigades across the State.

Our firefighters and rural volunteers across the State deserve our support. Mr Speaker, this Government is fully aware of the job they do for you, for me and for every other member in this Chamber and for every Queensland. This debate provides the perfect opportunity for each and every one of us in the Chamber to say thank you on behalf of all Queenslanders to our 2,000 permanent, 2,000 auxiliary and almost 50,000 rural volunteers.

Time expired.

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I am pleased to hear that, in common with the former Minister, the Minister also received a plaque. I am sure that she did not cry, because she knew that she was taking action to save the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

The Opposition's motion is an absolute joke. The Minister did not attack the board; she quoted from the independent audit of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, which contained some criticism of the board. How can a Minister be condemned for quoting something that is written in black and white?

It is to the credit of the Minister, Merri Rose, that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority will be able to improve its service to the people. In recent times, Queensland's firefighters have been in turmoil because of constant reviews and changes to the service. Under this Government, there will be stability. Both the urban and rural firefighters will be able to concentrate on their job of protecting life and property. The Labor Government will give them the tools with which to do that job. This Government is committed to properly funding the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

The Minister has directed her department to prepare a strategy to resolve the long-term

problems facing the fire service. Labor will recognise the contribution of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and its many thousands of permanent, part-time and voluntary staff. Firefighters are held in high regard by the communities in which they live, and so they should be. They are untiring workers both on and off duty. Queenslanders are fortunate to have thousands of such dedicated professionals and volunteers.

This morning, the members opposite proved that they are an absolute joke. Since arriving in this place, the lack of positive contribution to public policy formation and debate by the Opposition has surprised me. Earlier today, I was most surprised to hear how little the former Minister for Emergency Services, who I note has been dumped on the backbench, seemed to know about the fire service and the problems that he, in fact, created. He seems completely oblivious to the fact that the QFRA is facing a financial crisis. All that he can say in his defence is, "It'll be right, mate, this financial year." However, he conveniently steers well clear of talking about the future. He talks about the Masters report, which states that the fire service would be \$35m in the red.

Internal estimates by the Department of Emergency Services confirm that the Masters projections were conservative. The audit commissioned by the Honourable Minister shows clearly that the potential debt was \$118m. The former Minister should be called "Mushroom Mick". He must have been kept in his own littler corner in the dark, or else he is not telling the House all that he knows about the financial state of the fire service.

This Government is looking to the future. We will make it a rosy future, and that pun is unintended. We will ensure the QFRA's long-term viability; not like the Opposition, which left the fire service shuddering towards financial oblivion. The QFRA deserves better. Firefighters need to know that we will look after them. They would have been absolutely delighted to see what we delivered in this week's Budget. Those benefits will be spread right throughout the State so that all of Queensland benefits. This is a Government for all Queenslanders.

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (6.24 p.m.): I rise to support the Opposition's motion. This morning and in previous weeks, the Honourable Minister has made a number of serious allegations about me and the coalition Government regarding the funding situation of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and, more importantly, that the

coalition Government had done nothing to address issues about which she has spoken. Let me say that the Honourable the Minister has gone from a position last week where, like Sergeant Schultz, she knew nothing to a position this week where she knows next to nothing. It seems that, in keeping with the style of Labor advisers, she has been told half-truths, half stories and half facts.

What is most worrying is that she has criticised the board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority without having the decency of allowing that board to see the Coopers report. That is most important. Had she done that, she would have been prevented from making those errors and misrepresentations in her statement and making a fool of herself. As I said this morning, we will see that when she has the decency of giving the board the report and, I might add, letting us see it as well.

How can anyone believe a person who keeps reports secret, especially when we know that a lot of her statements are hot air? It is apparent that she is trying to make the board look bad so that she can get rid of it, and also the ambulance board, and put firefighters and ambulance officers back under the control of the director-general. God help firefighters and ambulance officers if that happens, because no-one else will.

However, most disappointing of all is that she does not believe that the firefighters deserved a pay increase. For six years under the Labor Government, these men and women went without a pay rise and, if this Government has its way, it seems that they will go for another six years without a pay rise. I and other members on this side of the House have the highest regard for firefighters and their families. We understand that they put their lives on the line to protect the lives of Queenslanders and their property. To criticise them, as this Minister has done, when they were among the lowest paid firefighters in Australia is absolutely mind blowing. The Minister is not in the Chamber, but for her to tell these brave men and women—

Mrs Rose: I am behind you.

Mr VEIVERS: That is even worse. That is a worry. Is the Minister going to vote with the Opposition after all? That is really refreshing to hear. This Minister can tell these brave men and women—

Mrs Rose interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: The Minister cannot interject unless she is sitting in her correct seat. She should get back over to the other side. For the Minister to tell these brave men and

women that they do not deserve the same pay as their brothers and sisters in other States is totally astonishing. I may joke a little, but this is very serious business. When I took over the Queensland fire service, it was in an absolute mess. Morale was on the floor. At Kemp Place up to 60% went out on sick pay. Within seven months of the board coming into action, the percentage of people on sick pay dropped to 3%. That saved the taxpayers of Queensland somewhere in the vicinity of \$120,000 to \$140,000 a week. Morale went through the roof.

This Minister is going to put this service back under the control of the director-general and the bureaucrats—where it was before when morale was slipping. It is slipping now. The firefighters are not happy. How dare this Minister criticise our firefighters. Let me say that they deserve—

Mr Sullivan: She didn't, and you know that.

Mr VEIVERS: She did. She said that they did not deserve the money they received, and you were one of the mugs who sat in here for six years—

Mr Sullivan: No.

Mr VEIVERS: You did, and you let them go for six years without a pay rise.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Southport will withdraw those words. They are unparliamentary.

Mr VEIVERS: I withdraw. This honourable member, who acts like a mug, sat in this Chamber for six years.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You will withdraw that word again.

Mr VEIVERS: I withdraw that the member is a mug. This incompetent sat here for six years and did not go along with giving the firefighters a raise. The former shadow Ministers, the honourable member for Murrumba, and the honourable member for Rockhampton, Mr Schwarten, are sitting opposite. They agreed with the coalition Government setting up the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. Government members should not ever say to me that the coalition Government did not look after them. The Labor Government did not look after them for six years. It did not give them a pay rise. The firefighters did not know where they were going. Morale was shot to pieces until the coalition Government came along. Yet this Minister, who is sitting opposite, wants to do the same thing by abolishing the board and going back to the firefighters being under the control of the bureaucrats. It is unbelievable. I

just hope that the firefighters and their families remember that this is the second Labor Minister who does not appreciate them, although she did not actually call them wankers.

Time expired.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): The amendment moved by the Minister must get the full support of members from both sides of this House. Not to do so would be to insult those officers who risk their lives fighting to save the lives and property of Queenslanders.

The Government recognises the valuable contribution being made by members of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, the vital service that they provide to Queensland communities and their dedication to performing that duty. I recognise their contribution and dedication, whether they are urban-based officers or volunteers of the 1,600 or so rural fire brigades that are registered throughout Queensland.

National Party members, Liberal Party members, One Nation Party members and Independents need to think very carefully about the amendment put forward by the Minister. To vote against the amendment is to question the commitment and dedication of the men and women firefighters right across this State. If members opposite vote against the amendment, they will be sending a signal to those men and women that they do not have confidence in their ability to do a dangerous job. To vote against the amendment is to deliver a kick in the guts to the men and women who volunteer their time and who put their hands into their pockets to provide a service to the community. If members have any understanding at all of urban and rural fire service needs, they will support the amendment moved by the Minister.

As the member for a large rural electorate, I can talk to members of any one of the more than 100 rural bush fire brigades that are scattered throughout central Queensland. I have made representations on behalf of fire brigades for many years and I will continue to do so for as long as I represent that area.

The Opposition can put any spin it likes on this debate but, as a rural-based member, I can tell the House that the Government is committed to backing rural fire services. The Government is committed to providing high-level support to rural fire services with the allocation of a \$3m funding increase over the next three years. The Government has placed special emphasis on increasing the rural fire

service budget as a recognition of the sterling job performed by almost 50,000 volunteers throughout Queensland.

A plan to consolidate base funding for the rural fire service took shape when we were in Opposition and now that we are in Government it is being implemented. The Government supports the desire of the rural fire brigades to be an independent division of the QFRA. Members who represent country electorates should understand the passion that rural firefighters feel about that issue.

Under Labor policy, base funding will be consolidated to around \$10m a year. In addition, a further capital injection will be made to improve the safety of volunteers.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr PEARCE: The former Minister cannot argue against the amendment before the House tonight, because if he does so he will be condemning rural and urban firefighters. He will show that he does not care about them, even though he says that he does. To vote against the Minister's amendment will clearly demonstrate exactly how he feels.

The Government understands how vital the rural fire service is to so many communities. We are determined to provide it with the best possible resources. We will deliver on our policy to boost funding for the construction of rural fire service stations. I continually meet with members of rural brigades and volunteers who work throughout my electorate, and the need for new stations, vehicles and equipment is a consistent theme of those meetings. We will deliver on our policy to buy land for new stations and to purchase new equipment and safety gear. They deserve the best and they will get it; members opposite should support that. The Government will recognise the invaluable contribution of rural volunteers by providing extra protective clothing and boots.

As a further testament to our commitment, there are plans to deliver up to 100 new vehicles to rural fire brigades throughout Queensland. Twenty-two Mitsubishi Canter medium-attack rural fire trucks worth more than \$53,000 each are already under construction. We are getting on with the job. A further 51 Canter vehicles are planned, along with 23 Mitsubishi Triton light appliances worth more than \$33,000 each. The Goss Government started this program and it received a lot of credit from rural Queensland for doing so. I appreciate the signal from the member for Callide, who obviously supports what I say. He understands what happened.

The previous Labor Government started this program and we will continue it.

Time expired.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): I rise to support the motion before the House tonight and, in doing so, I also express my support for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and its board. The Minister's amendment made no mention of the board, which is what it is all about. We know that the fire and rescue services and the rural fire services—as the previous speaker has mentioned—do a great job. However, this motion is about the handling of the board.

The minority Labor Government came to office only three months ago, but in that short time the people of Queensland have already seen a return to the bad old days of the Goss regime. It appears that Labor learnt nothing during its recent years in Opposition. It has returned to the bullyboy days—the days of mischief, misinformation and mistruths. Notable among the Cabinet of the minority Labor Government is the current Minister for Emergency Services. That Minister has an agenda to destabilise and eventually disband the board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, which is trying to run the fire service as it should be run—well and truly above politics. I put to the House that the Minister's behaviour harks back to the days of former Minister Tom Burns. When one looks at the Minister's handling of this matter, one could be forgiven for thinking that she has spent some time as an understudy at the Tom Burns' school of finesse.

The Minister stood in this Chamber and claimed that within five years the fire service will be in debt to the tune of \$118m. The Minister said that that claim was backed up by a report that was prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers. I might add that that report, which cost \$49,000, was paid for by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. Like so many reports that do not suit the minority Labor Government's political position, the report was suppressed from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and the Queensland public. The Minister has proved all too willing to offer selective quotes that suit her political agenda, but she has not proved willing to release the entire report. Why not? Perhaps she will do what the other 17 Ministers have done and form a task force. That seems to be the way to get around that particular problem. The Minister has not released the report because it does not suit her agenda or that of the Labor Party.

I remind members of some facts about the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, which previous speakers have already mentioned. I need to do this because these are crucial to the intent of our motion. When the previous Labor Government amalgamated the 82 boards throughout the State, it also amalgamated a debt worth around \$60m in its entirety. This fact has been backed by the member for Rockhampton who, on 31 August 1996, stated—

"Regrettably, the other thing that the Labor Government amalgamated was the debt, which ended up being around \$60m. The amount was made up of an operating debt of around \$29.6m and an overdraft of \$27.7m—about \$56m. I am the first to admit that that was an enormous impost to throw onto the back of the Fire Service."

In 1996, the member for Rockhampton and the Labor Party not only knew about the debt but regretted it, yet the current Minister claims to have no knowledge of it at all—like a few other things that she claims not to know about. We have heard that when the coalition took office in 1996 the debt had been reduced to \$17.5m. We have also heard that by the time the Beattie Government took office the debt had been reduced to \$13.5m. The debt is still being serviced, and serviced well, by the board.

Members should remember that the trust fund is not in debt. In fact, as has been said on numerous occasions in this House, the trust fund budget came in at \$18m in the black due to the good management of the board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. The board does not deserve the public maligning that the Minister has given it. Tonight the House should be paying tribute to that board. Rather than creating mischief, the Minister should do the honourable thing and release the report. The Minister should also apologise to the board for the unjust criticism that she has afforded to it. As I said, this motion is about the board; it is not about fire service workers. We all know the tremendous job that they do. I have a lot of great mates who work in the fire service, and we support them wholeheartedly.

To take up what the member for Fitzroy said; I believe that it might be a good move to make the rural fire division a separate entity. Members of the rural fire division are all honorary and they do a wonderful job, and perhaps that would be a good thing. I believe that in its current form, the board is doing a wonderful job.

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (6.39 p.m.): This evening the House has two options. There is a motion from the Opposition congratulating the board and there is a motion from the Government congratulating the firefighters. We have reduced the options to two. That is a choice that even the honourable members of the One Nation Party can follow. I urge members to support the firefighters, not the board.

We have not heard any argument why we should administer this adulation to the board. We on this side of the House are not greatly impressed by boards. We voted against the establishment of the fire and ambulance boards. When the honourable member for Chatsworth was the Minister, he abolished 81 fire boards, because that is what the Firefighters Union wanted. Why should we now give this adulation to the fire board? I do not know of any single reason that has been put forward, except perhaps the one put forward by the honourable member for Redlands, who said in this House that the establishment of the board had restored the dignity of firefighters. They never needed to have their dignity restored. They always had dignity. Whatever else they would have liked, even under the previous Government they were never short of dignity; these are the people who put their lives on the line to save other people. Perhaps they would have liked some better equipment, a few more firemen or even a pay rise under the previous Government, but they were never short of dignity.

Even if we accept the mad premise that they were going to get more dignity through the establishment of a board, I do not know exactly how it would have worked. For example, we could put on two or three firefighters at a cost of \$100,000, which is what it would cost to maintain for a period this artificial quango—this useless board—which was established by my honourable friend on the other side of the House. Should that \$100,000 go to the board or the firefighters? Honourable members opposite say that it should go to the board because that will enhance the dignity of firefighters. If a lot of money is spent on a board, it means that somewhere one man will have to go into a blaze instead of two, or two men instead of three—

Mr Mackenroth: In my electorate they were closing the fire station because they did not have enough firemen.

Mr WELLS: I take the interjection of the honourable member. I am sorry if Hansard

could not hear it; I will tell them what it was afterwards.

What it really means is that fewer firefighters are available as a result of the decision to set up a board. We can imagine the euphoria that they would feel as they go understaffed and undermanned into a situation of grave danger. They would think, "Well, at least we have the dignity of having a board to administer our affairs"! What good is served by having an extra layer of management like this? Why should we give adulation? Why should we, as the honourable member for Charters Towers said, pay tribute to the board? We do pay tribute to the board. Those extra layers of management cost money to run. They receive their tribute in the form of the meeting fees and the accommodation and travel allowances that they are paid for junketing around the State as they make unnecessary visits to various places to consult with people who do not know the answers to the questions; the people who know the answers are the firefighters. The board members are not firefighters.

Mr Mackenroth: When I became the Minister for fire services, at the Brisbane board every member got a cigar at every meeting they went to—a big cigar.

Mr WELLS: Mr Speaker, that was a really interesting interjection. You will have to read Hansard to see it, because I do not have time to repeat it.

I wanted to clear up one point. The honourable member for Southport said that the Minister does not believe that the firefighters deserve a pay rise. She never said that. What she said was that the pay rise that the previous Minister had granted was unfunded. She was criticising his economic management, not the pay rise. Let that be very clear. This is a Government which is committed to the firefighters. We are not committed to the boards, artificial levels of administration and gratuitous managerialism. We are saying to honourable members in this House: do not vote for gratuitous managerialism or excessive boards, vote for the firemen.

Time expired.

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—ONP) (6.44 p.m.): I am appalled to think that a Minister of the Crown taking advice from power-drunk bureaucrats would make such a misguided and inflammatory statement as that made by the Minister for Emergency Services this morning in relation to the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Fire and Rescue Authority board was formed to take political interference out of

the decision-making process. From our discussions with numerous people, ranging from a high-ranking board member right through to firemen out in the field, we are convinced that morale and efficiency under the leadership of chief Wayne Hartley is extremely high—or at least it was until the ill-informed outburst in the House this morning.

The Labor Government is obsessed with bureaucratic control and the notion that the service can be improved by the injection of a lot more bureaucrats and bureaucratic control. If this trend is continued we will have a fire service with a whole lot of chiefs and no Indians—and nobody who knows how to strike a match. The service is presently manned by a legion of highly motivated, highly skilled and practical firemen who have an excellent level of morale. Why would we want to destroy that structure? In fact, the service has done well to survive the studious neglect by both sides of the political spectrum. The alleged economic crisis has been manufactured by projecting the current funding level out five years.

The situation has been compounded because Labor passed responsibility for road accident rescue to the service but neglected to provide additional funding. When the Government changed from Labor to the coalition, the coalition also neglected to provide funding. Naturally, if responsibilities are enlarged and funding is not, problems will eventually arise. However, to attempt to restructure such an efficient organisation as the fire service just to pander to a Government's desire for an overwhelming imbalance of bureaucracy is absurd. The Minister's comments this morning were an insult to the service and have damaged morale. One Nation supports the vote of confidence in the current Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority board.

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (6.47 p.m.): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I enter the debate. Having been quoted as an authority on this issue tonight by so many of those who sit opposite, it is indeed a great pleasure to be here. I cannot understand why anybody would vote against the Minister's motion, because to do so simply means that all of those members who vote against this motion do not have any respect for the hard and dangerous work carried out by our firefighters. I do not think that is what members really want to do.

The original motion put by the Opposition states that "this House condemns the Minister for Emergency Services for the unjustified

attacks that she has made on this board". Tonight, not one member has been able to cite an example of what this unjustified attack was. What was said by this Minister that can be construed in any shape or form as an attack on either the firefighters or this board?

I spoke for about an hour in the debate when the board was introduced. I am on record as saying that it was set up as a buffer between the Minister and the firefighters simply to take the political heat off the Minister. If we consider the election promises made in 1995, we see that things such as one-in-three and pay increases were promised; the world was going to be rosy for firefighters as a result of the election of the Borbidge Government. We know that that could not be delivered.

The Staib report came and went and the underfunding was uncovered, but no money poured from the Treasury. The Treasurer at that time, "Aunty Joan", did not hand out any money from the purse. That did not happen. What was to be done? Someone said, "I know. Create a board. Let them take the flak. Let them wander around the State and meet people." But it did not happen that way. As all of us know, we can try to divest ourselves of all our responsibilities and stand back mute and absurd and say, "It's nothing to do with me. The board made that decision", but if the board did not get the dough in the first place it could not possibly function. That is what happened.

If that constitutes an attack upon the board, so be it. But the fact of the matter is: that is why it was established. It did not improve the lot of the people who worked in the fire service. Not one person who has spoken in this debate tonight has evidenced their remarks with one example of where firefighters were better off as a result of having a board, of where the fire board made a decision that could not have been made by either the director-general or the Fire Commissioner. Where is the value adding that this board brought? What difference did it make?

How much did this board cost? I heard the honourable member for Murrumba say \$100,000. I do not know where he got that figure from, but presumably that is the sort of money involved. I do not want to knock the board, but we have to weigh up whether it is better to spend money on a board that makes decisions that can be ably made by one person or whether it is better to have one person do the job and put that money back into the Fire and Rescue Authority.

From talking to the firefighters out there—and I know lots of them—I understand that they have not noticed any great advantage from having a board—any advantage at all, in fact. They still go to work and they still do not have one-in-three as a result of having a fire board. Nothing has changed in that regard. The most disgraceful thing was that the coalition did not even have the decency to have the union represented on the board. I moved an amendment to that effect at the time, but it was not supported by the coalition. So the board was not even representative of the people it was supposed to be helping.

As far as I and those on this side of the House are concerned, the motion put up by the Opposition tonight is a sham. Let us see if those opposite really want to vote against a motion of confidence in the firefighters of this State, those hardworking people who go out day after day and risk their lives.

At the moment members of the road rescue team from Rockhampton are over in Chicago competing in the world games, and I am very proud to be associated with those people. They are not there because of the board.

Time expired.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (6.52 p.m.): It did not take long for this Minister to get her feet under the ministerial desk and start creating havoc in her portfolio area. It did not take long before the Minister started putting up a few smokescreens to hide her obvious lack of understanding of this portfolio area, particularly in relation to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. It did not take long before we all came to realise Labor's true agenda in relation to the structure of the authority. Anything that the coalition set up has to be gotten rid of. It is pure spite!

Tonight we have heard the Government's true agenda from a series of Labor speakers. It is evidenced tonight by its amendment. Our motion recognises the valuable contribution being made by the board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. What does Labor do? It deletes any reference to the board. The absolute smokescreen that the Minister has put up is this enormous furphy that the Fire and Rescue Authority is bankrupt.

The people who have been selected on the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority board, some of whom I know personally, are decent, everyday Australians trying to do a decent job. They have a fair bit of expertise. Honourable members should look at the backgrounds of some of the people on the

Fire and Rescue Authority. I think those people should feel a personal blight on their reputations. They have every right to feel betrayed. They feel betrayed because they know that they are being used by this Minister as a scapegoat to hide the Labor agenda in relation to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. They have felt that betrayal since this Minister has launched her personal attacks and set about implementing the good old Labor agenda of political control and jobs for Labor mates, politicising the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. The member for Murrumba did it when he was the Opposition spokesman on Emergency Services—trying to politicise emergency services, trying to politicise the Queensland Ambulance Service.

What about the firefighters themselves? How alarmed must they be to hear the rantings and ravings of this Minister? The alarm bells would start ringing when the Minister openly slams the very authority that contains their own representatives.

I refer again to the ministerial statement made by the Minister yesterday. She quoted from the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, which she refuses to release. Then she went off, in one of the little fits that she has, claiming irresponsibility. The Minister will not acknowledge that PricewaterhouseCoopers would not have been aware that the funding for the commitment by the coalition Government had been allocated at the Cabinet Budget Committee.

Time expired.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.56 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed (see p. 2379).

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (8.30 p.m.), continuing: Before the dinner adjournment I was outlining some of the areas where the first Beattie Labor Government's Budget is strengthening local communities within Queensland. Before I mention the rest of those matters, I want to advise the House that earlier this evening I was speaking about the Bayside campus of the Moreton Institute of TAFE. I understand that the current occupant of the chair, the member for Mansfield, is a past student of that college. I know that he believes, as I do, that it is an

excellent institute of further education. I understand that the honourable member passed with flying colours.

I will continue outlining the initiatives that will strengthen local communities within our great State. These initiatives include: as part of the Education for All initiative, 127 additional teachers and other staff will be employed throughout the State to improve services and outcomes for students with disabilities and learning difficulties; 25 extra nurses per year for four years—100 in total—will be employed in secondary schools to advance drug and alcohol education; 30 staff will be employed under the Regional Communities Plan to help make Government policy more relevant to regions and facilitate opportunities for employment growth; the establishment of community-based juvenile justice centres for Ipswich, Logan City and Townsville employing more than 40 people; \$2.5m in grants for community development projects, including creating jobs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; \$2.4m over three years to establish three work-based child-care centres in public sector work places, making it easier for families to balance work with family needs; and \$21.5m for planned expenditure on water and sewerage projects in 1998-99 under the \$150m Small Communities Assistance Plan.

The Beattie Government's strengthening of local community initiatives is further supported by the Government's commitment to Queenslanders with special needs. This Budget includes the largest financial commitment ever made in this State to disability services. This needs to be emphasised. We have honoured the promise made during the election campaign to deliver an additional \$30m a year as part of a \$137.8m funding package to address the high levels of unmet needs for disability services in our community.

The Beattie Labor Government's first Budget also includes significant benefits for elderly Queenslanders, many of whom live in my electorate. This Budget includes \$22.6m over four years in additional State funding to significantly enhance home help services. The Budget provides funding for free ambulance services for pensioners, Queensland Seniors Card holders and their dependants. This benefit will be available to an estimated 850,000 Queenslanders from 1 January 1999, which is also the start-up date for the 50% concession for pensioners and holders of Seniors Cards who travel on water taxis to North Stradbroke Island and other Moreton Bay islands. This concession will also be

available for travel to Magnetic Island. This extension of the building better buses and ferries program applies to commuter ferries only and brings these services into line with concessions provided to seniors on other public transport services. This benefit will be warmly welcomed in my electorate.

The Beattie Labor Government has brought down an economically and socially responsible 1998-99 Budget in a time of global economic instability. The Queensland economy is not fireproofed against the economic turmoil that has engulfed our major trading partners in the region. This Budget, however, lays the foundation on which the Beattie Labor Government will build a strong, employed and socially caring Queensland.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (8.37 p.m.): As other members of the Opposition have stated, this Budget brought down by the minority Beattie Labor Government bears a great deal of similarity to the former coalition Government's Budget which was introduced into this Parliament in May this year. At the outset, I want to refer to a couple of matters of great significance that have been changed. One of those matters involves my own electorate.

I refer to the Indooroopilly rail station park and ride. I notice that some of the park and rides have remained. Originally there was a \$500,000 allocation to provide park-and-ride facilities at the Indooroopilly rail station. This would have assisted the residents who live in those streets. A great number of cars are parked in the streets. This move would also assist small businesspeople who are missing out on business because of the large number of people who are parking in the streets around the rail station. As a result, the whole neighbourhood is suffering.

There is currently vacant property adjoining the rail station which would have been an ideal property to acquire for the purpose of a park and ride. Over the years other park and rides have been established on the western suburban line. Unfortunately, some years ago the former Minister for Transport changed the rail timetables. Even though the timetables have since been changed back, a lot of people who previously parked at such places as Chelmer, where there are adequate park-and-ride facilities, do not want to go back to those areas and are now accustomed to parking in the streets of Indooroopilly. Therefore, we have a major traffic problem.

I made a submission to the Minister upon the new Government taking office, but unless

an allocation for this project appears elsewhere in the Budget it appears as if it has had the chop. I will take it up with the Minister again. The park and ride at Indooroopilly has been talked about for more than a decade. Some money was set aside, but that money has now been taken for other purposes. It may be that in time to come vacant land will not be available for this purpose. There will be a great deal of unhappiness if people find that their houses have to be acquired for this purpose. There are some rental properties in the area but people tend to not want to lose those properties. So while people continue to park there, we are going to experience those huge residential and small business problems. As I said, there is a good park and ride at Chelmer, which is about one third used, I suppose. Since the change of rail timetables some years ago, many people remain to be convinced to go back to that station where many of them parked previously.

I wish to talk about another matter which involves residents in my electorate, that is, stamp duty. It is disappointing that the stamp duty concessions which were introduced by the then Honourable the Treasurer, the member for Caloundra, in the former Budget have also been given the chop. They have been axed. The May Budget put in place stamp duty concessions for refinancing—whether it be business or household refinancing. The whole purpose of those concessions was to give home owners, families and many other Aussie battlers out there the opportunity to take advantage of the competitive finance market and to obtain concessions on transferring their loan arrangements and refinancing. I believe that one or two other members might have mentioned this issue, too. I wrote to the Treasurer about it because I had received representations. However, that particular provision does not appear to be in this Budget.

Mr Hamill: What's that?

Mr BEANLAND: The stamp duty concessions in relation to refinancing.

Mr Hamill: I said that that was deferred until 1999-2000.

Mr BEANLAND: The point is that it has been deferred.

Mr Hamill: You hadn't worked out a timetable for it.

Mr BEANLAND: The point is that there was a timetable. I intend to quote from the document. I was going to do that before the Treasurer interrupted me and got himself into worse trouble over this matter.

The former Treasurer, the member for Caloundra, put in place a timetable from 1 January 1999. Our Budget documents stated—

"The exemption will take effect following consultation with industry, with a target implementation date of 1 January 1999. It is estimated that the exemption will cost \$8.3 million in 1998-99 and \$16.5 million in a full year."

Mr Hamill: A target.

Mr BEANLAND: The Treasurer talks about a target. That was a more realistic target than his 5% unemployment target. The Treasurer has caught himself out. He is a sad case. People should not trundle in where they should not do so.

What is discouraging and most disappointing about this Budget is that many ordinary folk out there would have had the opportunity to obtain refinancing at reduced rates had this Government put those concessions in place. It is certainly a jolt to the many small businesspeople who are going to lose through this. I notice that stamp duty revenue has increased by \$63m. Nevertheless, the fact is that this would have given those people an opportunity to refinance and, no doubt, in the case of some small businesses, to create more jobs.

Another issue that relates to jobs is land tax. Government members have said that land tax applies only to the rich. Of course, it does not apply only to the rich; it applies to many of the battling small businesses who have to pick up the bill for this. Those people have, for a long time, campaigned to get rid of this tax. The former National/Liberal Government was going to abolish land tax, and we had a 10-year program to do that. But that has also been given the axe in this Budget. Whether it comes back in a future Budget, time will tell. As I said, land tax relates to jobs. This will particularly hit the tourism industry, because many of the people who pay land tax are located along the coastal belt, where there have been considerable increases in land prices in recent times. This is a very important matter for small business as far as creating jobs and encouraging businesses to get out there and generate business. At the end of the day, only through generating business, growth and development, and creating opportunities to employ more people will we be able to reduce our unemployment rate.

I want to say a few words about the arts, which is a particularly important sector to this State. Unfortunately, I notice that in relation to the Queensland Cultural Centre 2000, for

which the coalition provided \$10m in its May Budget as part of the design costs for the \$320m Queensland Cultural Heritage Centre and Gallery of Modern Art, Labor has wound that \$10m back to something like \$4m in this financial year's Budget, representing a reduction of some \$6m. I mention that particularly, because it was a commitment of this Government prior to coming to office. It said that it was going to advance an additional \$15m to that project.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: The point is that there is no \$15m, there is no \$10m; there is only \$4m. From reading the Budget documents, I understand that Stage 6 of the Cultural Centre precinct is being reviewed and is currently under a cloud. There is no indication from the Government at this point in time—and it has been in office for some time, and it has made commitments prior to this—that the project is going to proceed. The project is of great interest to the arts community of this State. Many people have approached me and other members in an endeavour to ascertain whether this project is going to proceed.

I turn now to the Biennial Festival of Music, which has been reintroduced. It was formerly known as the Brisbane Biennial and will now be called the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. There is some concern that the Government is contemplating changes in this sector. People are concerned about how this is going to affect the current festival arrangements. The Brisbane Festival, which I understand is concluding this weekend, has been extremely successful and well received. It is something to which people have taken. I can appreciate that, because it is an opportunity for the community. It provides an opportunity to appreciate a broad array of music, dance and culture as a result of the coalition's support for the creation of that festival.

Many people from all over Queensland have had the opportunity to perform with some very highly regarded artists and students. For example, students from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music were invited to play with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields under the baton of Sir Neville Martin—one of the finest orchestras in the world and one of the finest conductors in the world. These opportunities have been generated and created with the current festival arrangements. With the new proposals that have been announced, I trust that consideration will be given to ensuring that the current festival continues in its very popular format while the

Government puts in place another festival that will be to the betterment and benefit of Queensland.

The arts sector contains a number of youth initiatives. This Budget has allocated some \$3.5m over four years for youth initiatives. Whereas that is good to see, we need to ensure that recognition is given to all forms of artistic endeavour when allocating this funding. I caution the Minister for The Arts, when he is allocating funds, because far too often the focus is given to contemporary art or multimedia. There needs to be recognition of the many forms of art out there. Of course, everyone in the community has their own preferences. The Minister must recognise that not all young people express themselves in this particular form of contemporary art and multimedia.

Under the arts development and museum development assistance programs, unfortunately, it is disappointing that additional funding has been slashed by 20%. In its May Budget, the coalition allocated some \$1.5m. This minority Labor Government has reduced that allocation to some \$1.2m. Further, Labor has indicated that funding in 1999-2000 will be just \$1.7m compared with the \$2m promised by the coalition. Perhaps the Minister might review this particular allocation, because it is a very important sector. Art companies right around the State benefit from this. As well, fledgling artists and professional artists will lose job opportunities through the proposed cuts in this Budget. I am sure that the new Minister for The Arts will have a look at that, because it is important.

We see the continuation of the coalition's Orchestral Services Task Force. Queensland has many talented musicians, but does not have a complete, professional symphony orchestra. The philharmonic orchestra has been struggling financially for some time. I am sure that members are aware of that. However, it does perform a very important role in, among other performances, accompanying performances at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre. The symphony orchestra is underresourced financially. In terms of human resources, it has been suffering in recent times. It has also had to face the issue of corporatisation, which I am also sure will present it with future challenges. I encourage the Government to continue to explore options for the ongoing viability of professional orchestral music in this State. It is a particularly important sector, one in which I know the Government has been working and one in which we need to ensure that all parties receive their fair reward.

As to the Families portfolio—it is heartening to see that the Seniors Card has been retained. I am sure that many of those seniors who received benefits under the coalition's May Budget, which was brought down by the member for Caloundra, will be pleased to see that the Labor Government has retained the Seniors Card. Many people across the State will benefit from its retention. The Government has also retained the commitment to the International Year of Older Persons funding and coordination. A great deal of work needs to be done in relation to that year as well as in the continuation of the community consultations on the draft Queensland strategy of the ageing. Those are important issues for our older citizens. Many people have been waiting for the benefits that flow from the Seniors Card.

Also in the Families portfolio, funding has been provided for a rural children's centre. Again, that commitment was given by the coalition Government and that has been retained by this Government, as has the Positive Parenting Strategy, an initiative on which the former coalition Government placed a great deal of emphasis. In many cases in this complex, modern society, many parents are not too sure how to rear their children, so we must ensure that we provide them with an opportunity to talk with people about what is needed to raise a family. The Budget allocates funding of some \$2m for 40 services under a continuation of the coalition's Family Support Worker Program. That is heartening to see, as is the continuation of the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, upon which the former coalition Government placed a great deal of emphasis. Of course, the Government is continuing the 1998 Youth Advisory Forums. They have been going for some time. Funding is again allocated for the continuation of them. The Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy is a very important initiative. We need to target those young people who are at risk of taking their lives. In Queensland we lose far too many of them, particularly young males.

Funding has been provided in the Families portfolio for juvenile justice, because there is a proposal for that responsibility to be transferred to that portfolio. A couple of juvenile justice initiatives that were commenced by the former Government are continuing. One is community youth conferencing. I am sure that the figures that come in from the study that is currently being done will show that that conferencing has been of great benefit to helping young people off the road of crime and back into the community to play a very useful role.

Community youth conferencing is an opportunity for juveniles to sit down with the victim, apologise to the victim, make restitution and enter into an agreement that they sign to that effect. Of course, they can have family members at that conferencing program. The coalition Government was very proud to instigate that initiative. I know that it will prove very successful over time in the State. Also allocated is the continuation of the funding arrangements for new juvenile justice detention centres that were allocated in the coalition's May Budget.

I turn now to the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I note that the Budget provides for a continuation of providing disability services at courthouses, including the provision of lifts. That is particularly important not only for that portfolio but also for the Families portfolio, which I now shadow. Through no fault of their own, many people are required to go to courts and registry offices, which in some country towns and provincial cities are the major focus of Government services. It is very important that people with disabilities are able to gain access to those buildings. This Budget provides for the continuation of the provision of court facilities at Doomadgee. A new Magistrates Court complex has been provided for, as it was in the previous Budget.

I compliment the incoming Attorney-General and Minister for Justice on the continuation and implementation of the introduction of the uniform court rules, which were nearly completed when we left office. In fact, the legislation is all in place. There is a little bit of tidying up to do. That will come into force at the end of this calendar year.

Also contained in the Justice portfolio is the continuation of the courts modernisation program. When I took over the office of the Minister of the Department of Justice, I was shocked to find that in all our courts around the State there was no such thing as computerisation of any real worth. In fact, most work was done by the typewriter method and card systems were still used in those courts.

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! Before I call the member for Tablelands I wish to inform the House that in the swimming tonight in the Commonwealth Games, Australia has already won two gold medals, a bronze and a silver, including a games record by a great Queenslander, Susie O'Neill.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (8.56 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for

your update. I would like to concede to the Treasurer that, if there is one thing that I know basically nothing about, it is money and budgets. I cannot even balance my own chequebook, let alone anyone else's. I will not stand up here and bag anyone's Budget, because I know I could not do a better job. Recycled or not, the Budget is there. Let us face it, let us deal in a bit of reality: it will be the Budget of Queensland whether we like it or not. On behalf of a couple of other One Nation members who are not in the Chamber tonight, I say: let us just get on with the job. Though I am just a dumb country boy and I do not know too much about all this sort of stuff, I have gone over the Budget papers to the best of my meagre ability. In my role as the spokesman—

Government members interjected.

Mr NELSON: The longer honourable members interject, the longer I will speak. I was going to rise for only 30 seconds and here I am still speaking. For once I am not bagging the members and they should let me have my say. This is about the only time they will hear Shaun Nelson stand up and not bag the ALP, so let us get on with it.

Mr Musgrove: It's hard to be humble.

Mr NELSON: It is.

Mr Mickel: It is when you are perfect in every way.

Mr NELSON: I did not say that. I won my seat through hard work; I did not inherit it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I remind the member to refer to the Chair.

Mr NELSON: I must get on with the job. I said that I would take only a couple of minutes.

I want to highlight just one issue in my capacity as the One Nation spokesman for Education and member for Tablelands. I am waiting to go to the Estimates committee stage at which I can have a closer examination of some of the spending; however, I highlight that in these Budget papers I cannot see any mention—and I hope the Minister for Education is listening—of the public works that were to go ahead at Malanda State High School for its manual arts facility. That is a facility that is desperately needed. Malanda is a rural community and my home town. Even though I did not attend that high school personally, I know that that high school provides some of the best education in Queensland through some of the best educators I have ever seen in my lifetime. That

is coming from a boy who used to get into a lot of trouble at school.

Mr Musgrove interjected.

Mr NELSON: I accept that interjection from the member for Springwood that there may not be. That is why I am waiting to say in the Estimates committee, "Fine, that is there." However, I know that it costs a hell of a lot of money—somewhere in the vicinity of \$400,000—and that is why I am thinking that it should have been highlighted in the Budget papers. However, I accept that it may be pointed out during the Estimates committee.

I want to reiterate that if it is not in the Budget and if I find out that Malanda is not going to get its manual arts extension, then everything that I have done in this Parliament so far will be nothing compared to what I will do. The students need it as a matter of extreme importance. At the moment, they are working in dangerous facilities. That was highlighted to these boys over here before the last election—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order!

Mr NELSON: The members of the National/Liberal coalition—the Opposition—assured the people of Malanda that they will be going ahead with it. I know that certain assurances were given to a few of the educators in the tablelands that it would be going ahead under the Labor Government.

Mr Hamill: That was the coalition's Budget.

Mr NELSON: Yes. I have looked through that Budget and I know that it is not in there. However, I have it on good faith from a couple of people that they were certainly going to go ahead with it.

Mr Hamill: When?

Mr NELSON: I know that it is not in the coalition documents. I accept that interjection from the Treasurer.

A Government member interjected.

Mr NELSON: It is. I will put this to members: I have heard a couple of people say that I am going to change to the National Party. That is the biggest crock I have ever heard. I rolled a National Party Minister on 75%. I ain't got no love for the National Party. I will tell members that right now. Let me just put that on the record right here and right now. I am a member of One Nation and damned proud to be so. I will put it to the Treasurer that if I go to the Estimates committee and find that the funding is in the documents, that is fine; that is good and well. But if it ain't, by

Lord what Government members have seen so far will be nothing to compared to what they will get later.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (9.03 p.m.): I rise to support these appropriation Bills. Each year, State Budgets come and go, but this one is here to stay and will lay the foundations for some great developments in Queensland. This Government has delivered a great set of figures. I am pleased to report to my constituents—some of whom are here tonight, as members might have heard—that this Budget strikes a very good balance between social and economic priorities. Tonight, my constituents have been enjoying a barbecue. I might say that they will be continuing their efforts to make sure that this Government is here to stay, that I am here to stay, and I welcome them to the Queensland Parliament.

The people in our electorates will want to know what is in the Budget for our areas and what will directly benefit our schools, hospitals, families and work. These are important and expected considerations, and I will highlight key benefits for the residents of the Archerfield electorate shortly. However, we also need to judge Budgets and, in fact, judge Governments not solely on what they will do for each of us individually but on what benefits there are for the community and the State as a whole. Budgets have to lay the foundation for longer-term security as well as meeting some immediate needs. I am pleased to say with confidence that the Beattie Government State Budget delivers immediate improvements in health, education and justice and lays the foundation for significant employment growth.

I am pleased to report to the residents of the Archerfield electorate that they will receive some direct benefits and facilities and gain a great deal from the employment strategies and increased funding in health, legal and other areas contained in the Budget. Firstly, I want to look at some of these direct benefits and facilities. Unlike my colleagues who represent electorates in north Queensland or in major industrial centres in this State, I cannot boast of million-dollar gas pipelines or port redevelopment projects and other big ticket items.

Mr Palaszczuk interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: That is right. Archerfield contains a number of older residential suburbs, light industrial areas and several new suburbs experiencing rapid growth. It does not have the big ticket developments of other electorates. In keeping with the nature of the

community, some of the direct funding to the Archerfield electorate includes a new preschool and State school, the Grand Avenue School at Forest Lake. Previously, this initiative had been announced and a parents and citizens group has been formed. The Budget ensures that this new school is on track for opening in 1999.

There has been an allocation of \$10.5m for construction work on the Scientific Services Complex at Coopers Plains, and an allocation of \$4m to complete the establishment of the Construction Skills Centre at Salisbury. The headline story for our area is the \$3.3m that has been allocated generously by the Minister for Mines and Energy to establish an electricity substation at Archerfield. You beauty! I am sure there will be plenty of jobs in that.

There will be some disappointments for Archerfield residents in the Budget. My major concern is that the \$16m required for the grade separation of Boundary Road at the railway crossing is not allocated in this Budget. It has been a 20-year battle to get this horrendous crossing rectified. Some interim works are under way but big dollars are needed for a long-term solution. I will keep up the call for the major roadworks and continue talks with the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads on this issue. I also know that many residents in the Archerfield electorate want improved public transport, school computers, major roadworks to ease the congestion on Granard and Mains Roads, security grilles in their public housing, and job security. This Budget does not meet all of the needs of the people of Archerfield, but they should be assured that I will keep up the fight.

However, I am very pleased to report to my constituents the Statewide benefits that all of us will gain. The State Budget provides a \$283m, four-year Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program. New apprentice and trainee opportunities will be created in Government departments, local government and statutory authorities. The Budget also provides a \$5.4m training fund for the building and construction industry to create between 800 and 1,000 additional apprenticeships per year, \$165m for improved health services, \$65m to reduce hospital waiting lists, \$126.2m to assist disabled people and \$372.3m for law, order and public safety infrastructure.

As the member for Archerfield, I will be ensuring that my electorate reaps the benefits of some of these Statewide allocations. In regard to jobs—at the instigation of the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, I am chairing an employment seminar at the Archerfield aero club in

October. That seminar will bring together industry and community groups to develop employment generation proposals for my area. I am hopeful that we can get some of the urban renewal money or jobs strategy money that is contained within the Budget. I will be working hard to make sure that funding for employment projects, capital works and related initiatives directly provide secure employment for people within the Archerfield electorate.

The \$4m Construction Skills Centre is a great boost for my area. That centre will enable young people to develop world-class skills, equipping them well for work in this growing industry. In the area of family support, I am extremely pleased to see that Peter Beattie's actions have spoken louder than his words. This Government has allocated a massive increase in funding for disability support at \$126.2m, \$5.2m to improve child protection services, \$6.3m for three juvenile justice centres, \$17.4m to improve child-care services and \$484.7m—up from \$458.6m in 1997-98—for housing initiatives. Under the previous coalition Government, Queensland was no national champion in the provision of adequate social and community services. In 1996-97, the previous Government spent a mere \$122 per head on social and community services compared with a national standard of around \$200. That statistic is taken from the 1998 Grants Commission update.

This Government is getting a better balance between economic and social priorities. We are making a shift to social rationalism rather than economic rationalism. I am looking forward to implementing the Government's Budget strategy.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (9.08 p.m.): In speaking to the Budget, I would like to refer to some local issues and then some issues in relation to my shadow portfolio. I am extremely disappointed that money has not been put aside to at least obtain land for the establishment in the future of a new hospital to service the Capricorn Coast. I have made calls for this hospital in the past. The present hospital, which is right on the ocean front, is at a stage of its life where it is not as serviceable as it could be. A totally new hospital is needed to service and meet the needs of this fast-growing area.

A similar situation exists with the fire and ambulance services, both of which are located in the main street. It is not safe for ambulances and fire trucks to be racing down a main street. Unfortunately, the vehicles cannot move straight onto the opposite side of

the road because of the gardens that have been built in the middle of the road. Those services should be located away from the city centre in separate buildings but on one block of land, along with an emergency services and communications unit.

The Budget does not appear to provide funding for the new police station that we were hoping was to be built at Yeppoon. Indeed, funding has not even been provided to extend the existing police station. In addition, the previous Government obtained land for a new high school, but a lot of concern is being expressed in the electorate that the new high school has been put on hold or has been abandoned altogether. I shall endeavour to find out more about that when I return to my electorate next week. I assure the House that my constituents are not happy about it. An additional high school is needed in this area, which is going ahead at a great rate of knots.

Simply because a member is now in the Opposition, the new Government must not take things away from his or her electorate. The coalition was in Government for just over two years and we achieved an enormous amount for the Capricorn Coast. We were very successful. The people appreciated what was done and do not want to see coalition projects put on hold. For example, we must ensure that the road connecting Yeppoon and Rockhampton is widened to four lanes. Part of the road has already been widened to four lanes and any further work on the road should continue the four-laning.

In relation to my shadow portfolio, I am disappointed that it appears as though the coalition's 22% subsidy scheme for farmers, which was for small water supply schemes to a value of more than \$200,000, and which the coalition was reducing to schemes of more than \$75,000, will be scrapped altogether in this Budget. That certainly affects canegrowers; indeed, it affects all farmers. Also, there is to be a cutback in funding for stock route water conservation. Stock routes may not be used all the time, but it is a fact of life that in times of drought they are used and that is when the water supplies need to be available.

I also notice that administration in the Department of the Environment is being increased at the expense of the koala scheme, funding for which is being cut from \$4m to \$2.4m. That is just terrible. This was a good scheme; indeed, it was the main scheme. We are going to have a heap more bureaucrats and fewer koalas, and I do not think that that is a good trade-off.

In view of the time, I simply reiterate that much is needed in the Keppel electorate and I will continue to fight for whatever is required. In relation to my shadow portfolio, it would seem that assistance to people who live in the bush is being deviously cut already. The Minister needs to get his act together and ensure that he fights for the schemes that help the people of the bush. For example, the Governor's Speech did not make any mention of dams for Queensland. Frankly, we must provide strategically placed dams to adequately meet Queensland's future water needs. I know that in some instances there is a bit of an outcry against dams, but I only need to suggest that members look at the Fairbairn Dam. That dam was built in 1972 at a cost of \$23m. That dam now provides an enormous entertainment area for the people of Emerald. It is a fish regenerating dam. The water run-off is well controlled and it supports citrus growing, cotton growing, a number of mining towns and, of course, a number of coalmines. If members work out the tax that all of those organisations collectively pay—organisations that exist because that dam is there—the figure runs into hundreds of millions of dollars each year. That is the taxation benefit that the Federal Government receives from that dam, which cost it only \$23m. Many such schemes must be undertaken. If we do not ensure that we keep a balanced approach towards dams, the State will not continue to go ahead in the leaps and bounds that we hope it will. That certainly will not help the Labor Party's job creation program. In fact, in many ways this Budget does little for job enhancement.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (9.15 p.m.): The Budget announced on Tuesday by Treasurer David Hamill delivers \$380m worth of election promises. The \$16 billion Budget relies on 3.3% revenue growth to cover capital works, both old and new initiatives, across Government. This Budget is jobs focused and is a step towards Labor's jobs target. The Budget also commits Labor in Government to social responsibilities—responsibilities that we in the Labor Party take great pride in meeting.

Importantly for the people of Queensland, there are no new taxes or increased taxes in the Budget. No doubt there will be tax rises in line with inflation, but there are no deliberate increases for the purpose of raising additional revenue. The people of Queensland can feel comfortable about the Budget as it has been put together with a jobs focus and a strong commitment from Labor to getting the balance right between social and fiscal responsibilities.

The rhetoric of Budget announcements always creates an interest in the public arena,

but it is the ability of the Government to deliver the capital works and new funding initiatives that gains the respect of the community. I know that the Premier, the Treasurer and Ministers in the Labor Government will be taking their departments by the throat and using all their resources to deliver to the people.

As the member of a rural and mining based electorate in central Queensland, I am pleased with the Budget outcome. I would have liked to have achieved more for my electorate, but we have to remember that the Fitzroy electorate within the Fitzroy region is only a part of this large and diverse State. The Fitzroy and central-west region has been allocated \$509,237,000 for capital outlays in 1998-99, \$261.9m for transport related infrastructure and \$111.6m for mining, energy and electricity infrastructure. The estimated per capita expenditure for the region is \$2,653.

Mr Reynolds: It is the best in the State.

Mr PEARCE: Yes, we are leading the State and so we should; we put a lot into revenue. The per capita expenditure for other regions is as follows: Wide Bay/Burnett, \$1,411 per capita; the south-east corner, \$1,455 per capita; the Mackay and northern region, \$1,848 per capita; and the far north and north west region, \$2,177. On a per capita basis, the Fitzroy and central-west region does well out of the Budget, receiving \$500 more per head of population than the far north and north western region and \$1,198 more than the south-east corner.

I raise that point today because I am often approached by people who feel that our region misses out badly, especially after consideration of the revenue generated from the region through primary industries, mining and tourism. Certainly there are greater numbers of people in the south-east corner, which reduces per capita dollar expenditure. The Government has to try to spread the people's money evenly across the State, addressing the needs of more Queenslanders. Unfortunately, some people do not understand that we have a Statewide responsibility rather than a regional responsibility.

I wish to move on and mention briefly some of the Budget commitments that will benefit the people of central Queensland and in particular the Fitzroy electorate. There are several satisfying outcomes for me: the deliberate focus on jobs, the commitment to fixing the disgraceful neglect of people with disabilities, the Cool Schools program, a police presence for Gracemere, the construction of the Woorabinda health facility and free

ambulance services for Seniors Card holders, pensioners and their dependants. Importantly, the \$4.8 billion Capital Works Program will provide job security for more than 47,000 workers and will create another 30,000 new jobs. In doing so, it will provide opportunities for those who have been without work. If those job numbers can be sustained, that will lead to confidence and a feeling of hope. I am hopeful that some of these jobs will come to central Queensland.

The Budget puts in place the new direction for job creation and job security. This Labor Government is taking the first steps in meeting the challenge of job creation. We all know that the 5% target cited by the Premier during the lead-up to the election will be difficult for us in Government. However, I feel more comfortable about Labor's target for jobs than if we had no target at all. The Minister for Public Works and Housing, the member for Rockhampton, Rob Schwarten, and I will be looking to get our fair share of apprenticeships and traineeships for the region.

One of the most difficult issues for me as a local member has been the previous coalition Government's lack of understanding of the unmet needs of people with disabilities. I have personally met with many families and carers supporting people with disabilities in my electorate, and I have witnessed first-hand the dedication and commitment they provide. However, it can be tough and they need support to ensure that they can continue to provide a good quality of life for those in need. That is why I am delighted that this Labor Budget has honoured its election commitment to deliver an additional \$30m a year to address the high levels of unmet need for disability services in the community. This outstanding funding boost will not only improve the lives of many hundreds of people with disabilities and their families; it will create more than 800 jobs, including 300 in this financial year. The package includes additional funding for accommodation support, recreation and community access, and respite and family support services. I am particularly pleased that the funding will focus on people with disabilities and their families in rural and remote regional areas of Queensland. One has to visit rural communities and talk to people with disabilities and their families to gain an understanding of the real difficulties that they face because they live in an isolated rural community. They are unable to access services, and my experience is that that puts a great deal of pressure on a lot of those families.

Central Queensland students, staff and parents and citizens associations are

applauding this Government's commitment to the airconditioning of schools. An additional \$42m over four years—\$6m in 1998-99—has been allocated to aircondition an extra 183 State schools and 47 non-State schools, most of which are in central Queensland, with some in north Queensland. Those schools fall within the boundaries of the old Capricornia region, which means that 33 schools in the Fitzroy electorate will now be eligible to apply for funds under the Cool Schools program. This was a Labor promise made in good faith that is now being delivered. The coalition chose to ignore the strong campaign initiated by the Cool Schools 2000 committee. The coalition did not listen. It showed that it did not care about the sons and daughters of young parents. The coalition showed that it did not care that students and teachers are forced to take classes in extreme heat conditions.

The State Government will contribute 75% of project costs. This means that schools will now be able to set about raising a realistic funding target. The issue for me now is to access funding for those schools that have in their airconditioning accounts sufficient dollars to qualify for the 75% subsidy. Several of the schools have already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars. They have raised part of the final instalment towards the completion of their projects, and a Government subsidy provided now will allow these schools to have the airconditioning project completed before the hot weather arrives. They have made the commitment and provided the money. They now need a helping hand to complete their projects. On behalf of the school students, staff and parents and citizens associations throughout our region, I record my appreciation for the funding allocation for airconditioning. We made the promise, we are delivering and everybody appreciates it.

Another big win for the people of my electorate is the Budget commitment of half a million dollars for the construction of two residences and a police station in Gracemere. The community has put faith in me as its local member and, thanks to the Police Minister, the Police Service and the Labor Government, we will deliver. We have campaigned long and hard for this police presence. We have sent letters to Ministers, and we have made statements and asked questions in the Parliament. We have been strongly supported by the media, and that has allowed us to keep the issue in the spotlight. We did not give up.

We promised a Police Beat when last in Government. I can recall that positions had been provided for, but the change of Government following the Mundingburra by-

election saw the Police Beat program shelved. Within a week or two of winning Government, the Minister for Police was in Gracemere promising a police presence by June 1999. A budget line item in the Budget allocates the necessary dollars. It is in the Budget. The money is there and the promise will be delivered. The people of Gracemere and district are delighted.

Page 95 of Budget Paper No. 3 identifies \$4.483m for the construction of the new health facility for Woorabinda. When last in the Woorabinda community, I inspected the almost completed new nurses' accommodation. These self-contained units are modern, comfortable and of a standard that should be available to the hardworking and committed health workers providing their expertise in isolated communities such as Woorabinda. Labor in Government commenced the planning process for the new facility. To its credit, the coalition in Government continued the process. However, it is Labor that will complete the construction and commissioning of the new health facility. I am thrilled to bits to know that it will be a Labor Minister who will be opening this new facility that will keep sick people in Woorabinda close to their families and the culture that they know. Mothers will be able to give birth in their local community.

The next initiative that I wish to touch on is the free ambulance service. This State Budget will provide \$15m for the funding of a free ambulance service for pensioners, seniors and their dependants, which will kick in from 1 January next year. This means that about 850,000 Queenslanders, including aged and disabled pensioners, Seniors Card holders and other pensioners and their dependants will benefit from the free service. It is important that those eligible for the free service do not let their ambulance cover lapse in the meantime as, if they require an ambulance and are not subscribers, they could face a very big bill. Non-subscribers are charged \$285, plus \$9.55 for every kilometre. The Queensland Ambulance Service has made a commitment to refund any oversubscriptions for those eligible for the free service from January next. That was another Labor promise. The funding is in the Budget. We are going to deliver on that promise.

As the member for Fitzroy, I am very pleased with the Budget outcome. We have certainly put a lot of work into getting some of these projects approved and the funding allocated. I am more than happy with the way in which the Treasurer has responded to our

calls. I am sure that we will get on with the job and start looking for things to target next year.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (9.27 p.m.): Obviously, the overall thrust of the Budget is very hard to criticise because, as the Treasurer himself acknowledges, it is based on the structure of the Budget presented by the coalition when it was in Government back in May. I will take the opportunity to make a couple of observations in relation to the new Budget, the amendments that have been made and the 5% unemployment target that was a commitment of the Labor Party prior to the election. Many people cast their votes for Labor based on its commitment to a 5% unemployment rate. As the Leader of the Opposition said, that commitment has been qualified since the lead-up to the election in that it has suddenly become a target to be achieved within five years.

A lot has been said about the Asian meltdown and the impact it may have on the ability of the Government to reach that target. Today the shadow Treasurer highlighted the fact that the Government is now placing emphasis on the economic problems that Japan is experiencing. From my experience from the meetings I have been at over a period of time, that is nothing new. The situation is not a lot different from when the coalition brought down its Budget in May. The same parameters existed. Many of the Asian nations were in financial crisis.

The Japanese economy was not looking good and was not expected to come good. That has been predicted for some time, based on the fact that Japan went through a horrific period some years ago. In the eyes of many leading world economists, Japan did not take the correct steps to overcome those problems in that it did not write off a lot of the debt it had. As a result of that, there was a lack of confidence amongst Japanese people, and the Japanese Government has been trying desperately to overcome that.

When the Treasurer and the Premier speak about the effects of the problems in Japan and the problems with the Asian meltdown, they should realise that those problems are not new, and they should not change the outcome of this Budget from what was to be the outcome of our Budget. In actual fact, Queensland is in a very good position in the context of what has happened in Asia and in Japan in particular.

Japan is our leading trading partner, and many of the Asian countries are very significant trading partners of ours, particularly Korea. Prior to the change of Government, the

coalition was making many advances in trade with those nations. It was also diversifying its trade with other nations. The member for Logan will well realise that from the answer he received to a question on notice he asked of the Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade. He asked about the cost of setting up the Los Angeles trade office and the results of that office. As the answer stated, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the greatest percentage increase in exports in 1997-98 was to the United States. The increase of 40.17% was the highest of any of the overseas offices. That is a tribute to what the then Queensland Government was doing to diversify trade outlets.

Prior to the Asian meltdown, the coalition also made moves to diversify into Europe. As the Leader of the Opposition said today, we strengthened our presence in Europe. Not only did we open many offices overseas but we also took other measures, which this Government will reap the benefits of, to ensure that Queensland's export trade as a percentage of overall Australian exports and its position in trade throughout the world, against the competition of other countries, would only improve.

Included in those measures was the provision to utilise the bilateral business groups by providing financial assistance to them with our overseas trade missions. We also established regional offices to promote trade and give confidence to people in the regions. We established the Education Advisory Council, which people involved in education had been asking for for many years. The Labor Government did not do that when it was in Government. We were seeing great advances in the area of export of education, with students coming to Queensland to further their education.

These are all measures taken by the coalition from which this Government will benefit. So when we see the Premier and the Deputy Premier get up in this House and make claims about what is happening in relation to trade and exports, we will remember that most of that will have been a direct result of the actions taken by the previous coalition Government.

I detect a certain amount of negativity on the part of the Treasurer, the Premier and the Deputy Premier when they keep referring to the problems of Asia and the effects those problems will have on our economy. When we were in Government we talked positively about what Queensland had to offer and about the opportunities in trade throughout the world.

We were not negative about what was happening in Asia. Whilst there would be winners and losers, it did provide some opportunities in other fields where we are competitive. We are competitive in Europe. We are competitive, as I have outlined to the House, in the United States. We certainly will see some opportunities out of Asia.

Asia will not be on its knees forever. No-one can tell what the overall effects will be, but at the end of the day Queensland has so much going for it—our geographical position, our competitiveness, the quality of our products, our natural resources, our low tax State and our environment. We have so much to be positive about. The trade figures for the first 10 months of the financial year before the coalition went out of office only prove that—even during the Asian meltdown and post-Asian meltdown. We had an 18.6% increase in our trade figures, which is phenomenal, and we were increasing as a percentage of the Australian cake, which was against the trend of what was happening when Labor went out of office two and a half years ago.

It is no wonder that the now Premier and the now Government when in Opposition gave us bipartisan support, because we were kicking goals in trade—no ifs, buts or maybes. People were starting to put Queensland on the map as a destination for investment, increasing the number of headquarters of major companies being established in Queensland. We were seeing increasing numbers of delegations. We were also seeing more business delegations to overseas countries from which we are reaping the benefits, as exemplified by the trade figures themselves. I certainly do not want to see that put in jeopardy. I do not believe that the Government wants to see it put in jeopardy either, so I would like to see a more positive approach to the future of our trade with other countries and overseas partners than has been shown by this Government.

I really think this Government is creating a safety net for itself by conditioning the people to think that if it does not reach the 5% unemployment rate it is because of issues beyond the Government's control—the Asian meltdown and the Japanese economy. As I said, that is not the reality at all, because we were in exactly the same position when we brought down our Budget. That is one of the reasons we were a little cautious when talking about unemployment figures—we preferred to be on the conservative side—but no-one can accuse us in any sincerity of not being for jobs as much as anyone else in this economy is for jobs. That is what every one of us in this

Parliament is all about. There is no reason the Government should have a monopoly on job creation.

I will mention some issues relevant to the area I represent, that is, the Burnett electorate and the Bundaberg area. In the Budget, which is essentially the same as our Budget, as the previous speaker mentioned, there is an increase in the provision for the capital works program for the Wide Bay/Burnett region at around \$21m. We made provision for \$299m, if my figures are correct. That has been increased to \$322m. That is slightly misleading. While there are some gains, there are also some losses in that area.

Some commitments made by us did not appear in the Budget papers in black and white. There are a few areas of concern that I have in relation to those figures. I accept the figures and recognise that those figures should be honoured and met. There is increased provision for fast tracking the capital works program at the Bundaberg Hospital. The provisions in relation to the commitment of \$1.1m for mental health we made are unclear. I can see that the overall figure for mental health is down by \$6m on what we had provided.

Mrs Edmond: In the total mental health.

Mr SLACK: In the total mental health bill.

Mrs Edmond: Capital works has gone down. It is a \$28m increase in recurrent funding.

Mr SLACK: I would like an assurance from the Health Minister that the health program we had committed to in relation to mental health—

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mr SLACK: I am pleased to hear that, but I would like the assurance that the \$1.1m will be provided. That is the figure we committed to. There was another \$300,000 for renal support in the Bundaberg Hospital. These are issues that were unclear to me when I read through the Budget.

We made a \$500,000 commitment for the dredging of the Burnett Heads harbour. The current position with regard to that matter is unclear. The dredging of the harbour has been one of the goals of the people of Burnett Heads. There is no doubt that there is a pressing need for the dredging of the harbour in the interests of the area's economy. I would like to be assured by the Government that the coalition's commitment will be acted upon.

I want to mention provisions for water. The member for Bundaberg is in the House

and I know that she will acknowledge that the provision of water storage in this area is extremely important. Probably the No. 1 priority in our area is to ensure that we have sufficient water, which will lead to increased opportunities for jobs. When the coalition was in Government water was our No. 1 priority. We made commitments for the delivery of \$1 billion worth of water storages. This figure could have increased to \$2 billion over a 15-year period. The Bundaberg scheme entailed additional storage in the Burnett catchment and came within the No. 1 priority classification. The coalition was in the process of fast-tracking all the studies that were required to deliver additional major storage in the Burnett catchment.

In the meantime, because of the acute shortage of water and the severe economic effects that that was having on farmers and the rest of the community, we were also fast-tracking the provision of what we call the bags on the Walla Weir, the Bucca Weir and the James Weir. Prior to the last election Cabinet had made a commitment to fast-track the studies. Provided the outcomes of the studies were favourable—and we believed that they would be—the coalition was looking to add those additional bags in the coming year. Cabinet agreed that the money would be made available. We made provision for \$30m for Category 1 storages throughout the State. Cabinet made the decision in relation to the bags on those weirs with the realisation that the money would be made available provided that the all clear was given both on environmental and economic grounds. We had no reason to believe that the all clear would not be given. We believed that the all clear would be given in the shorter term rather than the longer term.

As I understand it, this Government's Budget has reduced the amount allocated for the Category 1 priority from \$30m to \$7m. We would like an assurance from this Government that the provisions which were made by the previous Government will be honoured by this Government. However, I do not see any provision for that in these Budget papers.

The other aspect of some concern was mentioned by our spokesperson on water resources. I refer to the abolition of the provision that we had made for a subsidy of 22.5% for on-farm storage. This subsidy was a big incentive to farmers in the area to provide off-stream storage and utilise the water that would otherwise run out to sea. The saving of that water would be of assistance to the economy of the Bundaberg area. It would also assist in obtaining jobs for people in

Bundaberg. I would like this Government to clarify those matters. Unless these things are clarified positively, the commitment by this Government to the Bundaberg area will be less in real terms than what was being provided by the coalition. With that contribution, I support the Budget.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (9.44 p.m.): I am proud to be part of a Government that is committed to reducing unemployment and targeting funds towards addressing the basic needs of our society. There are many needs and wants across all electorates in Queensland and they cannot all be catered for at once. The electorate of Mount Ommaney has many issues that need to be addressed.

Maintenance in a number of schools has been neglected. Oxley Secondary College has been waiting for the building of a construction court for many years. It keeps being taken off the agenda. The Middle Park State School P & C has advised me of a number of projects which have also been taken off the agenda. In fact, I have heard from most schools in the area and all have brought to my attention the same issues.

The Budget has committed a \$35m increase over four years to address school maintenance and security. The Minister for Education, Dean Wells, is committed to improving education by increasing spending by 5% on last year's Budget. The Centenary suburbs are still growing rapidly with new estates popping up at Riverhills, Sinnamon Park and Seventeen Mile Rocks.

We have needed our own ambulance service for many years and, with the population increasing by 6% every year, and rapidly ageing, the need for an ambulance service is even more urgent. The Budget provides for an amount of \$330,000 to purchase land to house an ambulance centre. This is a first step in providing a fully functional ambulance centre for the Centenary suburbs.

Noise barriers and the bikeway currently being constructed along the Centenary Highway will be completed early in 1999. The Government has sped up this process in order to satisfy the needs of local residents. The Government will provide \$1.3m for the third stage of the Centenary Highway noise barrier project and an additional section of the bikeway. There is still a need to look at the traffic hotspots along the highway—the bottleneck that occurs and the speed of traffic and its effect on noise. Testing of highway usage and speed limits will occur in late 1998

and early 1999 to ascertain the effects on noise levels.

Another issue that has long been awaiting attention is the need for ramps at the Oxley and Sherwood Railway Stations. We need an increase in the level of access for mothers and the disabled. The Budget provides for \$5m to be spent on security measures and \$3m for upgrading of access by the disabled to the Citytrain network.

The Mount Ommaney Police Station is a relatively new asset to our area. However, there is always the question about adequate police numbers, particularly after the closure of the Oxley Police Station. The Budget will provide for the completion of accommodation for the Brisbane Dog Squad at Oxley and the continuation of the relocation of specialist squads from Alderley to Oxley. A further \$105,000 will be provided to complete the Mount Ommaney Police Station. The Government is committed to increasing the number of operational police in the State. This is being achieved through the Queensland Police Service staffing plan, which aims to deliver an increase in police strength of 809 police and 571 civilians between July 1996 and August 1999.

I believe that the Government's Budget caters adequately for a broad range of people across my electorate. There is something in it for everyone—for young and old, for rich and poor, for employed and unemployed, for women and men, and for families and individuals.

For women, the provision of quality and affordable child care is fundamental to ensuring that women can participate in all areas of life, particularly in the paid work force. \$2m is provided for the first time by the Office of Child Care to assist non-profit organisations involved in outside school hour care services, child-care centres and kindergartens. These organisations will be able to apply for grants for capital equipment and facilities. With support for child care there needs to be help available for women to re-enter the work force. \$200,000 will be provided to give women the skills, confidence and self-esteem to re-enter the work force. \$1.5m has been allocated by Queensland Health for a new initiative to assist and support parents who have identified problems with their child's behaviour or development.

For our seniors, \$15m has been allocated for the first time to the Queensland Ambulance Service to provide free ambulance services to all pensioners in Queensland for the six months from 1 January 1999. An increased

amount of \$7.7m is allocated to the home assist/service program by the Department of Housing for home repairs, minor modifications and security for older people with a disability. The motor vehicle registration concession has been reintroduced for all Seniors Card holders from 1 July 1998 at a cost of \$2.7m in 1998-99. This concession provides a 50% reduction in the motor vehicle fee component of the registration fee.

For our young and unemployed, \$0.799m is allocated by Queensland Health to the Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth Program that provides primary health care services for young people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness. Capital assistance for non-State schools will increase by \$1m per annum. \$4.6m—including \$2.3m for 1997-98—is allocated to provide a 50% subsidy for external infrastructure at new non-State schools, including passenger pick-up and set-down areas.

Having had a long-term career in the former Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs prior to entering politics, I have a deep concern about our young people and their futures. They need to have some long-term goals, a worthwhile career and know that, some day, they will have their own homes and families. Employment does not seem to be on the agenda of the Federal coalition Government. It has closed the CES, and it is now more difficult for the unemployed to access jobs and for employers to hire unemployed people. The Beattie Government has set itself a difficult agenda, but it has had the courage to put jobs back on the agenda.

The Budget provides \$283m for up to 24,500 jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships over four years under the Community Jobs Plan initiative. This includes 6,500 apprenticeships and traineeships in the public sector, up to 9,000 additional apprentices and trainees in the private sector and 9,000 job placements of three to six months in community and environmental projects. As well, 17,800 extra jobs will be created from capital works, making a total of 65,600 jobs supported by the Capital Works Program, 685 additional teachers, 995 extra health workers, and over 370 more police and civilian support staff. I believe that these commitments will give our young people the opportunities that they deserve—a turning point in their lives. Not only will Queensland get back to work, but a number of measures have been put in place to address the urgent social needs of Queenslanders. As well, millions of dollars will go towards improving our health services,

reducing hospital waiting lists and providing assistance for the disabled in our community, addressing the needs of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, and promoting multiculturalism.

I intend to make the most of these Budget provisions for the benefit of my Mount Ommaney electorate. As an advocate for the members of my community, I will be ensuring that their needs are heard by Ministers of the Beattie Labor Government. The people in Oxley are in need of a long-overdue community health centre. An increase in the number of police is essential to act as a deterrent to crime in the area. There needs to be established in the electorate a meeting place for young people where they are able to get together with their peers for sport and recreation and to partake in community and vocational activities. I will be hounding my colleagues in Government to achieve these aims over the next three years. Much can be achieved by chipping away at the problems piece by piece to arrive at an ideal state.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (9.53 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise in this debate on the Appropriation Bills and to contribute to what I believe are two Budgets: this Budget and the Budget of the previous Government. As to those sections that have been rolled over into the current Government's Budget, my focus will be not only on the benefits to my electorate but on those that apply to the other people of this State. I pass on my appreciation to both sides of the House, because both have contributed to the current Budget.

A number of projects were funded under the previous Government and construction had actually started. As I said, those funds were transferred and re-presented in the current Budget. These include a long-overdue police station in Gladstone City. The construction of that is going along well. In fact, the Premier has had a look at that development. However, I raise one concern that the Mayor of Gladstone expressed in today's newspaper. He has a serious concern about the adequacy of parking in close proximity to the police station. Initially, the idea was to have a parking station under the police station, but that was done away with because of funding overruns. Now, the only parking is a little bit of off-street and on-street parking, so that may be a problem that will have to be confronted.

My disappointment, not only in the current Budget but in the previous Budget, was that there was no allocation for a Calliope police

station. This is something about which I intend to speak again in this House. The Calliope police work out of a room that is smaller than most of our Parliament House offices. They have no privacy. If somebody comes in with a personal matter, either the police have to ask all other people to exit the police station, and then they do the interview, or the sergeant has to actually take that person into his private home and hold the interview there. That situation is really quite critical, and it has been for many, many years. As I said, it is a priority that was in neither Budget, but it certainly needs to be attended to.

I believe that the funding for the courthouse has been rolled over into this Budget from the Budget of the previous Government. Again, the current Premier inspected the courthouse site. In the run-up to the election, there was a campaign to continue with the police station development but stop the courthouse development. I know that, after his inspection of the current courthouse, the Premier understood why the previous Justice Minister supported the development of the new courthouse. The current one is certainly too small for the projected growth of the Gladstone area. It is even too small for the current population—let alone the fact that there are security problems for staff at the courthouse.

Funding for the hospital redevelopment was provided by both Governments. That project is developing well. The Minister for Health is coming up in a very short time to open the new wing. I know that the staff are really looking forward to that. All of the disruption that comes with a redevelopment was able to be coped with simply because the staff there and the users of the hospital facility could see that the end result was going to be so much better. The co-location is also progressing very well. I know that that is going to significantly improve the health facilities that are available to the local residents.

I also commend the funding for palliative care. The Budget states that there has been an increase to \$2.3m. This is a very sensitive area of health. In my electorate, the people who undertake palliative care are the Red Cross, community health and hospital staff. They are a very special group of people. That have a compassion that is unparalleled. They are really dealing with end-of-life issues, not only with the patients but with their families. A lot of counselling, comforting and care has to go into it. So I congratulate any increase in funding in that sector.

Mental health service provision is a problem for my region. Our mental health staff work out of a demountable building. I always look at it and think that if I went in there with a mental health problem, I would probably come out with a worse one, because it is just so depressing. It is small. It is underresourced, simply because there is nowhere to put people. I know that they are looking for alternative accommodation at the moment. They are paying exorbitant rent for that building. That is incredible.

Mrs Edmond: Can you talk to me about it when I come up there?

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Sure. The increased funding for HACC services is also welcome. One of the focuses is to keep people in their homes as long as possible. That can be as simple as appropriate ramping, appropriate safety precautions in bathrooms and that sort of thing. That can keep older couples together, and it can keep people in their family homes for much longer. They are mentally very happy to stay there. So the increases in that funding are very, very welcome.

I was pleased to see the continued funding of \$1m for the Central Queensland University Gladstone campus retained. I also welcome in the Education budget the inclusion of more of Queensland in the Cooler Schools program. When I went through the schools in my electorate that would be eligible, I could not see any that would be excluded. I thank the Minister for that. That includes the private schools as well. During the most recent hot summer, many parents were concerned about their children's welfare. I am sure we are not unique. We have a number of classrooms that are converted areas that are airlocked. They are enclosed, quite stuffy and there is no circulation. The Cooler Schools program will be greatly welcomed by the students, particularly in the summer months. I was pleased to see the continuing funding for the Boyne Island general learning half block.

Tonight we have had a debate about firefighters. I will include ambulance officers in my comments. They are at the forefront of our emergency services. Funding for them is essential, not only for facilities and equipment but also to ensure that their morale is kept at a high level. They turn out to some of the saddest incidents that people have to face. They have to not only apply their skills at that time but also cope with the emotional aftermath that they as service providers face. It is important that their morale be kept as high as possible.

I welcome the disaster funding. It appears that the Federal Government is making it more and more difficult for local councils to access disaster funding. That is very sad. A community that is facing a natural disaster is a community that risks problems in the future, because floods, fires and similar disasters have an intensive and intrusive effect. They affect people for a long time. Access to disaster funding without a great deal of heartburn eases that burden.

I certainly welcome the provision of free ambulance subscriptions for pensioners and Seniors Card holders. I thank the Minister for Emergency Services for her response to a question. When this initiative was first announced, I was asked a lot of questions about whether it would be transferable interstate. The announcement of the initiative referred to "emergency treatment provided by ambulance services". My constituents wondered whether just a very narrow strip of services would be available free and that the rest would have to be paid for, which would necessitate the taking out of cover anyway. The Minister for Emergency Services was very prompt in her response to say that it would cover all ambulance services and that there would be reciprocal rights interstate for pensioners and Seniors Card holders who are holidaying. I thank the Minister for that.

As to the Disability Services portfolio, from the Budget documents I have not been able to obtain a clear understanding of what has been allocated to unmet needs in this financial year.

Mr Hamill: \$21.2m extra.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is \$21.2m extra. I am not sure whether \$30m or \$50m was called for during the very emotive debates in this House.

Mr Hamill: About \$100m over three years, if I recall.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: That is welcome. The unmet needs sector is one of those that is as big as the bucket will allow it to be. It is very difficult to fully address. It is like the provision of health, education and police services. For those people who are full-time carers of people with disabilities, any assistance is gratefully received. That is certainly appreciated.

I note that \$300,000 is allocated for Gladstone youth. In the Gladstone region, the average age is low. A lot of young families settled in the area when the industries came. They have grown up and they have children of their own now. Many of those are in their teenage years. We have a very high youth

population and a very high level of youth unemployment. That funding for prevention and intervention is certainly most appreciated.

In the Transport portfolio, additional funding has been provided for the tilt train. I have a question for the Minister for Transport. We had meetings prior to the election at Mount Larcom. Currently the train stops at Mount Larcom, picks up and sets down passengers. Prior to the election, the then Transport Minister gave an undertaking that the train would continue to stop to pick up passengers when they were booked and to set down passengers. The Labor candidate who ran against me indicated that the Labor Government would continue on with that commitment. I would be certainly very pleased to have that commitment reaffirmed. There are no major capital works projects for transport listed for my electorate. There are two on which I will seek clarification and one that I will remind the Government about.

The issue Monto Road is a hoary chestnut that has been around since Adam was in knee highs. That dirt road services four rural towns. It is a commodity link for timber for the Austicks factory. It also carries cattle and grain. The majority of it is still a dirt road. There is a low-cost seal that is being applied to some sections of that road very effectively. That road is certainly a concern to those residents and will continue to be until that bitumen link is completed. Announcements were made regionally about the Dawson Highway between Calliope and the Biloela range and for the duplication of the Dawson Highway in Gladstone. There is nothing stated about those in the Budget documents, but they were regional announcements. I will be optimistic and assume that they are going ahead.

A number of Budget items remained: the GPA expansions, the vessel tracking system upgrade and the marine pollution response. All of those funding elements are included because of our industrial base. They are essential. I welcome and congratulate the Minister for Mines and Energy on the solar hot water rebate, which was reinstated. I also congratulate the Minister for The Arts on the RADF funding. Rural communities are very isolated from cultural development. People in Brisbane in the south-east corner are a bit spoilt. I think they do not always appreciate what they have. In rural Queensland, people really fight for access to cultural performances, whether they be the visual arts or the performing arts. People who are developing their skills also struggle to access tutoring and to gain experience in performing. The RADF scheme provides access to funds to smaller

groups and individuals who would not qualify for the major grants. A \$2,000 grant to an individual artist or performer is a huge boost to their skills development. Emotionally it encourages them a great deal. The increase in the RADF funding is particularly welcome.

In the Budget Speech the Treasurer talked a lot about increases in apprenticeship numbers. For both sides of politics, this is an essential issue. It is argued about and numbers are bandied about. Members on one side of the Chamber say that it is this many thousand and members on the other say, "No, it isn't really: if you take this off and this off, it is a lesser number." Despite all that political rhetoric, we must remember that usually it is our kids whom we are talking about when we are fighting about numbers or arguing about the reality of the statistics in budgets or anywhere else. Apprenticeships are a key development tool for both our young people and our older people, but particularly for our youth. Any increase in opportunities for apprenticeships is more than welcome.

I look forward to the development of Government housing in the Gladstone region. The statistical breakdown is not in the Budget papers because of the difficulty of doing that. The housing that is available in my electorate is stretched to say the least. I commend the Minister for Public Works and Housing. He sent one of his advisers to my office. We discussed the possibility of aged care accommodation on a block of land in Philip Street. I thank the Minister for his openness to that suggestion and his support for that suggestion. Although it is not in the Budget, I am looking forward to that coming to fruition.

As to law and order, one of the new Budget line items is the replacement of the Rockhampton Correctional Centre. That is not in my electorate, but it is the correctional centre that we access. Some refurbishment money from the previous Government's Budget and some other money from the previous Government's Budget are rolled over and \$11m of a \$60m package for replacement of the Rockhampton Correctional Centre is provided. Unfortunately, jails are a necessary evil. I welcome that new Budget line item for the Rockhampton region and, consequently, the Gladstone region.

Although I am very conscious of the time, I would like to comment on a number of other issues. I congratulate the Government on its continued funding of the Queensland Crime Commission, on the increase in funding to criminal injury compensation and to victims of crime, and on the funding for the surf-

lifesaving clubs. I do not want to detail anything more because of the time. I am quite conscious of that. I reiterate my thanks not just to the current Government for the Budget that it has brought down but to the previous Government, because many of its proposals and innovations are included in this Government's Budget. Both Governments should accept the appreciation of people in the community, and certainly the appreciation of the people in my electorate, for the funding that has been made available for people such as carers of people with disabilities and people who face health problems—mental health problems or problems in any other stream of health. Any initiatives that bring greater physical relief or greater emotional relief are more than welcome. We are really doing what Government is about, and that is serving the community. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to contribute to this appropriation debate. I thank both Governments for contributing to the Budget, and I wish the State of Queensland well in the year to come.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP)

(10.10 p.m.): This is the first time that I have had the privilege to respond to a State Budget on behalf of the people of Kurwongbah. I say that I am delighted to be responding to the first Beattie Labor Government Budget. If I was asked to make a list of expectations that electors have of a Government, I would put leadership as No. 1 on that list. Of course, leadership goes hand in hand with a good leader. What makes a good leader? Many would express views about concepts of vision, of communication, of listening to people and the ability to take people with them. Already Peter Beattie, in his short time as Premier, has demonstrated these attributes. One of the more interesting views about what makes a good leader is the view that a leader is made by the circumstances in which the leader finds himself. What is meant by that is that we view leaders by the events that surround them.

So what are the circumstances in which Queensland now finds itself? The Budget reveals that our circumstances are challenging. Our country does not face war, nor does our State face the prospect of economic depression. However, short of these two terrible events, we face as daunting a set of challenges as at any other time this century. Economic circumstances are not bleak but nor are they easy. But most importantly, economic opportunity is very uneven. Some industry sectors are performing reasonably well while others, such as the resource sector, some primary production and parts of the service

sector, are doing it tough. Equally, economic prosperity among the regions and individual households varies considerably. This disparity of result in opportunity contributes to a greater sense of uncertainty. That is manifested in concerns about unemployment and job security.

The Treasurer, the Honourable David Hamill, and the Beattie Government have rightly delivered a Budget that focuses on jobs and on addressing social needs. The Budget is a sound, economic response to outside market forces. It will put us in good stead to weather the current international financial crises. Over the past 12 months, there has been unprecedented volatility in the world financial markets, with the collapse in the Asian currencies and the Russian rouble and worsening economic problems in Japan. Significant decline in the value of the Australian dollar in comparison with the US dollar and large falls across-the-board in world equity markets are making the situation in Queensland all the more difficult and will have adverse impacts on us.

These challenges require strong leadership. They require a response that can counterbalance the adverse impact. They require a recognition of where shortfalls will occur and initiatives in place to take up the shortfalls. The Budget does this and it does it in a number of ways. It does it by strengthening our domestic economy, by taking direct action to strengthen our economic and social fabric, by strengthening our domestic economy by supporting consumption here, and stimulating activity through increased capital works.

I am proud to be part of a Government that is inclusive and that recognises the importance of community, cultural and economic diversity. I am also proud to be part of a Government that recognises the challenges being faced by our community. We are listening to the community's concerns and responding to them.

For my part, back in May 1997 at the Kurwongbah by-election I became acutely aware of the peak levels of insecurity and uncertainty in the community. In my first speech to this House, I addressed those issues at length. I set myself goals by which to address the three main issues of concern of the people of Kurwongbah in a plan for Kurwongbah. Many of the goals set out in my plan have been achieved.

This Budget delivers more of these goals. One of these achievements has been the establishment of a Police Beat shopfront at

Westfield at Strathpine. This has now been added to by the budgeting for a community Police Beat at Bray Park. One of the major concerns of Kurwongbah residents is community safety. In part, this means that we need a greater police presence with police being accessible in order to respond in times of need and being visible as a deterrent. These measures go a long way towards enhancing community safety in our area. I am also aware that the community of Eatons Hills has been calling for a greater police presence, and I have been working with the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to address that need.

To address the community feeling of uncertainty where jobs and job security are concerned, the commitment of this Government is without question. The Working Queensland initiatives in the Budget will benefit greatly the people of the Pine Rivers Shire. The Community Jobs Plan, which is a strategy for creating jobs, and the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program will see \$283m being spent to provide up to 24,500 jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships over four years as well as 6,500 apprenticeships and traineeships in the public sector, up to 9,000 additional apprenticeships and traineeships in the private sector, and 9,000 job placements of three months to six months on community and environmental projects. We will also see 17,800 extra jobs in capital works, making a total of 65,600 jobs supported by the Capital Works Program, 685 additional teachers, 995 extra health workers, and over 370 more police and civilian support staff.

Funding of vital public infrastructure, especially in roads and rail, is very welcome news for the people of Pine Rivers. There is no doubt that tackling local transport needs is a major issue in my electorate, and this Government has made a good start. The provision of \$36m for the third rail track from Mayne to Caboolture will mean more peak hour express trains and more train services generally for Pine Rivers commuters. It also means a more comfortable trip to the city, especially for workers. A seat on the train all the way to work will be a welcome change. The allocation of \$1 billion for roads Statewide represents a significant investment in our public infrastructure. It must be emphasised that these new roads will be user free, which is a very different situation from that now experienced in States such as Victoria and South Australia, where new roads are toll roads.

Many other measures in this Budget will greatly benefit the electorate of Kurwongbah.

In education, the Budget has delivered a record \$3.46 billion expenditure program with new initiatives in literacy and numeracy, new initiatives for students with disabilities and new initiatives that have measures to address the inequities that exist currently between schools. The scrapping of the Leading Schools program has greatly assisted all State schools in my electorate, such as Lawnton State School and Petrie State School.

In health, a record Budget of \$3.722m has been delivered with a focus on more health workers, new and refurbished hospitals and health facilities and, most importantly, an extra \$18.05m to assist in reducing the waiting lists for public hospitals. Although Pine Rivers does not have a public hospital, it has an excellent community health service.

For our seniors, the free ambulance service and concessions on motor vehicle registration will mean more dollars in their pockets. The introduction of the Home Assist/Home Secure program in Pine Rivers will give the seniors in that area peace of mind. Many local residents have worked hard to get this program into Pine Rivers, and I know that they are delighted that it is going ahead. The introduction of the solar hot water system rebate has also been well received. Already, I have received many approaches for applications for the rebate.

The acceleration and boost in the Capital Works Program will generate more business for many of the local industries in my electorate. The Brendale industrial estate has many small and medium-sized businesses that service the building and construction industry. This should generate more jobs and a greater sense of job security for those employed in these industries.

In conclusion, I can say proudly that this Budget has a strong social capital base. Funding to disability services has rightly been called a revolution. A massive boost of \$126.2m has been budgeted for people with disabilities living in the community. This will mean improved life chances and circumstances for many, many local residents in the Pine Rivers Shire. The shame of the unmet needs and the paltry amounts offered by the coalition is now a thing of the past.

This is a Budget that shows leadership from good leaders. I congratulate the Treasurer on delivering a sound economic Budget, a Budget that delivers all our election promises, and a Budget that has a strong social base.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, adjourned.

GRIEVANCES

Vegetable Industry

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (10.20 p.m.): In Queensland there are a lot of variables, particularly in the vegetable industry. For example, we have the ability to produce and market the quality vegetables that manufacturers and consumers really need. Queensland growers provide over one third of all Australia's vegetable needs. Our climatic conditions provide southern markets with a supply of out-of-season staples, so consumers can enjoy most lines all year round.

Queensland asparagus, broccoli, Chinese cabbage, capsicums and beans all compete successfully on a global market, particularly in Asia. The outlook for good quality vegetables is stable, although vegetables face some market pressure, with shoppers seeking greater variety and convenience. Export markets offer expansion opportunities where demand is for high-quality, diversified products such as Queensland has produced for a long time and will continue to produce. We must not forget that.

A bold new four-year marketing program for vegetables urges consumers to eat more vegetables—

Time expired.

FAI Home Security

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (10.22 p.m.): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House what I consider to be the unethical behaviour of the selling and canvassing practices of FAI Home Security. I have received a number of complaints about this company. I have given the company the courtesy of writing to it about my concerns, but to date I have received no response to the two letters that I have written.

FAI Home Security misrepresents the facts about local crime such as home break and enters in an attempt to frighten home owners into signing up for a home security system. I have received complaints about the standover tactics of some sales representatives who have been described as pushy and insulting.

One complaint related to an FAI Home Security salesperson using the name of a constituent as a reference without her knowledge. I am told that FAI Home Security has used a private list of women's names to make contact with them. That has caused a lot of concern, and I can understand why. Those women are all members of the Nursing

Mothers Association. They are very protective of their group for privacy reasons and the actions of FAI Home Security in using some of those names as a reference is causing personal embarrassment. There are real concerns as to how FAI got its hands on the list of names. FAI has been contacted by one aggrieved woman. The company has made promises to cease the use of the list as a contact list and has promised that this will never happen again.

The way that FAI Home Security does business leaves a lot to be desired. I call on the company to cease immediately this unacceptable behaviour and to apologise to those women who have had their names slurred by the actions of a company that is more interested in profits than a responsible and respectable approach to doing business. Those women are very upset about what has been happening. They feel as though their privacy has been invaded. The actions of the company in pursuing people over the telephone and misusing people's names as references is a disgrace.

Time expired.

Mr G. Lui

Mr LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (10.24 p.m.): I pay my deepest respects to one of the greatest men of the Torres Strait islands. On 24 August, Mr Getano Lui Senior from Yam Island died. Mr Lui had been awarded an MBE in 1980. He served as chairman of Yam Island council for over 30 years and, during that time, he was a commissioner for ATSI. I had the pleasure of living in the Torres Strait islands during the 1970s, which was a time of great turmoil. The most significant controversy was the border change issue and Mr Lui played a significant role in that issue.

Getano Lui was born in Mabuiag in 1913. He was first married in 1933 at a wedding officiated by his father, Reverend Joseph Lui, who is now buried at the magnificent St Paul's mission church. As a teacher, Mr Lui was transferred to Yam Island for three years from 1936 and he returned to Yam Island as a Government teacher in 1941. His first wife died during the early 1960s and he remarried in 1967. Mr Lui had 14 children to his first wife, including Getano Lui Junior. He had six children to his second wife, including Victor and Daniel. Getano Lui Junior took over from Mr Lui Senior as chairman of Yam Island council, and Victor and Danny are also members of the current Yam Island council.

Mr Lui's work in the Torres Strait has gained prominence in Torres Strait history. He was an outspoken leader on many political issues, and acted as an adviser and elder on both church and cultural issues. He was a strong advocate for education, being a teacher himself.

Over the past few years, Mr Lui did not experience good health. On recent trips I was delighted to be able to visit him under his house at Yam Island. I was even more delighted if I found that he had been able to move himself to the tin shed beside the basketball courts when I visited. I considered it a great honour that Getano Lui Senior would make this effort. To the people of Yam Island, I convey the respect and thanks of the Queensland Parliament for the life and work of Getano Lui Senior.

The Strand, Townsville

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (10.26 p.m.): The Strand in Townsville is destined to become one of Australia's top city beachfronts. Last Monday, Townsville Mayor Tony Mooney and I previewed highlights of the two-stage redevelopment that will give The Strand urgently needed weather protection and transform the beachfront into a first-class landscaped recreational area.

The rock wall between the beach and the roadway will be demolished and a new low rock wall will be constructed, utilising as much of the rock from the old wall as possible. One of the features will be sweeping views of the beach, the ocean and Magnetic Island from the roadway and footpath across the new wall, the top of which will be at about footpath height. The Queensland Government recognises the great merit of the project. I am delighted that Government input has made it possible for this redevelopment to proceed.

Project managers MacNorth have been appointed. The new-look Strand and the Strand wall is engineered to a standard of protection that will withstand severe weather conditions representing a one-in-100 year event. The total estimated amount of sand added to the beach will be 250,000 cubic metres. New beach will be created as the construction program goes along. The estimated general fill for the entire project is 210,000 cubic metres and the estimated amount of rock is 100,000 tonnes. That will give members an idea of the magnitude of the project. By constructing headlands along the beach, sand losses and maintenance costs will be kept to a minimum. The headlands and the new rock wall will help to trap the sand. A wide,

high-tide beach will absorb wave energy before it reaches the sea wall.

It is vital to complete as much of the program as possible before the 1998-99 cyclone season commences. The beach will be replenished with coarse sand similar in quality to the sand already on The Strand. This is also essential in an effort to minimise sand loss. The on-site work force will peak at 100 early next year.

I very much welcome the official start of this much-needed development. It will be a world-class vista of which both residents and tourists will be proud.

Rugby League

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.28 p.m.): As we are coming up to grand final time in Queensland and throughout Australia generally, a lot has been said about football. I must be one of the traditionalists who enjoys Rugby League and Rugby Union. However, certain things have bothered me in recent times—indeed, they have bothered me for the past 10 years. When we were growing up, we all learnt the various positions of play on the field. When certain codes decide to change the numbers of those positions, it makes it rather confusing.

Once upon a time, a fullback was No. 1, the wings were 2 and 5, the centres were 3 and 4, the five-eighth and the half were 6 and 7, and so on through the forwards. When they get a bit disappointed with that, they change the numbers around just to confuse the fans. Then, of course, they are not happy with that and they change the scoring pattern, so that instead of getting three points for a try, it is now four.

Mr SPEAKER: It is a sign of old age, I think.

Mr COOPER: Mr Speaker, I know Bunny Pearce came from your electorate of Redcliffe. He was a fabulous footballer, as were the Cherrys from Roma. The list can go on forever—Artie Beetson, Ray Higgs, Charlie Frith. The names go on and on.

What we, as traditional fans, do not like to see is everything being changed to suit television. I love to see Australia taking the field in their green guernseys with the gold "V". When I was in Sydney, I used to be a fan of St George, which played in white guernseys with a big "V". They changed that just for the sake of television. I hope we never see anything here similar to the American gridiron, where a team takes the field for about five or 10 seconds, gets a bit puffed and is replaced by

another team. Because it looks good on television, they wear big helmets and other protective gear.

What annoys me about Rugby League—I love it—is that when a scrum is set down the ball cannot possibly be put right into the hooker. He might as well not be in the scrum. I remember the days of Ken Kearney and other terrific footballers. Now the ball is put in the second row or behind the lock's feet. That is supposed to be football. As far as I am concerned, it is not football.

Time expired.

Mr G. Huegill

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (10.30 p.m.): All Queenslanders are proud of our Commonwealth Games team competing in Kuala Lumpur. The people of Mackay are especially proud, because we can boast of being the home town of a young man who not only won a gold medal but, in doing so, set a new Commonwealth Games record. I am referring of course to Geoff Huegill.

Geoff won gold and clocked the new Commonwealth Games record of 52.81 seconds in the 100 metres butterfly. He led the way for an Australian trifecta, with Adam Pine placing second and Michael Klim third. I congratulate Geoff on his fantastic swim. He must be so proud to have achieved what many can only wish for—not only to participate in the Commonwealth Games but also to come back home with a gold medal.

Mackay is well known as a very sport-oriented city and is proud to be known as home to many talented sportsmen and women who have gone on to compete in State, national and international sporting events. The marvellous performances by Geoff and all his Australian team-mates has given us a wonderful boost towards the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. We know that Australia has a multitude of young talented sportspeople and we look forward to seeing them compete at the Olympic Games in two years.

I offer special congratulations to Geoff's mother, Mrs Jum Huegill, who celebrated Geoff's win with friends and other well wishers who streamed into her shop to offer their congratulations. Geoff and his family came to Mackay in 1981. While living in Mackay, he was trained by Kevin and Julie Knight of the Paradise Swim Centre and Pat Wright of the Mackay Amateur Swimming Club. During this time, Geoff won district, north Queensland and national championships in both butterfly and backstroke.

Mr Speaker, to further his sporting ambition, Geoff moved to your electorate of Redcliffe in 1990, where he came under the coaching wing of Ken Wood. He has since dropped backstroke in order to concentrate, most successfully I might add, on his favoured event—the 100 metres butterfly. I know that the people of Mackay are very proud of Geoff's effort. He has become the talk of the town and will go down in the city's great sporting history. He competes tonight in the relay event, and I join with the rest of Australia in wishing him and his relay team-mates every success.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired. He might be interested to know that Geoff has just won another gold medal for the medley relay—it's the good air at Redcliffe.

Mr MULHERIN: That is great, Mr Speaker.

Water Auctioning, Tinaroo Falls Dam

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (10.32 p.m.): Tonight I rise to condemn the practice of auctioning water from the Tinaroo Falls Dam. I point out to members of the House who might not be familiar with the practice that at the moment about 10,000 megalitres is set aside and auctioned off to farmers, basically to the highest bidder. Ten thousand megalitres is nowhere near enough water to supply the 864 farmers in the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area—the MDIA. I believe the practice turns farmer against farmer and makes it incredibly difficult for them to work their crops viably. They are paying about 250 points for each megalitre of water. That makes it incredibly hard for them to plan for the future. I know that this is how the DNR operates at the moment. The practice is incredibly restrictive on farming in the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area.

The Tinaroo Falls Dam was built in 1953 for approximately \$12m back then. I think by now we have paid for the Tinaroo Falls Dam. It has raised a lot of revenue in the past. To pay for its upkeep, I think it is wrong to burden the farmers of the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area with the unfair practice of auctioning water. That dam should well and truly have been paid for by now. Let us face it, \$12m is not a hell of a lot.

I ask—and I will be asking in future—that this practice of the DNR be stopped. I admit that the farmers should still pay for the water; they should not get it for free. If it is going to be auctioned off, sufficient water should be allocated so that the farmers do not have to

compete against each other for the water and so that they can buy it at a fair price. It should not just be a revenue-raising stunt. These farmers have been hard pressed. Perhaps we could do something about it.

Time expired.

Crime Prevention Strategy

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.34 p.m.): Prior to the election, the Labor Party made it very clear that the Government was going to be both tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. Yesterday in this House the Premier announced the formulation of the Crime Prevention Task Force that will drive the Government's \$47m Crime Prevention Strategy in partnership with the community. If we are going to be successful in tackling crime, that partnership with the community is essential, and it is something that I have personally fostered as chair of a local juvenile crime prevention task force and coordinator of my local Freshwater Neighbourhood Watch.

Since being re-elected, I have worked with the officers of the Smithfield Police Station to re-establish the police/community consultative committee for the Marlin Coast, which has not operated over the past three years. This consultative committee consists of people from a wide cross-section of our community, with representatives from various beach townships as well as business, local government, education, youth, recreation, welfare and emergency services. The president of the committee is Charles Williams, of Machans Beach, who is well known for his long and selfless service to Neighbourhood Watch organisations. I wish to put on record my personal admiration and appreciation of him for his willingness to continue to serve the community despite his not being in the best of health. Ann Mauger, the vice-president, is the local deputy principal and will bring her considerable skills to this position. I thank both her and the committee secretary, Clare Minchin, and of course the police themselves, particularly acting Senior Sergeant Peter Olesen, who organised the meeting to establish the committee, and Senior Constable Dave Raymond, who is equally committed to community policing on the Marlin Coast.

The Government's Crime Prevention Strategy will be underpinned by extra Police Beats and shopfronts. I wish again to record my thanks to the Police Minister, Tom Barton, who has responded positively to my

representations for a Police Beat at Trinity Beach on the Marlin Coast, which has the highest crime rate of the townships there and which has been plagued by youth crime and vandalism problems over recent years. I anticipate also that the operation of the Smithfield Police Station will be improved with the final appointment of a permanent senior sergeant, a position that has been vacant for the past 18 months—something which is an indictment on the previous Government.

Time expired.

Mr P. Rafter; Starlight Foundation

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (10.36 p.m.): Tonight seems to be the night for acknowledging sportspeople. I wish to acknowledge a Queensland sportsman not only for his sporting prowess but also for his generosity of spirit. Pat Rafter arrived back in Brisbane yesterday and today handed over a \$300,000 cheque to the Starlight Foundation.

Families in my electorate and many other electorates have benefited from the programs of the Starlight Foundation, which is an international non-profit organisation that commenced in 1998 in Australia. It is run by a group of prominent Sydney businessmen and women. The foundation helps to brighten the lives of seriously ill children from ages four through to 18. Starlight grants wishes to seriously ill children, the most common illnesses being leukaemia, cancer, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, AIDS, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida and cerebral palsy. A very important aspect is that Starlight encourages the entire family to be part of the wish and often seeks to accommodate the special needs of the family to enhance the experience. The ill child goes away with its family unit, and all of them not only enjoy the special wish but also a respite from the stresses and strains of living at home.

We saw Pat Rafter's skills demonstrated in the US Open, when he took out his second title. It is important that this Chamber recognises his generosity of spirit, which is something that is often replicated in other Australians. We need to highlight and recognise his donation, because his generosity has ensured that a recreation room for seriously ill patients can be constructed at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. When we read about the benefits that such facilities have had in other States, we realise that the relief that it offers to the children is difficult to quantify. I congratulate Pat Rafter.

Time expired.

Industry Policy

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (10.38 p.m.): Part of any Government's jobs, jobs, jobs strategy has to be the development of a comprehensive integrated industry policy. The Beattie Government is establishing a State Development Department. It has begun the process on the right foot. In the past there has been a disparate spread of departments all with the task of helping businesses, both large and small.

To its credit, the Borbidge Government set up a separate trade department but at the same time retained a separate business department. I think the member for Burnett performed the task capably, but I think his department was fatally flawed when it simply ignored and then sidelined Loftus Harris, the previous director-general. Loftus Harris is now in Sydney, heading up the State development department of New South Wales. It is pleasing, therefore, that the new department has obtained the services of Mr Ross Rolfe, whom I think is an outstanding appointment.

The economic settings are also important. For example, the tariff reductions we have seen in recent years have benefited Queensland because the State has not had a diverse manufacturing sector. As a result of those tariff reductions, we are now seeing growth and developments in places such as Townsville with Korea Zinc. Of course, the member for Gladstone would know only too well the significant developments that have occurred there.

In primary industry we have seen, without any Government help and certainly without any tariff protection, industries such as cotton advancing significantly. The cotton industry has been an outstanding performer. In fact, it has created jobs in rural and provincial Queensland—at places such as Emerald, Goondiwindi, Dalby, St George and Dirranbandi. How disappointing that the policies that have created these jobs are under threat by One Nation, because Pauline Hanson wants tariff increases—

Time expired.

Employment, Queensland Rail

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.40 p.m.): Despite the statements of the Minister for Transport, workers at the Townsville South rail yards are still concerned about their futures. So they should be, after the Minister's answer to a question without notice asked by me yesterday.

I note that the recently elected member for Mundingburra has close contacts with the rail unions. In her maiden speech she thanked Warren Williams and the RTBU for giving her a campaign office for three weeks. She also thanked Mr Williams' secretary for her major contribution to the campaign. Warren Williams has plenty to answer for.

I know that the question of employment contracts is not an easy one for Governments of any persuasion, but we must do what we can to ensure that we preserve the skills and the jobs. When I was Minister I made arrangements for a number of projects to be allocated to Townsville South—refurbishment of long distance rolling stock and the production of 300 KOJX livestock wagons and new coal wagons. I seriously question the proposed relocation of the rail workshop facilities at Stuart. This matter may also be subject to an inquiry by the Public Works Committee in order to examine the benefits of this project. The member for Townsville may be able to enlighten us about the real intentions of Labor in shifting these rail yards, but I say "spoil sports", because Labor knows it got it wrong with the proposed closure of the railway workshops north and south.

The rail workers in Townsville remember the 8,000 rail jobs that were lost and the proposed closure of rail yards under the previous Labor Government. They know the impact that the proposal to close or mothball thousands of kilometres of rail line would have. This explains why they are keen to be locked into permanent positions, because they do not trust Labor.

Mr Williams, after taking his VER, helped get Labor elected in exchange for a range of promises for his members. Within three months the workers realised that they had been conned. We now have rolling strikes and a great amount of discontent. Labor no longer represents the workers of this State and cannot be trusted to do so any more.

Time expired.

Police Stations, Greenslopes Electorate

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (10.43 p.m.): Prior to the State election this year the coalition, in its very desperate attempt to hold on to power, came out to the southern suburbs, particularly the suburbs in my electorate, under the guise that it would construct a new police station to service the area. This was an incredible ruse, because it was really attempting to close down at least two of the police stations servicing my area—the Coorparoo and Camp Hill Police Stations.

I am very proud that I and the honourable member for Chatsworth went to the electorate with the very clear undertaking that we would not close down those two police stations, that we would not move to a new configuration of police stations which replaced those two police stations with another police station, the location of which was never known. We did not have any indication as to where it would be located or what sort of police station it would be. All we knew was that the police stations that we had were to be closed down and that police would have to drive further to deal with crimes.

It seems that that is certainly a revelation to the member for Broadwater, who commented on the front page of the South East Advertiser this week that demographics indicate that Coorparoo and Greenslopes need a police station. I have news for the honourable member for Broadwater: we already have two. We like them and we want to keep them open. We are very happy that the undertakings given by the now Government before the election have been fulfilled. The police stations in the Greenslopes area will be maintained. They will not be closed.

Time expired.

Assistance for Goondiwindi Contractors

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (10.45 p.m.): Honourable members would have heard of the floods in areas in and around Goondiwindi. I am sure that many members have seen the graphic footage on television. There have been eight flood peaks down through that area. While that has done a tremendous amount of damage to farms, I think we should look at the other problem which perhaps is not as evident, that is, the effects on the contractors of the area—the earth movers, backhoe operators and other people who do work for the various farmers around the place. Many of them have not turned a wheel since April. Some of them will finish up going six months or more with absolutely no income.

I put to the House that these people are urgently in need of some sort of assistance. Honourable members might say, "Here he goes. He is calling for help from the public again." Precedents have been set right here in Brisbane, and I was here when that was done. After the 1974 floods, the then coalition Government gave assistance to large numbers of businesses that were affected by the floods, particularly along Ipswich Road.

I was on Fred Campbell's committee in those days, and in the end we wrote off quite

a few loans that people were unable to repay. The main reason loans were given at low interest rates was to get those businesses up and running again, because a lot of them were totally wiped out; they were devastated. There was no insurance, as is the case with the people I speak about tonight. There is no way they would have insurance in respect of lost revenue. They will lose their plant and equipment, because they will not be able to meet the finance payments due on them. If we are not careful it will continue, and soon there will be great difficulty getting the cotton crop in the ground. That will be disastrous as well.

Time expired.

Goods and Services Tax

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (10.47 p.m.): I rise in this Grievances debate to defend from John Howard's GST the many elderly people who live in the electorate of Ferry Grove. This tax is a most unfair and discriminatory tax, especially on those on fixed incomes, many of whom are the elderly, such as Mr John Pantor of Ferry Hills, who recently came to see me. He has been a worker all his life and has had little more than his wages for him and his wife to live on. His wife has Alzheimer's disease and is in a nursing home.

He presented me with a breakdown of his current cost of living. Nursing home fees, drawn from his wife's pension, total \$7,854. He has added up the various other costs involved in maintaining her on an annual basis. There are pharmacy costs for scripts and costs for various creams and skin repair ointments, hair dressing and cosmetics. That all adds up to \$8,799. Her pension is \$9,360, leaving \$570 annually—the princely sum of \$11 per week—for clothing and other items.

This man owns his own home and has very limited savings. His pension is \$9,360 and his total costs, including rates, electricity and so on, are \$6,185, leaving \$3,174—the princely sum of \$61 a week for all extras for himself such as clothing, house maintenance and so on. This is very typical and it is shameful. The GST is an attack upon him.

Time expired.

Nundah Bottleneck

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (10:50 p.m.): Funding for roads projects can be a complex process. We are used to the Budget allocations in which we see where the major project funding occurs. But what happens if the Minister or the Cabinet makes a decision in between Budgets? What happens is that in the RIP update—the Roads Implementation Plan update—the new funding is allocated.

Unfortunately, what we have seen with the Nundah bottleneck is that this did not occur because in December 1995 the then Minister, Jim Elder, allocated the money for the start and early completion of the bypass of the Nundah bottleneck. Unfortunately, just when the RIP update was due in February/March 1996, the Borbidge Government came to power and froze the Budget allocation. We know that the money would have been allocated in the RIP update because the Goss Government had done that the year before. In the 1995 update the Goss Government had allocated something like an extra \$70m, including funding for rural roads. This funding was not in the initial Budget. That is how the process worked.

The Borbidge Government stopped that funding for the Nundah bottleneck. If the coalition had continued with the RIP update and allocated the money, the Nundah bottleneck project would be 12 to 24 months more advanced. The business people of that area would be happier. It is a shame that the member for Clayfield, Santo Santoro—who claims to be the friend of business—was part of the Cabinet that shot that allocation to bits and put the completion of the Nundah bypass back by at least 12 months.

The Beattie Government has allocated \$3.6m towards that project. This contrasts with the \$2.8m that the coalition proposed for this project in its Capital Works Program. We know that the overall amount of \$35.2m stays the same. It is a shame, though, that the inactivity—

Time expired.

The House adjourned at 10.51 p.m.