

TUESDAY, 20 OCTOBER 1998

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

ASSENT TO BILL

Assent to the following Bill reported by Mr Speaker—

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill.

TSUNAMI DISASTER, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have received a correspondence from the Speaker of the Papua New Guinea National Parliament. I will read that correspondence—

"Dear Speaker Hollis

...

It is with much pleasure that I wish to inform you that I have received the Motion of Condolence on the Tsunami Disaster which was passed by your Parliament.

It is heartening to know that there are friends who share with us our sorrow as well as our happiness.

As has been the case over many years, the people of Queensland and indeed the people of Australia have stood by us in both good and bad times.

Please accept our appreciation and convey same to the mover of the motion, Honourable P. D. Beattie, Members of your Parliament and the people of Queensland for the money and other humanitarian assistance which they sent for the Tsunami Disaster victims.

I will be tabling the Motion of Condolence when our Parliament meets on, Tuesday, 29th September 1998.

Yours sincerely

(Sgd)

JOHN T. PUNDARI, MP

Speaker of the National Parliament"

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF MANSFIELD

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have to report that I have received from His Honour the Judge of the Court of Disputed Returns the following order—

"IN THE MATTER of The Electoral Act, 1992

IN THE MATTER of the election of One member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Mansfield in the State of Queensland

BETWEEN: FRANCIS EDWARD
CARROLL

Petitioner

AND: ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF
QUEENSLAND

First Respondent

AND: PHILIP GERARD REEVES

Second Respondent

ORDER

JUDGE: Mackenzie J.

Date of Order: 21 September 1998

Document initiating this hearing: Hearing

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The petition be dismissed.
2. The question of costs be reserved.
3. Submissions with respect to costs to be in writing and served on the other parties and delivered the Associate to Mackenzie J no later than 4.00 pm on 25 September 1998.
4. Any reply to be in writing and served on the other parties and delivered to the Associate to Mackenzie J no later than 4.00 pm on 29 September 1998.

Prepared in the Office of the Registrar."

Mr SPEAKER: I lay upon the table of the House a copy of that order.

OMBUDSMAN**Annual Report**

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to report that today I have received the annual report of the Queensland Ombudsman for 1997-98. I table the said report.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Maryborough Hospital

From **Dr Kingston** (35 petitioners) requesting the House to take the appropriate action to ensure that full and adequate

hospital services and facilities are retained in Maryborough and that the plans for the hospital redevelopment be restored to those promised before the election.

Persecution of Egyptian Christians

From **Mr Fenlon** (59 petitioners) requesting the House to voice to the Egyptian Government the House's concern about the mistreatment and persecution of the Christians of Egypt and the Egyptian Government's lack of action in regard to the correction of these injustices.

Far North Queensland Electricity Board

From **Mr McGrady** (144 petitioners) requesting the House to instruct the Far North Queensland Electricity Board to return to their previous practice of annually pruning the trees beneath the powerlines or to put their powerlines underground.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

24 September 1998—

Public Works Committee—Annual Report 1997-98

Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority—Annual Report 1997-98

1 October 1998—

Electoral Commission of Queensland—details of polling at the State General Election held on 13 June 1998

5 October 1998—

Trustees of the Eagle Farm Racecourse—Annual Report 1 July 1997 to 31 March 1998

6 October 1998—

Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee—Annual Report 1997-98

8 October 1998—

Queensland Investment Corporation—Annual Report 1997-98

Queensland Investment Corporation Investment Trusts—Financial Statements 1997-98

Queensland Investment Corporation—Statement of Corporate Intent 1997-98

Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority—Annual Report 1997-98

15 October 1998—

Board of Architects of Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

Legal Ombudsman—Annual Report 1997-98

19 October 1998—

Estimates Committee A—Report No. 1 October 1998

Estimates Committee A—Report No. 2 October 1998

Estimates Committee A—Additional Information volume

Estimates Committee B—Report October 1998

Estimates Committee B—Additional Information volume

Estimates Committee C—Report October 1998

Estimates Committee C—Additional Information volume

Estimates Committee D—Report October 1998

Estimates Committee D—Additional Information volume

Grain Research Foundation—Annual Report 1997-98

Surveyors Board of Queensland—Annual Report 1997-98

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by The Clerk—

Animals Protection Act 1925—

Animals Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1998, No. 275

Building and Integrated Planning Amendment Act 1998—

Proclamation—repeal part 4 of the schedule to the proclamation made under the Act on 26 March 1998, No. 269

Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950—

Commissions of Inquiry (Forde Inquiry—Evidence) Regulation 1998, No. 278

Commissions of Inquiry (Forde Inquiry—Quorum) Regulation 1998, No. 277

Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984, Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984—

Community Services Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1998, No. 274

Crimes (Confiscation) Act 1989—

Crimes (Confiscation) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1998, No. 267

Education (General Provisions) Act 1989—

Education (General Provisions) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1998, No. 273

Education (School Curriculum P-10) Act 1996—
Education (School Curriculum P-10)
Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 1998,
No. 280

Electricity Act 1994—

Electricity Amendment Regulation (No. 3)
1998, No. 260

Forestry Act 1959—

Forestry Amendment Regulation (No. 3)
1998, No. 263

Forestry Regulation 1998, No. 264

Forestry (State Forests) Amendment
Regulation (No. 1) 1998, No. 281

Gaming Machine Act 1991—

Gaming Machine Amendment Regulation
(No. 3) 1998, No. 279

Health Act 1937—

Health (Drugs and Poisons) Amendment
Regulation (No. 3) 1998, No. 259

Indy Car Grand Prix Act 1990—

Indy Car Grand Prix Amendment
Regulation (No. 2) 1998, No. 265 and
Explanatory Notes and Regulatory Impact
Statement for No. 265

Integrated Planning Act 1997—

Integrated Planning Amendment
Regulation (No. 2) 1998, No. 272

Proclamation—repeal part 4 of the
schedule to the proclamation made under
the Act on 26 March 1998, No. 271

Integrated Planning and Other Legislation
Amendment Act 1998—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act
stated in the schedule commence 12
October 1998, No. 270

Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act
1998—

Interactive Gambling (Player Protection)
Regulation 1998, No. 258

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act
that are not in force commence 1 October
1998, No. 257

Local Government Act 1993—

Local Government Finance Amendment
Standard (No. 2) 1998, No. 276

Mineral Resources Act 1989—

Mineral Resources Amendment Regulation
(No. 4) 1998, No. 268

Native Title (Queensland) State Provisions Act
1998—

Proclamation—the provisions of the Act
that are not in force commence 30
September 1998, No. 266

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas)
Amendment Regulation (No. 8) 1998,
No. 262

Public Service Act 1996—

Public Service Amendment Regulation
(No. 2) 1998, No. 256

Tow Truck Act 1973, Traffic Act 1949,
Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994,
Transport Operations (Road Use Management)
Act 1995—

Transport Legislation Amendment
Regulation (No. 2) 1998, No. 254

Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act
1995—

Transport Operations (Marine Pollution)
Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 1998,
No. 261

State Counter-Disaster Organisation Act
1975—

State Counter-Disaster Organisation
Regulation 1998, No. 255

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT

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

response from the Minister for Transport
and Minister for Main Roads (Mr
Bredhauer) to a report of the Travelsafe
Committee entitled Brisbane's Citytrain
Network—Part One—Safety of the Rail
System and Infrastructure

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

- (a) Minister for Communication and
Information and Minister for Local
Government, Planning, Regional and Rural
Communities (Mr Mackenroth)—

Report of the Local Government Electoral
and Boundaries Review Commission on
possible changes to the external
boundaries of the Cities of Ipswich and
Brisbane and the Shires of Boonah,
Laidley and Esk

- (b) Minister for Employment, Training and
Industrial Relations (Mr Braddy)—

WorkCover Queensland—

Annual Report for 1997-98

Statement of Corporate Intent for
1997-98.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Audit Office

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—
ALP) (Premier) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: The
Public Accounts Committee of the 48th
Parliament tabled the report of its Review of
the Report of the Strategic Review of the
Queensland Audit Office on 23 April 1998.
That review was a statutory requirement of the

Financial Administration and Audit Act. The overall findings of the strategic review were favourable and indicated that the management and operational changes implemented over the past five years had led to significant improvements at the Audit Office. The strategic review was undertaken under the new legislation introduced in 1993. This complex and detailed review was not completed until July 1997. An equally complex and detailed review by the Public Accounts Committee of that report was not completed for another eight months and was delivered on 23 April this year.

The Government is required to respond to the committee report, and I use this opportunity to announce to the House that a detailed response by the Government is in the advanced stages of preparation and will be provided to the Clerk as soon as possible.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Goods and Services Tax

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.39 a.m.), by leave: On 13 November I will be attending a Special Premiers Conference in Canberra. The meeting has been called by the Prime Minister to discuss the Commonwealth's planned changes to the taxation system. I table the Prime Minister's letter of invitation.

I advise the House that I have written to the Prime Minister indicating that Queensland will continue to vigorously oppose a GST. We oppose a GST and the Commonwealth's proposed tax reforms because they could have an adverse impact on Queensland and the people of Queensland. The State's service industries, in particular hospitality and tourism, could be hurt. As well, a GST would raise questions about financial equity and distribution of funds between the States. Any proposal to introduce a GST has to recognise that Queensland is a low-tax State and that Queenslanders should not have to subsidise other States for their higher taxes. I also have to consider social equity and the impact on the disadvantaged. I table my letter to the Prime Minister, clearly setting out Queensland's position.

Despite our opposition to a GST and planned tax changes, I will be attending the 13 November meeting, along with the Treasurer, David Hamill, to ensure that Queensland is not short-changed, and officials from the Premier's Department and Treasury will be involved in preliminary meetings, prior to 13 November,

the first being next Monday. During this process, we will be in there fighting hard for Queensland.

Let me now detail how Queenslanders will suffer if the GST is imposed on them. The real question is: what will Mr Howard's and Mr Costello's 10% goods and services tax do to the price of the basic food groups? Let me shed some light on this very important issue. Peter Costello's own costings, his forecasts—backed up by figures from Treasury—have predicted an average increase in the price of fruit and vegetables of 5.7%. What an outrage!

I table the relevant page of that document for the information of members. Under Mr Howard and Mr Costello, apples and oranges will cost 5.7% more. Bananas and pears will cost 5.7% more. Potatoes and carrots will cost 5.7% more, as will lettuce and tomatoes—all the basic salads. How can a Government claiming to be helping out the battlers tell us that essential foods will cost at least 5.7% more? The GST is a disincentive to eating healthy food.

The Queensland Heart Foundation has already identified serious problems with our children's diets. The foundation says 40% of primary school age children do not eat fruit and at least 27% of primary school children do not eat fruit or vegetables. It has reported serious problems with childhood and adolescent obesity, with up to 50% of Australian children recording high cholesterol levels. When we look at the trends being reported, consider the effect a 10% goods and services tax will have on our children's health. If children already prefer fatty foods, what incentive is there to encourage them to eat well if it is cheaper to eat takeaway than it is to have an apple? How can Australian parents encourage proper eating habits if they cannot afford to buy the food? The GST is a tax on our children's health.

Furthermore, any change in the nation's eating habits has severe economic implications on Queensland's farming communities—something about which I would have thought members opposite would be concerned. I am happy to fight for the farmers even if the members opposite are not. Mr Speaker, I will look after the farmers—don't you worry about that!

As I said, any change in the nation's eating habits has severe economic implications for Queensland's farmers, particularly on the Darling Downs and in north Queensland. And what of our rural and

indigenous communities? How will this affect them? The high costs of freight to rural and remote areas has already pushed fruit and vegetable prices through the roof. This tax will make that situation much worse. This 10% tax on the poor will damage the work we have done in improving the living standards and conditions in our indigenous communities. All the vital education programs in place to teach people how important it is to eat the right food will be compromised, because this sector of the community will not be able to afford it.

In short, this is a tax on our children's health that will also hurt rural and indigenous communities and Queensland's hardworking farmers. It is an unfair impost on Australians who deserve much better from their leaders. I urge the Australian Democrats in the Senate and Senator Brian Harradine to stick to their public commitments and defeat the GST in the Senate.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Alcoholic Food Essences

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: I rise to bring to the attention of the House an issue which is of increasing concern to me and the Government. In recent times, a marketing trend has emerged where alcoholic food essences are being packaged for sale in containers as large as 500 millilitres, which may be readily mixed with water to produce a palatable drink imitating liquor products such as rum, whisky, ouzo and the like.

The Liquor Act and regulations detail particular sales of liquor which are not required to be licensed. One of these exemptions allows the sale of alcoholic cooking essences if the essence is not used as a beverage or to manufacture a beverage. This commonsense exemption allows the sale of cooking essences in supermarkets, delicatessens and other stores. However, availability of these new generation cooking essence products from supermarkets and delicatessens, combined with a retail price from as little as \$4.60 per bottle, has made the product attractive, particularly to minors. Unfortunately, these essences may have an alcohol content as high as 80%, which is sometimes not detailed on the bottle label and which may result in a dangerous cocktail for young people.

It has come to my attention that some unscrupulous shopkeepers are marketing these essences as a liquor substitute, whilst

hiding behind the exemption provided by the Act. Others are selling the product in ignorance of the fact that it contains a potentially lethal percentage of alcohol. My department's Liquor Licensing Division has written to all wholesale distributors of these products as well as some retail outlets who stock these essences advising them that unless the sale of the product is for cooking purposes, a licence is required under the Act. The Government is also taking action to amend the regulation to ensure that the sale of cooking essences without a licence is restricted to where bottle or container sizes do not exceed 50 millilitres, or, in the case of vanilla essence, in containers up to 100 millilitres, except in the case of sales to bona fide caterers. This will ensure that essences for domestic cooking purposes remain available from supermarkets and delicatessens, but larger quantities which are obviously marketed as a substitute beverage are only available from a licensed establishment. In the interim, I place all parties on notice that should my department's liquor licensing investigators discover any sign whatsoever of these products being sold as substitute beverages, action to the fullest extent that the law provides will be taken against offenders.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Japanese Economy

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.46 a.m.), by leave: Last week, accompanied by senior executives of the Queensland Treasury Corporation, I met with senior bankers, economists and business leaders in Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo. These business leaders are not up-beat about short-term prospects for the region. In fact, while official Japanese Government figures suggest economic growth this financial year of negative 1.8%, Japanese economists expect growth in the current fiscal year to plunge as low as negative 3.2% and, at best, in the next year "recover" to only zero growth.

This, in the second largest economy in the world and Queensland's largest single trading partner, is not good news for the global economy nor for us. If the \$A900 billion bank rescue that the Japanese Government is proposing is successful, if America does not slip into recession and if there is not a worldwide credit crunch, there are reasonable prospects for recovery for Japan. Elsewhere in the region other leading economies such as those of Singapore and Hong Kong are now convinced that Japan will not lead any regional

economic recovery, and are themselves downgrading growth forecasts.

Already there has been a flight of capital from developing economies which has impacted negatively on the ability of our trading partners in the region to stimulate their economies. Already there has been a marked tightening in credit markets, and in some countries we have seen substantial asset deflation. Words such as "bleak" are often used by economists in the region to describe the short-term economic outlook.

Furthermore, we are kidding ourselves if we think that we are immune to the economic contagion gripping our region. However, Queensland has fared better than most. In fact, Queensland is proving itself remarkably resilient in troubled economic times. Our forecast economic growth rate this year of 3.5%—although down on recent years—is the envy of the region. The Queensland Treasury Corporation—the body which raises debt on behalf of State Government instrumentalities—is able to offer investors seeking a safe haven bonds which are rated AAA by Standard and Poor's and Moody's and are backed by the guarantee of a Government with negative net debt. This makes the QTC—like the Government that guarantees its debt—almost unique in the region.

Queensland's future economic growth will be underwritten by a Government which is committed to strong and sustainable levels of infrastructure spending—spending which will create jobs and increase the wealth of all Queenslanders. Most importantly, our future will be underwritten by being an increasingly outward looking and constructive member of our region. Much of our current economic growth is—some would say surprisingly—underwritten by continued high levels of exports to Asia. This is because with a lower Australian dollar and efficient industries our commodity exports are attractive to our regional partners who are trying to trade their way out of difficulty. Our low cost of operations allows us in many cases to replace lost price premiums with increased sales volumes.

The world economy is in uncharted waters. Japan's Government is running a massive deficit spending program in an attempt to salvage its economy, while the US Federal Reserve has twice cut interest rates in an attempt to stave off slowing growth in the world's largest economy. My recent visit through the region was at times a very sobering experience, but there were two key points that need to be stressed. Firstly, we are entering very tough economic times—in a

world of uncertainty and a region of negative growth, with Taiwan and China the only glimmers of light. But secondly and most importantly, Queensland is better placed than most to weather the economic storm and be well positioned to grow strongly as the region recovers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Arts Council School Touring Program

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: Last week I had the pleasure of launching the Queensland Arts Council School Touring Program, which takes live performances of drama, music, history, dance—all key areas of the curriculum—into classrooms from Torres Strait to Goondiwindi. Next year, this program will bring the arts to life for 650,000 Queensland school students in their own towns and communities. Those 650,000 students will see 50 separate performances on each school day—that is 5,400 performances—that will enhance their learning by bringing to life everything from the works of Shakespeare to the history of their own nation and its federation.

All of these 650,000 Queensland students will get equity of access—whether they live in Annerley, Atherton, Alpha, Aramac or Aurukun. Whether their school has 15 or 1,500 pupils, they are each charged just \$3 per head. No wonder this scheme is hailed as a world leader—the best in Australia. The Australia Council's National Magazine, *Lowdown*, in August wrote—

"The magnitude of such a program is unequalled anywhere in Australia."

It pointed out that the closest thing to it, Victoria's School Touring Program, operates for 103,000 students, less than a sixth of Queensland's 650,000 participants—

"Equity of access"—

is—

"the cornerstone of the program, asking students for just \$3 to attend a performance, regardless of geographic location. A student on Saibai Island, 3 kilometres from the coast of Papua New Guinea pays for and receives the same standard of performance that a student in a metropolitan school does."

The Queensland Arts Council underwrites a loss on each remote and rural tour because

that, realistically, is the cost of guaranteeing equity of access for all children in a State as vast and decentralised as Queensland. It costs thousands of dollars now to tour even small troupes of performers to schools in remote regions. For example, the Queensland Arts Council pays \$10,000 to \$11,000 to get a two-person team to the Torres Strait.

Those who would demand cuts to arts funding are, in effect, seeking to wind back opportunities for children in rural and remote areas. It is equally disturbing to envisage the prospect of a goods and services tax with its inevitably adverse effect upon the arts industry and the cost of touring arts programs. At every level, the GST will impact on every artist taking part. Every actor, every performer, as service providers, will face a mountain of paperwork and a 10% hike in the cost of costumes, sets, materials, accommodation and meals on tour. Such costs pose a threat to the accessibility which should characterise the arts in our society.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Out-stations Program for Aboriginal Offenders

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: Last week I attended the Aboriginal Coordinating Council in Cairns. During discussions with Aboriginal leaders, I said we had to look at creative ways of reducing the disproportionately high number of indigenous inmates in the State's jails. One of the ideas I raised was to use the out-stations program as the first option for young, non-violent, first-time offenders.

Currently, out-stations are used as a final step in the rehabilitation process after offenders have served time in institutions. At the out-stations, offenders are placed under the responsibility of community elders and leaders to complete their parole period. The program, if you like, is a specialised parole process.

As I made clear to the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, I was floating the idea of out-stations as a point of discussion. Certainly, more work has to be done on the concept before it could even be considered a firm proposal. However, I must say I have been overwhelmed by the positive response about my out-station idea. The member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington, and Opposition Justice spokesman and member for Warwick, Lawrence Springborg, both gave qualified support to the out-station idea. On ABC radio,

the member for Nicklin said he would like to see it trialled when the concept is fully developed. I agree and I thank him for his considered response to the idea. Also on ABC radio last week, the member for Warwick said the out-station idea had merit and that jailing some offenders can be counterproductive. He went on to further say—

"But I'm not opposed to the principle of taking non-violent or non-sexual offenders out of our jails and leaving our jails for people that have caused or conducted serious crimes and are of a general threat to our community. I mean I don't have a problem with that."

This type of bipartisan support for such a worthwhile aim has to be applauded, and I am sure that the member for Broadwater, Allan Grice, supports his shadow Cabinet colleague, as does the rest of the House. Far too often in this House, both sides attack each other just for the sake of opposing the other's policy position. It is pleasing to see these differences put aside, especially when it involves the touchy issue of offender rehabilitation and prison sentence management.

As we develop the out-station idea further and others aimed at reducing the number of non-violent, non-sexual offenders from spending time in our jails, I look forward to consulting further on these issues and look forward to the continued support of the coalition and the member for Nicklin.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Riversleigh Fossil Area

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (9.55 a.m.), by leave: One of the most unique areas in Australia is the Riversleigh section of the Lawn Hill National Park in northern Queensland. This fossil-rich, World Heritage listed area is recognised internationally as one of the few remaining places on earth where we can look into our past with any certainty. For the past three years, unsuccessful attempts have been made to acquire some 800 hectares of land surrounding the Riversleigh homestead to add to the World Heritage listed area. Not only is this proposed additional area fossil rich, but it contains many important Aboriginal cultural sites, including rock art, burial, spiritual sites and dreaming tracks.

Last month I visited the Lawn Hill National Park and met with tribal elders from the Waanyi people, whose links with this land can be traced back some 17,000 years. The

Waanyi people currently own 49% of this tract of land. The other 51% is owned by the Pasminco mining company. Just prior to my visit, the sixth meeting of my Waanyi ministerial advisory committee was held at Musselbrook to discuss, amongst other things, the Waanyi people's attitude towards the management of this land—land which has considerable history and significance for these people. The meeting of this advisory committee advanced the possible sale considerably, with a leading role played by Waanyi tribal elder, Peter O'Keefe.

When I arrived at Lawn Hill National Park, Mr O'Keefe and other members of the Waanyi tribe welcomed me onto the land and we spent considerable time discussing the Aboriginal people's great affinity with this part of Queensland. I am pleased to inform the House that the Waanyi people have now agreed to negotiate the sale of these 800 hectares surrounding the Riversleigh homestead to enable the land to be added to the World Heritage estate. This is a considerable breakthrough after many years of talks. In addition, the chief executive of Century Zinc, Mr Ian Williams, has indicated his company will not stand in the way of the sale if that is the desire of the Waanyi people.

I now anticipate this land will be purchased for protection by the State and added to the World Heritage estate. At the same time, it is my intention that the Waanyi people play an active and key role in the management of this land. Scientists have dated Aboriginal occupation of this part of Queensland back some 17,000 years and the Waanyi's deep affinity with and understanding of the cultural significance of the land is a rich resource for all Australians.

In my discussions with Mr O'Keefe, we agreed there would be opportunities for Aboriginal people to act as cultural rangers in the proposed new section of Riversleigh to pass on their vast knowledge of and connection with this land to both international visitors and Australians who visit this unique part of Queensland. I have also advised the Waanyi people that we would assist them in their plan to settle back on this land. Mr O'Keefe expressed the hope that many of his people, currently living at Doomadgee, would be able to renew their cultural ties and return to live at Lawn Hill and Riversleigh. The Waanyi elders see this as an important step in giving their younger generation a better understanding of the land, of the spiritual sites, the story places and the dreaming tracks.

Our Government sees this as a significant symbol of reconciliation. The purchase of the land surrounding Riversleigh homestead will provide protection for the future. It is a unique site where conditions have been ideal to preserve fossilised samples of species long since extinct. But it is equally significant that we are able to negotiate this purchase and involve the Waanyi people. They have a very deep and very real understanding of this land, this part of Queensland.

We expect that in the next six months we will formalise purchase of this land. With the help of the Waanyi people, we will develop a management plan that protects its important values while enabling the economic potential of the region to be fulfilled. I have also indicated to the Waanyi people that I will review the name of the Lawn Hill National Park to give it an Aboriginal name appropriate to the region, which is of such significant importance to the Aboriginal people.

There is an opportunity for environmental and cultural interpretive tourism and, similarly, enormous potential for employment for young Aboriginal people. This is a unique opportunity to complete the landscape and involve the local people in protecting and managing this land.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Food Safety

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP)
(Minister for Primary Industries) (10 a.m.), by leave: There is no more fundamental issue for primary producers around the world than the issue of food safety. The food our farmers produce must be safe—their livelihoods, their markets and their consumers depend on safe food and fibre. The public health responsibility of our primary producers is critical.

Queensland primary producers have worked very hard for many years to meet their food safety and public health responsibilities, and our second-to-none image as a "clean and green" producer is evidence of that hard work. For instance, our meat industry is recognised as one of the world leaders in food safety. This has involved the introduction of hazard analysis and critical control point quality control and quality assurance programs as tools for management. I notice some members opposite nodding their heads in agreement. That worries me because the former Borbidge Government left the Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority, the body charged with the responsibility for food safety, with a \$1.845m loss.

A report by independent business consultants found as at 30 June this year that the QLMA had liquid assets amounting to \$1.3m and it would be expected that the authority would exhaust its funds somewhere between December this year and March next year. With a current deficiency of equity of \$200,000, the report concluded that the QLMA is technically trading as insolvent. What a legacy for a body as important as the QLMA.

Among the main points for the QLMA's poor trading results the consultants found, firstly, a failure to get Cabinet approval for new fees in March 1998 and implementing new rebated fees prior to their being approved; and, secondly, a failure to convince the then Government that there is a community service obligation beyond that serviced by industry itself. This is Government inaction at its worst. This is a Borbidge Government back-seat job of epic proportions.

The Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority was formed under the Meat Industry Act 1993 with responsibility for ensuring meat safety regulation in Queensland. Its role is a very critical one. At Government and industry insistence, the QLMA has developed and implemented the industry adoption over a four-year period of Q-Safe, a new quality assurance accreditation program that represents world best practice in food safety management. Instead of assuring the future of this body, the previous Government let the QLMA sink into a \$1.8m loss.

I can inform the House today that Cabinet has approved the course of action I propose, which is to appoint an administrator. The administrator, whom I have yet to appoint, will report to me on what action and funds will be required to provide a sustainable QLMA. The appointment of an administrator does not reflect on the integrity of the board members; they have served the QLMA well. However, the appointment does reflect on the inaction of the previous Government. As well as the appointment of the administrator, I will initiate a review of the Meat Industry Act to start soon. This review is required under the provisions of the legislation. The members opposite can nod in agreement as much as they like, but they must also have a reality check from time to time and shake their heads in disgust at what they did not do.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Severe Storm Season

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP)
(Minister for Emergency Services) (10.04 a.m.),

by leave: Queensland is facing what is potentially its worst storm and cyclone season for many years. The Bureau of Meteorology has advised that our predicted weather pattern is similar to that of 1974, the year of the disastrous Brisbane flood and a season in which 16 cyclones crossed the coast. One of those cyclones was Wanda, which caused the Brisbane flood and also decimated beaches on the Gold Coast. The beach destruction was caused by massive seas whipped up by a relatively minor storm surge associated with Wanda. Sea levels in some places rose by half a metre and inundated the foreshores.

Every cyclone has an accompanying storm surge. A storm surge occurs when the cyclone crosses the coast. We have been fortunate that those surges rarely cross the coast in populated areas. We have been just as fortunate that when they have crossed it has been at low tide. The consequences of such an event at high tide is frightening. Unless we are prepared, this could be a disastrous summer.

The Meteorology Bureau and the Emergency Services Division of my department agreed on the need to conduct storm awareness campaigns much further south this season. The southernmost centres previously have been the Wide Bay and Mackay areas, but this year the experts say that the effects could be felt in a much wider area.

Statistics worldwide show that prepared and aware communities are the ones that suffer least in natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and severe storms. Complacency is the greatest killer. Heavily populated coastal areas such as the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast are not immune from the ravages of a cyclone's tentacles. After the long years of drought caused by the El Nino effect, Queensland's weather pattern has swung back to the La Nina pattern, which brings greater cyclone activity and corresponding deluges. While this can be good news for our farmers, it means that there is a need for people living in urban coastal areas to make themselves aware of strategies to protect their property and safeguard their families. That may be as simple as cleaning out gutters and pruning tall trees near homes. People should check their backyards for potential missiles such as wheelie bins and kids' swings. Even pot plants and a child's toy can be deadly.

The freak storm that lashed Brisbane, Warwick and the south-east last week, leaving in its wake a massive multimillion-dollar

damages bill, showed just how vulnerable we are to the forces of nature. It was a miracle that no-one was killed or seriously injured. The fury uprooted huge trees and plucked branches from trunks and transformed them into missiles. Iron sheeting was ripped from roofs at the height of the storm.

Queensland has one of the most effective disaster management systems in the world. Our distinctive cyclone siren has now been adopted nationally as the standard early warning signal for major disasters. Last week, I officially opened the new State Disaster Coordination Centre at my department's Kedron Park headquarters. This centre will help us direct resources to where they are needed as quickly as possible in the event of major incidents.

A key component of our disaster management system is preparedness. An ounce of calm and commonsense preparation now could save the burden and heartache of major property loss and injury. My department's Emergency Services Division will work closely with councils to get the message across. A range of brochures is available with helpful information about how to prepare for storms, floods and cyclones. They are as close as local SES units and local councils. We cannot prevent storms, floods and cyclones, but we can and we must be prepared when they hit.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.08 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest No. 8 1998 and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Report

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (10.08 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House a report of Estimates Committee E relating to Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill, together with additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

Report

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.09 a.m.): I table report No. 1 of Estimates

Committee F relating to Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in the Appropriation Bill, together with additional information provided to the committee.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G

Report

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.09 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the report of Estimates Committee G relating to the Estimates of expenditure referred to it and contained in Appropriation Bill No. 2 1998. I also lay upon the table of the House additional information provided to the committee, including the Hansard transcript of the public hearing held on 8 October 1998. I commend the report to the House.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Water Storage, Irvinebank; Electricity Industry

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (10.09 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"That the Minister for Mines and Energy will formally apologise, and allow adequate compensation to be paid to, the Operators of the Irvinebank State Treatment Works. He must also contribute meaningfully to government decisions which ensure that Queensland has adequate and secure power, generated by projects, which create infrastructure with the most attractive benefit cost streams, which are long lasting, which have high salvage values, and which create the highest number of long term and permanent jobs across the maximum number of regions and industries."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Electricity Industry

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.10 a.m.): Today I take the opportunity to place on the public record the efforts of the coalition over a considerable period to make sure that the problems in the power industry in this State were addressed properly after the former Minister, who is now the new Minister, left the incoming coalition Government in February of 1996 with 37 megawatts more power at Barcaldine—his sole achievement during his period in office as Minister for Minerals and Energy under the previous Goss Government.

An Opposition member: What about Eastlink?

Mr BORBRIDGE: I will come to Eastlink.

The reality is that in 1991 the QEC warned the Goss Labor Government that if it did not proceed with Tully/Millstream Queensland faced the prospect of blackouts in 1997. The coalition became the Government in February 1996. In March 1996, some three weeks later, we called tenders for the electricity generating units at Townsville, which this Government now admits will resolve the problem in January of next year when they come on stream.

In respect of Eastlink, the Government has been caught out, because by its own admission it would not have been on line until January 1999. That is what the Estimates committee was told. However, Powerlink Queensland said that it was unable to speculate on other actions which may have been initiated later by affected parties. The reality is that there would have been a legal challenge to Eastlink. It was handled disastrously. It would have been subject to judicial review. There is no way that it would have been up and running by January of next year. What the coalition did——

Time expired.

Mansfield Electorate

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (10.12 a.m.): I am pleased to inform the House that, contrary to media speculation at the time of the court case, I am still here and here to stay to represent the people of the Mansfield electorate. After continuing to read and listen to hypocritical statements regarding my win, I believe I must now bring some truth to the argument.

Fact 1: Judge Mackenzie ruled that the preference cards used were legal and that my result would stand. Fact 2: Mr Carroll, my Liberal opponent, used a preference card which had no Liberal Party recognition. Our card clearly stated that it was from the ALP. Fact 3: If the people do not want political candidates to lobby for preferences, we would have to get rid of the entire preferential system. This would result in the adoption of the first-past-the-post system. Failure to do this will continue the situation whereby candidates rightfully must be able to lobby for preferences. Fact 4: Our aim was to ensure that One Nation did not gain the balance of power in the Queensland Parliament. Had the Liberals won this seat, One Nation would have gained the balance of power in this Parliament. Fact 5: It

was Mr Carroll and the coalition that gave One Nation preferences which ensured that it won 11 seats in this Parliament. Had they not done so, as the recent Federal election illustrated, One Nation would be an irrelevant force.

Much has also been expressed about the actions of my booth workers. I find it mighty offensive and defamatory to many of my family members and friends that it is implied they acted improperly. At no time did they or did I want them to give the appearance of representing anyone other than me. Anyone who knows my family and friends would realise that the very last thing they would want is to pretend that they were part of One Nation. I hope this brings a bit of balance to the argument. I sincerely thank everyone who has contacted me to offer support and congratulations. I also express thanks for the personal support that my family and friends have given me over the past three months. I look forward to representing the people of the Mansfield electorate over the next three years.

Time expired.

Member for Nicklin

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.14 a.m.): On the previous sitting day, 18 September, the member for Nicklin asked a question without notice of the Education Minister concerning the purchase of a block of land adjoining the Maleny State High School. In his question, the member for Nicklin clearly sought to give the impression that something underhanded or improper had occurred when he claimed that an agreement had been reached with the property owner on 29 June, and to use his words, on "the very day the coalition lost Government".

The Queensland Government Gazette shows that the Government changed hands on 26 June, when the member for Brisbane Central was sworn as Premier and Minister for Education. On 29 June, the Minister for Education was the member for Murrumba. More than anyone else, the member for Nicklin was responsible for the change of Government. He was the central player—the king maker. It defies belief that he could have forgotten this date.

The fact of the matter is that the member for Nicklin knew the date but wilfully misled the House to cover his own discredited tracks at Maleny State High. On 4 September, just two weeks before his disgraceful Dorothy Dixier, he applauded the Labor Government's announcement of a \$700,000 deal to buy the

additional land for the school. He could not get close enough to the Education Minister when the announcement was made in his own electorate. They even issued a joint media statement to mark the occasion. The only problem was that the local community did not like it, and they told him so in no uncertain terms.

So in order to get himself and his Labor mates off the hook, the member for Nicklin slunk in here a fortnight later with his outrageous claim that the coalition finalised the land deal three days after Labor took office. And all this from a so-called Independent—the Parliament's self-appointed conscience who preaches to all other members about the need to lift standards in this House! However, he was correct on one issue. He said that there was a smell about this whole issue. It is the stench of a sanctimonious hypocrite.

Time expired.

Christian Brothers

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (10.16 a.m.): Tuesday, 13 October 1998 will be remembered for two things: one was the storm that hit Brisbane, particularly the inner-northern suburbs; the other was the ceremony held at St Stephen's Cathedral. Despite the inclement weather and traffic chaos, a packed cathedral saw all seats taken, with people lining the side aisles, three to five deep at the side doors and 10 to 15 deep at the front doors. Why were these people there and who were they? They were there to support and show solidarity for the congregation of Christian Brothers. There were men and women of all ages—past and present students and parents of students, members of Parliament, the judiciary, business people, office workers and labourers. They were there to say to the Brothers, "We are with you. We support you."

I table a speech given by my Brother Tom Kruger on behalf of the Christian Brothers in which he acknowledged the truth that abuse of children by some of the Brothers had occurred over the years. He also acknowledged that the vast majority of the 4,000 Christian Brothers who taught in Australia were and are good, honest, hardworking and dedicated men. The spontaneous applause from the congregation supported Brother Kruger and his confreres. More than two million young people have been taught by the 4,000 Christian Brothers in Australia. There are a number of members in this House who have benefited educationally,

emotionally, spiritually and socially from contact with the Christian Brothers. There are others whose husbands or sons have similarly been assisted.

If one relied only on media reports, one would have thought that the Christian Brothers were a group of organised child abusers. That is a lie. They are not. Members of this House have been convicted of corruption or child abuse, but that does not make every member past or present of this House corrupt or an abuser.

There was no report in the Courier-Mail about this great event; yet if 20 people had been demonstrating outside the cathedral, that of course would have been written about. In common with many other thousands of Queenslanders who sent their support, we express our support for the Christian Brothers.

Time expired.

Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.18 a.m.): The Minister for Primary Industries has announced that he has dismissed the highly qualified and widely respected board of the Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority and will replace it with an administrator. For the benefit of members, I point out that the QLMA is the statutory authority responsible for meat safety and hygiene in this State. The actions that the Minister has taken stand to jeopardise Queensland's reputation as a supplier of wholesome meat.

When the coalition came to office in early 1996, we were soon made aware of the deteriorating financial position that the QLMA faced. Why was it in such a bad state? That was because the former Minister, Mr Ed Casey, recklessly stole the \$500,000 per year contribution that the Queensland Government gave to ensure the health and hygiene of Queensland meat for Queenslanders. Labor was not content with just raping and pillaging the DPI. Ed Casey and his Cabinet mates were dead set on pulling money out of anywhere they could find it, including the QLMA, which shares responsibility for Queenslanders' welfare.

When the coalition came to office, we were soon made aware of the QLMA's deteriorating financial position and promptly instigated a review of the QLMA, in conjunction with the stakeholders. On receiving the findings of that review, we sought to address the problem immediately. We focused the QLMA solely on meat safety and hygiene,

we restructured and decreased the board size and we asked the QLMA for a business plan. We resumed the rightful financial contributions to the QLMA to help it ensure meat safety and hygiene for Queenslanders, and we guaranteed the financial security of the QLMA. Those financial contributions are one of the Government's community service obligations.

The new board, to its credit, has performed admirably under very difficult circumstances, and I pay tribute to it. Now, despite this, the Minister for Primary Industries has seen fit to reward it with the sack. The Government has chosen to shirk its responsibilities to Queenslanders, just like it did in the Goss days. Now we see that Mr Beattie's minority Labor Government has learnt nothing. It has failed to consult the stakeholders, it has failed to consider the requirements of the meat industry and it has failed to have regard for Queensland consumers. The Minister will regret this decision.

Disability Services; Miss Lions Competition

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (10.21 a.m.): The Beattie Government's \$30m a year increase in funding for disability services is no token increase or minor adjustment to allow for economic forces, it is a major injection of funds to a sector which has demonstrated a need for some time. This decision will mean a great deal to the many people with disabilities and their families, not to mention the many carers and community-based workers who work and live in my electorate.

What gratifies me most about this package is that it aims to strengthen the partnership Government has with the valuable community agencies that already exist in our community. These organisations provide assistance to the many people with physical and intellectual disabilities who currently live, work and make significant personal contributions to our local areas. The community-based agencies which serve the Redland Shire have made a real difference to many people with disabilities. They have provided accommodation support, recreational options, employment and training, respite care, personal encouragement and motivation and other life-style support programs.

It takes the ingredients of confidence, concern for people in the community and entrepreneurship to make it as a successful entrant of the annual Miss Lions Competition. With the support of SHARE, the Special Housing Association of Redlands, and the

local Lions club, a talented young woman, Miss Jean Fry, rose to the challenge and set in place an extremely successful fundraising campaign benefiting local community projects and medical research in Queensland. Jean Fry endeavoured to make a difference. She represented her local area and then went on to win an award for her fundraising achievements. This achievement is a benchmark any person would be proud to reach. Jean Fry is a special person—a person with an intellectual disability. Congratulations, Jean.

Through the support that is very much a part of SHARE, the Bayside Respite Care Association and the Horizon Foundation, people with disabilities are able to break through their personal glass ceilings to realise their ambitions through new opportunities and a strong network of friends brought together by these agencies. I recognise the efforts of these people and the organisations they support for the impact they have had on countless individuals in the broader community.

Time expired.

Water Storage, Irvinebank

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (10.23 a.m.): According to a letter from the Minister for Mines and Energy dated 25 August 1998, the State is trying to gain exclusion from the Irvinebank State Treatment Works (Sale and Operation) Act 1990 for the Ibis Dam. It is nothing short of theft. It is unfair, it is underhanded and, in layman's terms, it is wrong.

It appears that the reason for this exemption is to deprive the operators of the Loudon Mill access to the water they need to maintain their operation. Seven years of political interference has shut down the operation and caused substantial financial damage to the whole community. It is also plainly obvious that the dam will be sold to the Mareeba Shire Council for the sum of \$1, without any thought of fair compensation to the operators of the mill.

How can anyone justify this treatment—especially a Government which is all about jobs, jobs, jobs? This act has taken the jobs of independent miners and mill operators and has affected countless other flow-on jobs throughout the tablelands. The whole attitude of the Department of Mines and Energy is not consistent with the jobs orientation of the Beattie Government.

I add that the family at the centre of this saga are immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. They came here to escape communist oppression and for a better way of life. They thought they had found that better life here in Australia, but our benevolent and highly sensitive Government has found it in its heart to oppress these people further. This country is not so equal and not so free. Government members have the hide to call me intolerant!

Bundaberg Electorate

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): My electorate of Bundaberg was recently fortunate to be the fourth centre in Queensland to host a Community Cabinet meeting. I commend the Premier and his Ministers and staff on the time they so willingly gave to the hundreds of people who took the opportunity to attend. Cabinet meetings had been held in Bundaberg on two other occasions during the last seven years, but neither of these gave the public the opportunity to participate. Premier Beattie and his Government deserve congratulations for their initiative and determination to take Government to the people and to listen to the people.

In Bundaberg, more than 130 formal deputations were heard, and most of these people went home very pleased with the informal and friendly atmosphere and satisfied with the positive results. Numerous groups received good advice or were successful in obtaining funding commitments, the largest being \$2.7m for much-needed building expansion at the CQU Bundaberg campus and \$350,000 to bring facilities at the Bucca rowing venue up to world class and to provide a training venue for the Australian Olympic rowing team.

During this Cabinet meeting in Bundaberg, Queensland's first state development centre was officially opened by the Premier and the State Development Minister, Jim Elder; the Honourable Matt Foley announced a \$500,000 boost to regional arts funding; Minister Merri Rose opened a rural fire shed at Wartburg; and other Ministers visited various departments. Three Ministers were briefed at the proposed Coonarr coal port and some inspected the site, and Minister Rod Welford stayed on for an extra day to visit the new Walla Weir, which was full and overflowing for the first time, and to inspect farms and farming procedures. In all, it was a very busy two days which was much appreciated by the people of our entire region.

Time expired.

New Hospital, Capricorn Coast

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.26 a.m.): I preface my comments by stating that a number of Ministers opposite have indeed given courteous replies and tried to be helpful in response to issues raised by Opposition members. I now comment on the Health Minister's response to representations made by me to put a new hospital complex for the Capricorn Coast on a five-year plan. This was done after representations made to me by a number of senior medical people in the area. To my surprise and to the surprise of everybody, through a letter to the editor I was got stuck into in no uncertain terms for simply doing my job.

The people of the Capricorn Coast are very disappointed at the attitude of the Minister in trying to play politics, when all I was doing was adhering to the representations that I had made. This is indeed a very shabby effort on the part of the Minister. It is not in any way condoned by the people. They really do not appreciate this type of behaviour. All we asked for was a listing on the five-year plan. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in maintenance when we were in Government. It is time for a new hospital.

The Minister wants to play politics. It is a most ordinary effort. I am sure even the Premier would not be very happy with her performance in trying to politicise the issue of people's health. We are simply doing our best for our people, yet the Minister chooses to politicise things. She has made an absolute mistake. All will be forgiven if she turns around and puts this project on the five-year plan. There is no big hurry; it just needs to be put on the plan. Other Ministers have tried to help, yet this Minister wants to play politics. It is no wonder she gets herself into strife, as she did in Maryborough and other places. She ought to lift her game. She should act better.

Time expired.

Education Funding

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (10.28 a.m.): On 8 October I attended the Maleny State High School Parents and Citizens Association meeting, at which the association requested that I raise in Parliament two matters of specific interest to the school community. The school parents and citizens association requests, firstly, that the Queensland Government seriously review and amend the system of subsidisation of school projects so that the limit of \$200,000 is altered upward to \$400,000 in response to the

mounting costs of major capital works, such as multipurpose buildings. Secondly, it requests that the Queensland Government consider and amend its practice of providing school facilities, such as multipurpose student activity centres, to new schools only. Older schools experience inequity when confronted with the responsibility of funding these facilities themselves whilst newer schools receive them as part of their original establishment.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Mines and Energy

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I ask the Premier: does he have total confidence in the ability of his Mines and Energy Minister to handle his portfolio in respect of the current power crisis when his Minister has been described in court under oath by a superintendent of police as "irrational"?

Mr BEATTIE: Let me deal with these questions in order. To the first question, the answer is: yes. I should draw to the attention of the House that the second question is a matter of sub judice. Let me deal with the issue—

A Government member: That's right.

Mr BEATTIE: That is quite right, it is a matter of sub judice. Let me deal with the issue in relation to power. The issue of power is very simply this. People out there are not particularly interested—and, frankly, nor am I—in the politics. People want certainty of power, and my Government has a strategy to deliver it. It is that simple.

Mr Borbidge: It's your fault.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition says it is our fault. Let us talk about fault. Let us have a little bit of nonsense politics, which the Opposition Leader loves getting into. One of the things that the previous Government did was to scrap Eastlink. That is what it did. Let us look at what the position in relation to Eastlink was. To meet supply requirements in 1999, the Goss Government commissioned the construction of a 500 megawatt interconnector between Queensland and New South Wales. The construction of Eastlink would have been completed when? On 1 October 1998 and fully operational on 1 January 1999! From 1 October 1998 commissioning power would have been available as a source of power in situations of extreme power loss. The recent

examples of supply shortfall should therefore have been offset by electricity from Eastlink.

So in other words, who was responsible for the delay in Eastlink? Who was responsible for the delay in the connection of power which would have given us 500 megawatts? Who? The answer is: the Leader of the Opposition and his Government! Do I have any confidence in the Minister? You bet I do! Let us go to what Powerlink says. Honourable members should not take my word for it. What did the Powerlink chairman say to the Estimates committee? Mr Jardine said—

"I can confirm that, because the timetable of Eastlink would have it going through its commissioning phases now."

In other words, it would have been on route and available to provide services right now. He says, "I can confirm that." Let us look at this. It says very clearly—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I table a document provided to the Estimates committee which proves that the Premier is misleading the House. It is an answer from the deputy director-general of that department.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, there is no point of order. Let me table the transcript from the Estimates committee in which the chief executive officer of Powerlink says it would have been available. The Leader of the Opposition is responsible.

Time expired.

Minister for Mines and Energy

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a question to the Minister for Mines and Energy, described recently by a superintendent of police in sworn evidence as "irrational"—

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. This is a matter of sub judice. This is a serious point of order. In the interests of the fair running of this Parliament, I sought not to object to the previous question from the Leader of the Opposition. This matter is before the courts. The decision has been adjourned. It is sub judice and, under those circumstances, is not a proper matter before the Parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: The matter is sub judice; it is before the courts.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I will not refer to the court case. I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy, who has been called many things, to his statement to the Estimates committee that—

"You know as well as I know that, when you select the chair of a committee, you normally do so in the main to get the recommendations that you are looking for ..."

I ask the Minister: in light of this extraordinary admission, what credibility can possibly attach to the looming report to him which supports his widely contradicted claim that the current power crisis in Queensland is a result of poor equipment maintenance?

Mr McGRADY: The person who was selected to do this report for me has spent a whole lifetime in the Queensland electricity industry. The person concerned has the greatest respect of people on all sides of the industry. I have not received the report. I have received a summary of the report. Let me inform the House that I have total confidence in the person who was employed to do this report and, rather than members opposite attempting to score political points, I would suggest that the time is now right for them to join with us in resolving a problem which this State has.

Mr Borbidge: Your mess.

Mr McGRADY: It is all very well for members of the Opposition to say, "It is their fault", or it is someone else's fault; I am saying that this Government has a plan and a strategy, but above all else we inform the people of Queensland exactly what we are proposing to do. There are no secret deals going on. Whenever there is a tight situation, we inform the people of this State. Just last week I invited every media outlet in Queensland to come to Mary Street. We laid the cards on the table. We explained in detail what the situation was. I understand now that the people who represent the Queensland media have a far better understanding of the true situation with regard to power in this State and the problems.

If the Opposition wants to spend the rest of the week blaming, blaming, blaming, we have plenty of ammunition that we can come back with. But the important thing is that this Government has a plan, this Government has a strategy, and I believe that we are on the right track.

Queensland TAB

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the media debate about the future of the TAB in Queensland. I note that there is some controversy about the job security of workers at the TAB and I ask the Premier to explain what his preferred option is.

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Chermside for his question. As all members would know, he has a considerable racing community in his area.

The position is very simply this: yesterday the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing brought a detailed submission to Cabinet. He briefed Cabinet in relation to the TAB and its future, including possible privatisation. He subsequently then briefed the caucus. Both the Cabinet and the caucus noted that this matter will, in fact, be debated at the party's conference in Maryborough in November. I have signalled to the Cabinet and the caucus, as has the Minister, that we will be arguing for privatisation of the TAB for the long-term interests of betting in this State. It will be a matter for the conference. We will accept the decision of the conference and we will put the position very clearly to that meeting.

It is important, I think, that we do set clearly on the record for the purposes of this debate that the profits of the TAB are, in fact, distributed as prize money to the race clubs of this State; they are not provided to the taxpayer. The Queensland taxpayers receive the benefits from a wagering tax. That wagering tax will, in fact, be charged on the TAB whether the TAB is in corporatised form, in its current form or in a privatised form. So that money will be going to the taxpayers.

It is well known that, as a matter of philosophy, my Government does not support as a general principle privatisation of essential services. That is why, prior to the last election, we made it clear that we were opposed to the privatisation of the electricity industry in the same way that we are opposed to the privatisation of railways, ports—the essential services in this State—water and those sorts of areas. However, when it comes to a betting institution, my view is very clearly this—and I will be putting this to the conference: I do not believe that taxpayers' money, which should be going into essential services such as education and health, should be put into a betting institution. It is that simple.

In terms of the job security issue—I have had discussions with the Australian Services Union. The job security issue is one that both the Minister and I have taken very seriously. There will be ongoing discussions with the ASU to protect employment opportunities. We are of the view that there will be jobs growth out of a privatised TAB; not only will existing jobs be protected, there will be jobs growth as a result of it. I invite members to inform themselves about the TAB and what is happening in Victoria and New South Wales. It is a very

competitive market. Therefore, the TAB in Queensland needs to be competitive to protect the Queensland punter and to protect the future of the TAB.

Callide C Power Station

Dr WATSON: I refer the Treasurer to his written ministerial direction to CS Energy of 28 July when, as a shareholding Minister, he conspired in the Government's bid to halt construction of the \$800m Callide C Power Station by demanding that the chair of that Government owned corporation cooperate with a second review of contracts with Shell Coal.

In the letter of 28 July, the Treasurer urged the head of CS Energy, Mr Harley, to communicate with Mr Fryor of his department. Or in simple terms, the Treasurer was trying to pull the plug on a desperately needed power station. I ask: why has this secret ministerial direction not been gazetted, and when is the Treasurer going to table the letter?

Mr HAMILL: I reject outright the claim of a conspiracy to pull the plug on Callide C. It is wrong in fact. The assumptions that the member has made are quite wrong.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will allow the Treasurer to answer the question.

Mr HAMILL: And why is it improper that, as a responsible shareholding Minister, I would seek details of contracts which are being entered into by Government owned corporations that fall within my area of responsibility?

Goods and Services Tax

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Treasurer to the forthcoming Premiers Conference and negotiations on the introduction of a goods and services tax, and I ask: what is the Queensland Government's position on the issue of tax reform?

Mr Johnson: You love it, don't you? Tell the truth.

Mr HAMILL: I hear the honourable member for Gregory interjecting. It is about time that Opposition members did come clean about their policy in relation to tax reform. But before I get into that, I want to make it absolutely clear that the Queensland Government goes to the Premiers Conference in November with two fundamental objectives: firstly, to make sure that Queensland is not short-changed by a Federal Government that

is determined to put a GST on food and a whole range of other goods and services; and, secondly, a Government that is determined that Queensland should get fair compensation for the taxes that we do not levy. Why should we be subsidising the removal of financial institutions duty around the country—a tax which we do not have here?

All of a sudden, Opposition members are making some noise in relation to tax and tax reform. How many times, when they were in Government, did they refuse to share with the Parliament their strategies in relation to the financial arrangements of the State? Time and time again we asked them to declare their position in relation to a GST and the Federal Government's tax policy, but they would never come clean. It has taken a little while, but the cat is now out of the bag. Thanks to a former senior Minister of the Borbidge Government, we now have an exposition on exactly what the tax strategy of the coalition Government really was.

The member concerned tells his local community that the Queensland Government could not afford, within its current revenues, the services and so on. That is why, according to that member—

"To finance this overspending millions were stripped from the electricity industry, and Suncorp/Metway was partially privatised."

This mob opposite said that there was no asset stripping for the recurrent budget. What is more, that same member said—

"The Queensland government should now be brave enough to abandon the promise 'no new state taxes' and undertake a complete review of our state taxes and charges so we can develop a better fund raising strategy ..."

He goes on—

"Queensland cannot afford to pass up this opportunity to use GST as a focus for a new state revenue raising strategy."

Who is the author?

Mr Littleproud: It's me!

Mr HAMILL: There he is. There is the author. It is the member for Western Downs. I thank the member for Western Downs for coming clean on exactly what their strategy was. Talk about the silence of the shams! There they are, exposed by their now-retiring colleague as to exactly what their secret agenda was.

Time expired.

Callide C Power Station

Mr HORAN: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to his written ministerial direction to CS Energy of 28 July, as a shareholding Minister of the Queensland electricity supply industry, to achieve a second review of the contracts between CS Energy and Shell in relation to the Callide C power project. I also refer to the fact that this direction was ostensibly to achieve "a proper understanding of the status" of those contracts, and I ask: has the Minister's memory of this secret ministerial direction to CS Energy improved since the Estimates committee process, when he was 90% sure that no such direction had been issued? Does he now recall it? Why was this secret ministerial direction not gazetted, as required by law?

Mr McGRADY: When a new Government comes into office, I think it is important that the Ministers in the various portfolios try to get an understanding of what deals have been done by the previous Government. Prior to election day, the coalition had a Cabinet meeting in Nanango. After the Cabinet meeting, the then Premier and his Ministers indicated to all who were prepared to listen that there was going to be an extension to the Tarong Power Station. That received massive coverage in the electorate, which eventually fell for the National Party. At the same time, the people who lived in the area and, in particular, the work force and the business community, were led to believe that all this had been signed and sealed at the Cabinet meeting.

The facts were that the extensions to Tarong have never, ever, ever, ever received any endorsement by the board. A feasibility study was going on then, and it is still going on today. So no decision was ever taken by the board at Tarong. That is the first thing.

I now come back to Callide C. The facts are that one of the responsible Ministers of the incoming Government wanted to find out exactly what the status was. Therefore, we did the right thing by simply asking what the position is. We received the information—

Mr Borbidge: Twice.

Mr McGRADY: I do not care whether it was one, two, three, four or five times. The bottom line is that we received the information which we required. In this Parliament, I made the ministerial announcement that the Callide C Power Station would go ahead. Callide C is going ahead, and Callide C will go ahead as per the original plan.

What Opposition members are trying to do today is to criticise the Treasurer and myself

for simply seeking the facts. We sought the facts, we got the facts and we made the decision based on the information we received. Callide C will go ahead based on the information that we have received.

Time expired.

Light Metals Industry

Mr MICKEL: I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can he advise the House of any progress in the development of a full light metals industry in central Queensland?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for his question. He is a new member of the Parliament who on my committees has taken a keen interest in project development. In relation to this project, there has been significant development. The mineral wealth of central Queensland is well known. However, in the past, we have not value added to the degree that we should have. It is the value adding that creates long-term sustainable jobs in this State. We have had processing of bauxite into aluminium at Gladstone. We have seen the development of magnesite deposits at Kunwarrara.

Since my early days as an Industry Minister, I have had a long association with the Australian Magnesium Corporation, because it was involved in one of those projects that I thought was worth supporting because of the opportunities for well-paid, long-term sustainable jobs. Since coming to office, I have had continual contact with the project and have had my department working closely with that company. I am pleased to say that it has now decided to move ahead with that project. I can inform the House that it has chosen the Stanwell Power Station site near Rockhampton as the preferred location for its smelter.

It will now begin a major feasibility study into an \$800m smelter at the Stanwell site. This has been a three-stage process. The first stage was the development of the pilot plant at Gladstone. The second stage determined the site of the major facility. The third stage is to move ahead with the feasibility study to determine whether it can establish and ramp up the viability of the project. If that plant goes ahead—and at this stage every indication that I have shows that it will—it will be an exciting prospect. That plant will start production in late 2002 and move to full production in 2004. That will mean many long-term jobs in central Queensland: 1,000 will be employed in the construction phase of the project and, once

the project is fully operational, we will see 300 jobs in that region. The multiplier effect for a light metals industry is something to see. That will drive the die-casting industry. We are talking about opportunities in central Queensland from this project of thousands of downstream jobs in and around Gladstone and Rockhampton. That is what central Queensland has been looking for and needed for a long time. That will take Queensland into a new strata of industry. In the new millennium, Queensland will become the light metals headquarters of the world. We have been working on those projects across Governments over the past 15-odd years. This is the most exciting development we have seen for some time.

Time expired.

Power Crisis

Mr MITCHELL: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to repeated statements by Mr Gordon Jardine of Powerlink that the current Queensland power crisis is an issue of demand and supply based on the inadequacy of current generating capacity. I also refer to the Minister's repeated claim that the problem is with maintenance. I ask: who is lying to the people of Queensland—Mr Jardine or the Minister?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That term is unparliamentary.

Mr MITCHELL: Who is not telling the truth to the people of Queensland—Gordon Jardine or the Minister?

Mr McGRADY: In all the dealings that I have had with Mr Jardine, I have never yet found him to tell untruths. I can say that the same applies to yours truly. It is all very well for the Opposition to try to attach blame to one side or the other, but let me tell them this: the people out there in voter land do not care who was responsible; all they want is a reliable power supply. That is what this Government is all about. That is what we intend to deliver.

As I said in my reply to the previous question, last week I invited all the media to come into my office where we gave them a briefing. When I say "we", I mean Mr Jardine—for whom I have the greatest respect—Mr Coulter from the Department of Mines and Energy and me. At no time during that briefing did we try to blame anybody. We simply gave the facts as they are. The facts are these: it is true to say that, in the next week or two, the situation is tight. The situation is tight, but that is certainly not of the making of those on this

side of the Chamber. November will become somewhat easier. We will then move into the Christmas period and into January and on through the year when the situation should be a lot easier.

From day one, I determined that if ever there were a problem in the supply industry I would inform the people. The same tight situation existed 17 times last year and the people of Queensland—to use a pun—were kept in the dark. I want to give an assurance to the people of Queensland and to this Parliament that I will keep the people informed of the true situation. The bottom line is this: we have a plan; we have a strategy. I believe that this Government is going down the right path. I can assure the people of Queensland that we know where we are going.

Government Advertising Policies

Mr PEARCE: I refer the Premier to comments by the Opposition Leader on ABC radio on 12 October when he made allegations about this Government's advertising policies. I ask: was there any truth at all in the allegations? How does this Government's record compare with that of the coalition Government?

Mr BEATTIE: I am delighted to take that question because I would like to talk about power. The Leader of the Opposition said on 12 October on ABC radio that we were starting an advertising campaign for Stanwell power, which appeared to be just the start of Labor's spending. That was a very clear accusation. He really hurt my feelings. What is the truth? Is that true? The answer is: no, it is not true. What Government was in power when those ads were authorised? The Leader of the Opposition wanted some letters tabled. I am happy to table two letters and another document. That will expose the hypocrisy of the Opposition in relation to power.

Letter one is dated 6 April 1998. That letter from Stanwell Corporation Limited is to Mr Keith Cogzell of Grantley Cogzell Benn, an advertising agency. The letter states—

"Dear Mr Cogzell,

Stanwell Corporation intends to appoint a creative advertising agency to manage its advertising program for a period of eight months (from May 1998-January 1999)."

Honourable members should remember the date. The letter continues—

"Your firm is invited to provide a submission outlining your credentials as a

suitable creative advertising agency for this project.

...

Your response is expected to be submitted by close of business Wednesday 22 April 1998."

In case members have forgotten the date, here Stanwell is seeking an advertising agency well before the State election. I table that letter for the information of the House.

The second letter, also from Stanwell Corporation Limited to Keith Cogzell, is dated 20 May 1998—before the State election.

Mr Schwarten: Who was in Government then?

Mr BEATTIE: "Who was in Government then?" indeed.

The letter states—

"I am pleased to inform you that your agency has been selected to manage Stanwell Corporation's advertising program for a period of eight months. The period outlined in the brief was 6 May 1998-6 January 1999."

However, due to delays the time was extended. I table that letter for the information of the House.

The third document is approval of the script for the ads, which were approved on 15 June 1998.

Mr Schwarten: Who was in power then?

Mr BEATTIE: "Who was in power then?" indeed: the now Leader of the Opposition! The Leader of the Opposition has been exposed through these documents. He is not only being dishonest publicly in relation to power but also being grossly dishonest in relation to his attacks on me and my Government. This is typical of this Opposition's attack on power. Its attack on power has as much credibility as what the Leader of the Opposition said on ABC radio, and that is zilch.

Water Storage, Irvinebank

Mr NELSON: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: can he explain the reasons for the exclusion of the Ibis Dam from the Irvinebank State Treatment Works (Sale and Operation) Act 1990? Why is no thought given to the future of the people affected by the changes made to that Act?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the member for the question, and I note that this is part of the motion that he proposes to move tonight. I understand that the member is relatively new.

This matter has been going on for approximately 10 years. When I saw a copy of the member's motion that he proposes to move tonight, I went through my notes to see if I had a brief. It was all crumpled up and pulled out. In fact, the brief is so old that I must discuss its heritage value with one of the other Ministers.

The situation is that, in my brief life as the former Minister for Minerals and Energy, this was a constant matter. On a number of occasions, Chris Lewis, who is the Mayor of Mareeba, and members of his council met with me. I have met the gentleman and his son. I then left the portfolio, and for two and a half years my predecessor was involved in the matter. I came back to the portfolio—to the same office, the same pot plants, the same pictures on the wall, the same people working for the department, and the same briefs—and I said, "For heavens's sake, hasn't this been sorted out yet?" However, the problem is that when Ministers of both political persuasions—

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I find this incredibly patronising. I would like the question to be answered. Answer the question!

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

Mr McGRADY: I will keep it simple. When a Minister of either the coalition or this side or the department write letters, there seems to be a problem in getting replies. They simply do not reply to correspondence that is sent. Let me say this: the next time I go to Cairns, I will be more than happy to meet these gentlemen. However, I want a resolution to this problem, because this matter has been going on for 10 years under three different Ministers. We all cannot be out of step. Three Ministers dealing with the issue suggests that there is something wrong.

Time expired.

TABCorp

Mr REEVES: I refer the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing to last Wednesday's Toowoomba Chronicle which reported that the privatised Victorian TAB, TABCorp, looks certain to be named as the financial backer of the Toowoomba Clydesdales Rugby League Club, and I ask: does the Minister have any concern that the Government's decision to award TABCorp a Queensland gaming licence will allow it to turn local sporting clubs into mini-casinos? In

particular, what impact will TABCorp's entry into the Queensland gaming industry have on the Queensland TAB?

Mr GIBBS: I thank the honourable member for the question. This was a matter that I referred to in another place some weeks ago when we were being questioned in relation to departmental budgets. There are a number of very important issues here. Of course, the first one is that, in its wisdom, the previous Government decided to allow eight gaming machine operators into Queensland. The disappointing fact about that is that the Government sold those gaming machine licences, would members believe, for the princely sum of \$250,000 each—\$250,000 to gain a gaming machine licence in Queensland! However one of the most disturbing aspects of this matter is that one of the operators that that Government sold a gaming licence to was none other than the Victorian TAB—to come into Queensland and compete against our own TAB!

Since then, VicTAB has gone to 10 clubs in Queensland, eight of them surf-lifesaving clubs, and offered them deals to build new, palatial clubhouses for them at fairly low interest rates and then to take about 25% off the top of the poker machine profits as part of the repayment of the loans. That is a disgraceful, ordinary piece of work in itself. However, it gets worse. Every time people from Queensland go into one of those clubs and play the machines in those clubs, they are putting money directly back into the pockets of the Victorian TAB—into prize money for racing in Victoria, into prize money for improvements to clubhouses in that State—against the best interests of Queensland.

The amazing facet of this problem is that one of the clubs that is just about to enter into a contract with the Victorian TAB is no other than the Clydesdales Rugby League Club in Toowoomba, which is located less than one kilometre away from the Toowoomba Turf Club. Guess who is the chairman of the Clydesdales Rugby League Club—the person who has been involved in putting together this deal with the Victorian TAB, against his own interests, against his own State, against his own racing club, against his own city? None other than the shadow Minister for Racing!

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

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will withdraw the words that the member finds offensive.

Mr GIBBS: I will withdraw whatever it is that the member finds offensive, but here he

is, the shadow Minister for Racing in this State, who has been party to putting this deal together with the Victorian TAB——

Mr HEALY: I rise to a point of order. That is untrue. I have not been party to any deal with the Victorian TAB. I ask the Minister to withdraw that. It is simply not true. I have not been the chairman of the Clydesdales for three months.

Mr Gibbs: The member is the chairman of the club.

Mr HEALY: No, I am not.

Time expired.

Power Blackouts

Mr DALGLEISH: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: will he outline the contingency measures that will be implemented to overcome the power blackouts that would appear to be inevitable during periods of peak load?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the honourable member for that question. Naturally, I am delighted to respond. Let me say that the question is relevant, as the answer to it is what the punters out there are waiting for. They want to know what the Government is doing, and we are prepared to tell them.

First of all, a structure has come in from the west, which will bring another unit at Tarong on stream, I think, on Friday afternoon. This is a massive piece of equipment. Today, I want to pay tribute to the people in the Transport Departments of the various States through which this equipment went. They did a tremendous job and got the equipment here eight days earlier than anticipated. We expect the unit that has been down at Tarong to be back on line around about Friday lunchtime.

The other thing that is very, very important is the commissioning of the Calvale to Tarong transmission line. That should be done by the end of November. That brings power from central Queensland down to the south-east corner of the State. That should alleviate many of the problems. On top of that, generation capacity and supply will be increased with the commissioning of the 283 megawatt power station and also the 158 megawatt power station, which Transfield is developing in Townsville.

It is fair to say that for Queensland to meet its needs we have to generate approximately 200 megawatts of additional power each year, and the State is on track to do this. For the benefit of all members I table this document that details exactly our plans

and proposals. I also table this document for the interest of members. Anybody who wants a copy can have one. This document gives the graphs of the true situation. If the elected representatives of the people of Queensland are really to assist the State at this point in time, this is the information that they must have.

I will clarify one point that was raised here again this morning: I spent two or three years of my political life trying to get the interconnector between Queensland and New South Wales. We all know the history of that and I do not propose to go over it again and again today. I noticed that when I paid tribute to Mr Gordon Jardine before, the former Premier nodded in agreement. I will quote what he said at the Estimates——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Honourable Minister's time has expired.

Mr McGRADY: I table the document.

Gold Coast IndyCarnival

Mr HAYWARD: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing: will he advise the Parliament of any preliminary results posted by the 1998 Gold Coast IndyCarnival and do those results mean that there is a long-term future for the event in Queensland?

Mr GIBBS: It certainly does bode well for the future of the event. Of course, the results from the weekend will not be fully known until the end of October. However, some of the figures that we have are fantastic, considering the fact that only a month ago I reported to the Parliament and Cabinet that we were looking down the gun barrel of a \$1.5m loss. It looks as though the event will make approximately \$200,000 in profit this year.

On an overall basis, last year the crowds numbered 226,130; this year 243,553 people attended over the four days. That is an increase of more than 9%. General ticket sales generated \$3.9m compared to \$3.1m last year. Corporate sales reached \$7.850m this year, which is an increase of \$1.1m on the net sales last year. Early estimates of the event indicate that direct spending in the Queensland economy equals approximately \$50m. The impact of this spending is estimated to be equivalent to approximately 650 jobs. The value-added benefit to the Gold Coast region was \$30m, which was equivalent to 530 jobs.

The media coverage of the IndyCarnival event has continued to grow. In 1991, coverage of the event was distributed to only

30 countries. This year the number of countries receiving broadcasts of the event has increased to 195. That growth factor alone proves that the financial investment from Governments of all persuasions has been a responsible one. The State Budget simply could not provide the money to buy such advertising in those countries.

I place on record my appreciation of the role of the chairman of the IndyCarnival, Terry Jackman, and his board. They have done an outstanding job this year. In a sense of bipartisanship, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I appreciate the role that he played this year. It is has been healthy that the politics has gone out of it at long last.

This has turned into a great event for Queensland. This year saw the race grow and mature in a way that we have never seen before. We are currently negotiating with CART to look at the possibility of extending the contract beyond the year 2000. I am confident that this will happen. I thank the 1,300 volunteers who gave their time to be at the event over the four days. That was a sensational performance. Of course, the departing chief executive, Tony Cochrane, has done a great job in the past four years and I congratulate him for that. Although some honourable members may have a philosophical difficulty with the expenditure at times, the overall results achieved are great for Queensland.

Electricity Industry

Mr SEENEY: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to successive statements by power industry representatives that, in relation to all major equipment failures in the Queensland electricity industry since 1995, maintenance was not an issue in any of these failures, and I ask: in the face of the total rejection by industry of your lack of maintenance theory, why do you persist with it?

Mr McGRADY: I refer the member to the debates and the discussions that we had in this Parliament some 12 months ago when the then Opposition proved, through documents that were tabled, that there was a problem with a lack of maintenance in the three State-owned power stations. I did what I believe to be the right thing and simply commissioned a task force to look into the three power stations in the State. The task force has given me a summary of its report. The full and final report will be presented to the Premier and myself some time this week. The full report will not be

made public for one simple reason, that is, the confidentiality of parts of the report. The whole purpose of commissioning the report was to find the true and accurate picture of the situation in Queensland's power stations, and then for the Government and the industry to take the necessary actions to ensure that the present problem does not happen again.

One of the problems that I foresaw some 12 months ago was the deliberate attempt by the industry, obviously with the support of Government, to retrench people left, right and centre. Members will recall during the various debates that we had in this Parliament that we indicated that between 2,000 and 3,000 jobs could be lost from the Queensland electricity industry. That was never denied by the then Government spokesman.

In line with the motion that will be debated tonight, I say this: the last thing that I want to see is men and women from the electricity industry being thrown onto the unemployment scrap heap when, in my opinion, there is proof that the maintenance program has not been properly carried out. The member for Callide comes from an area that relies upon a major power station. I invite him—and I expect him—to join with us in resolving the issue.

Expo 2002

Mr FENLON: I refer the Premier to recent media reports that the Philippines is considering not staging Expo 2002. I ask: will the Premier confirm that the State Government will revive Queensland's bid to host the Expo on the Gold Coast?

Mr BEATTIE: The answer is: yes. I notice that there are a number of experts wandering around who seem to know how this process is going to be determined. Indeed, this morning that legendary columnist Dennis Atkins seemed to have it all worked out as well.

The truth of the matter is that there is no determination of the process yet, in that the Philippines has not formally withdrawn. They have been given the baton and while they have it we are not in a position to take it from them. We have indicated to the Federal Government and to other appropriate sources that, yes, Queensland is interested in the bid and we will do everything we can to secure the bid. However, until such time as the Philippines relinquishes its interests, we are not in a position to secure it. I have signalled that we will do everything we can to revive the bid. I have signalled publicly that, if it is appropriate, I am prepared to go to Paris to secure that bid.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Someone has to do it. That bid is an important one. When the Leader of the Opposition was Premier, he also went to Paris. Maybe those on the other side want to trivialise this, but I do not want to trivialise it and I will not. Expo 2002 is an exciting opportunity for this State. It is not a laughing matter; it is a serious matter. The previous Government made a bid for it and had our support. I note the support of the Leader of the Opposition for our bid. This is not a matter of humour; it is a matter of substance for the State. It will create employment opportunities and help us to put Queensland on the world map.

When I was in China last week, I held discussions with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade—the CCPIT—which is China's representative body on the BIE. The director, Mr Liang Xinhua, gave two indications and commitments to me: firstly, that China would support Queensland if there was a vote at the BIE; and, secondly—and this is the exciting part—that China would be a participant at Coomera. China's exhibit at Expo 1988 was one of the most exciting. I was delighted to have those assurances. There are certainly difficulties along the road in this matter, but Queenslanders need to understand that we will do everything we can to get Expo 2002. I have had full cooperation from John Moore, the former Federal Minister. He has written to me about it previously. We have been in constant contact in relation to the matter, and we have the full support of the Federal Government.

Remote Area Power Scheme

Mr JOHNSON: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: will he please explain to this House and to the people of the Barcoo Shire, whom I represent, and the people of the Boulia Shire, whom he represents, his decision to scrap the coalition Government's Remote Area Power Scheme, which would have provided the benefit of supplying power to the people of those two remote western shires?

Mr McGRADY: I thank the honourable member for the question. A similar question was directed to me during the Estimates hearings, and I was delighted to take it. When I became the Minister back in 1992, one of the first decisions I made was to conduct a pilot scheme in the Shire of Boulia to see what we could do to try to improve the power supply for those people on remote and isolated stations. I got together four people, including one lady who came from one of the properties in the

area. We also called for people to offer to allow their property to be used for the pilot scheme. Four independent people were selected to trial the scheme on their properties.

My ministerial colleague Rod Welford was the chairman of the task force that supervised the whole scheme. A great deal of money was spent by the Government on that pilot scheme. Without naming the property, I will give honourable members an example of the benefits. Whereas the people on this property used to drink Sunshine milk, they now drink fresh milk. Whereas they used to drink a cool stubbie, they now drink a cold stubbie. Whereas they used to use fans of a night-time, they now have airconditioning.

Upon becoming the Minister after the recent State election, I discovered that \$5m had been allocated to bring grid power to some of the properties in Boulia. When I read the Budget papers of the former Government—the Budget that was never passed by this Parliament—I noted that \$5m was to be spent in this financial year. I asked the question: "But what happens next year, the year after and the year after that?" The reply I received was, "Tom gave some commitment and he threw in \$5m."

I have left \$1m in that particular Vote. Bringing grid power to the isolated properties of Barcoo, Boulia and other remote places around Queensland would cost approximately \$94m. If the previous Government had been sincere, it would have allocated \$5m this year, X amount of money next year and so on. That never happened. What I am saying to the member and the people of the Barcoo, Boulia and other places is that \$1m is there. Some time this week I will be having a meeting with the chief executive officer and the mayor. I now have an Office of Sustainable Energy in my department, which has \$10m allocated to it. I assure this House that that will be a priority of the work of this new office.

Police Numbers

Mrs ATTWOOD: I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: could he please advise the House whether the Beattie Government is on track to achieve the police number targets committed to by Labor prior to the recent election? In particular, could the Minister please advise on any recent graduations and their benefit to Queensland?

Mr BARTON: The Beattie Labor Government is well on the way to fulfilling its election commitment of providing 1,061 additional officers over the next three years.

Police numbers are growing at a rate not seen since the first years of the Goss Labor Government. This year alone, numbers will grow by at least 317 officers. This is the first year that growth will exceed the average needed for the Police Service to reach its 2005 target of 9,100—many more than were put in place under the previous Government. To achieve this 2005 target, we will ensure that we will have a net gain of between 300 and 400 new constables each year. But there is one difficulty, and one difficulty only, with having so many new officers being put through the training program, and that is that those enormous increases sometimes can mean that we may have a shortage of experienced officers as the relatively new officers begin to outnumber those experienced officers already in the service.

One of the many ways in which we can address this issue—and we are doing so effectively—is through the induction of experienced police officers, better known as "retreads". Last week I attended an induction parade for 22 police retreads at the Oxley Police Academy. The utilisation of the previous experience of these officers from jurisdictions across the country and indeed across the world is vital to the Queensland Police Service. As old hands at police work, they are expected to rise quickly through the ranks to senior positions and become tomorrow's leaders for the many batches of new recruits as they come through over the next three years. Their recruitment in this State comes at a time when most other Police Services in Australia are contracting in size.

The Queensland Police Service is expanding—and I repeat: expanding—at a rate not seen since the Goss years. Two officers inducted came from as far away as New Zealand and South Africa. One was a police superintendent in South Africa. Along with those recruited from other States, they realise that their career prospects and chances of advancement are better in Queensland.

Areas right throughout Queensland will benefit from the placement of those 22 recruits. The Gold Coast will receive five; Logan district, one; Cairns district, two; Rockhampton, two; Maryborough, one; Redcliffe, two; Toowoomba, one; metropolitan north, four; and metropolitan south, four. The placement of those recruits comes on top of the participants in two recent induction parades, one from the Oxley Police Academy of 135 and one from the north Queensland campus in Townsville of 36, who are already working in police stations right across

Queensland, and there are a lot more yet to come.

Electricity Costs

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Mines and Energy to an announcement by the former Minister for Mines and Energy regarding the coalition Government's decision to reduce electricity costs for patients requiring home oxygen support and kidney dialysis. I also refer him to concerns raised by patients who are justifiably angry that these reductions have not yet been passed on by his Government. I ask: why has he delayed the introduction of this very important initiative?

Mr McGRADY: I agree entirely with what the member is saying. Negotiations are taking place between my ministerial colleague's department and mine as to how this scheme will operate, and we hope to be able to make a joint announcement in the not-too-distant future.

Surf-lifesaving Movement

Mr WILSON: I ask the Minister for Emergency Services: could she inform the House of the accuracy or otherwise of a recent newspaper report which suggested that there was no link between the surf-lifesaving movement and the rate of drowning deaths?

Mrs ROSE: Any suggestion such as that contained in a front-page article of the Gold Coast Bulletin last week that our thousands of surf-lifesavers have no impact on the number of beach drownings is ludicrous. Tens of thousands of Queenslanders and visitors to our State owe their lives to our surf-lifesavers. The fact that there has not been a drowning death between the flags on a patrolled beach in Queensland speaks volumes for the work of our surf-lifesavers. Anyone suggesting that they are not a main contributing factor to this proud statistic is living in a dream. Surf-lifesavers have saved more than 71,000 lives over the past 60 years on Queensland beaches. Last year alone, they saved 2,819 lives on our beaches. They also performed 55,937 preventive actions before a rescue was needed, 18,033 first-aid treatments and 42 live-saving resuscitations.

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

PRIVILEGE

Callide C Power Station

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (11.30 a.m.): Mr Speaker, I rise on

a matter of privilege suddenly arising. This morning in question time the Leader of the Opposition repeatedly asserted that I gave a direction to the board of CS Energy in relation to the Callide power project. He further claimed that the alleged direction was in secret correspondence. On both counts the Leader of the Opposition has misled the House. I refer to section 133 of the Government Owned Corporations Act, which states, inter alia—

"A GOC's board must—

- (a) keep the shareholding Ministers reasonably informed of the operations, financial performance and financial position of the GOC and its subsidiaries, including the assets and liabilities, profits and losses and prospects of the GOC and its subsidiaries; and
- (b) give to the shareholding Ministers reports and information that they require to enable them to make informed assessments of matters mentioned in paragraph (a)"

In order to expose the Leader of the Opposition's latest conspiracy theory, I now table a copy of the so-called secret letter, signed by the Honourable Minister for Mines and Energy and me as shareholding Ministers. The letter was sent to Mr G. N. Harley, chairman of CS Energy Limited. I table the letter. As honourable members can now see, the letter sought information from CS Energy. It contained no direction to the CS Energy board. As I stated this morning, the letter was written pursuant to my responsibilities as a shareholding Minister, pursuant to section 133 of the Government Owned Corporations Act. I will continue to do my duty as a responsible Minister under that Act.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Power Supply Industry

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.32 a.m.): That is the answer the Opposition was seeking in question time that the Treasurer was unable and too incompetent to provide.

Mr HAMILL: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition continues to mislead the House. I answered the question I was asked by the honourable member for Moggill by saying that I was carrying out my responsibilities as the shareholding Minister. The Leader of the Opposition's claims are false.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We are debating the issue now.

Mr HAMILL: The Leader of the Opposition's claims are false, they are offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Honourable Leader of the Opposition will withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: I didn't ask the Treasurer a question this morning.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Honourable Leader of the Opposition will withdraw the words that the Treasurer finds offensive.

Mr BORBIDGE: I will, but I did not ask the Treasurer a question this morning.

Mr HAMILL: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the remarks that he just made. I gave a clear answer to the member for Moggill this morning. I did not suggest that the Leader of the Opposition asked me a question. I said that he repeatedly asserted wrong information. That is for the record.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Honourable the Leader of the Opposition will withdraw those words.

Mr BORBIDGE: I think he should see an analyst, but if he is upset I will withdraw. The status of the Queensland power supply industry needs to be accurately described to the people of this State. They deserve to and must know the truth behind the fact that we have a Government which cannot guarantee to keep the lights on.

I do have some empathy with the view that Queenslanders do not care how we have gotten into this situation but that they want the problem fixed. We are only going to get the problem fixed if the Government of the day understands what the problem is, because only then can it take the appropriate action. If it gets the problem wrong, and therefore the answer wrong, we will be in for not only a tight summer but a tight situation for years, with blackouts becoming a standard part of life in this State.

That is precisely the direction in which this Government is heading. It tells us that the problem is maintenance and the structure of the industry. That is nonsense! Only the Minister for Mines and Energy and a trade union affiliated with the Labor Party is on that tram. That assertion is denied by the industry whenever it is put up. It is in fact a deliberate untruth to try to divert attention from the real cause of the problem, which is that there is simply insufficient generating capacity to handle peak demand. That is the pathetic situation our State is in.

How did we go from being a State where traditionally there has been a workable reserve plant margin to one in which we can now count spare megawatts on our fingers? We have the problem because the last time the Labor Party was in power in this State it ignored repeated warnings that unless it took firm decisions in 1991 there would be a power shortage in this State from 1997. That highly specific and expert warning was given by the then Queensland Electricity Commission to the Government-appointed task force, then examining whether to proceed with the Tully/Millstream project.

The facts are essentially and briefly these. In December 1989, Labor inherited a plan for the future security of electricity supply in this State which, left alone, ensured reliability of supply until about now. The National Party Government of the mid to late 1980s had committed to construction of the 1,400-megawatt coal-fired station at Stanwell and had committed to the construction of 600 megawatts of peaking power at Tully/Millstream. Stanwell was planned to come on line as needed through the first half of the 1990s and Tully/Millstream in about 1997 to meet what was then expected to be a shortfall in peak generating capacity. So in 1989 the conservatives had the bases covered for Queensland power consumers right through to the end of this decade. That is precisely the sort of planning that has to be engaged in.

Labor stopped Tully/Millstream in February 1990 and then for years ignored the warnings that if it did not replace that capacity the State would have a power crisis towards the end of the 1990s, and most likely from 1997. The fact is that the amount of time needed for major new generation projects is seven to eight years for coal, about six years for gas and about three years for distillate.

In 1991 Labor did nothing. In 1992 Labor did nothing. In 1993 Labor did nothing. In 1994 Labor did nothing. In 1995 Labor panicked. It finally worked out that it had placed the State in a position where a power crisis from at least 1997 was a certainty, and it finally cobbled together a few projects, none of which was ever going to have any impact on the 1997 crunch period, which were always going to be too little, too late for 1998.

The QEC warnings of 1991 were absolutely right. The peak load of last summer left reserve capacity of some 18.6%, or fully about 10% less than the amount of reserve capacity the QEC had long warned was the absolute minimum for a reasonable level of

confidence. We have equipment failing—not because it is not properly maintained but because it is being asked to work too hard for too little. We are measuring reserve capacity in a number of megawatts that can be counted on one's fingers. That is the situation and it is important to establish, because if the problem is not acknowledged—this Minister will not acknowledge the problem—then it will not be fixed.

In the medium and longer term the problem will get worse, not better. I generously restrict that danger period to the medium and the longer term, because in the shorter term the coalition's cavalry is coming to the rescue. Unlike Labor, the coalition acted immediately on coming to office. Within three weeks we had called tenders for 400 megawatts of power that will come on stream hopefully in January, which will start to rebuild reserve capacity to a viable margin.

We cannot alter the situation in the interim, but from the very first year over which we had any influence whatsoever as generators of power we did. Next year another 303 megawatts of power resulting from coalition tenders will come on stream at Oakey, with another 500 megawatts via Westlink from 2001. Also, 840 megawatts from the CS Energy/Shell project, for 840 megawatts at Callide, will start to come on line.

But the very great and the very real concern is that we are already seeing from this second Labor Government this decade the exact same irresponsibility towards the power industry that it displayed first time around. In 1990, the project it moved to stop—Tully/Millstream—was a 600-megawatt project. In 1998 the project it wanted to stop was 840 megawatts at Callide C and the expansion at Tarong. The Callide project was committed when we left office and is crucial for security of power supply in this State from 2001 or 2002.

If Labor was to stop that project, as it twice tried to do on the instructions of the de facto Premier, the member for Capalaba, then it would have to replace those megawatts, and the same goes for Tarong. This Government wants to stop that project as well and will have a much better chance because it is at the feasibility stage. The Premier has explained his reasons very candidly. Callide and Tarong, he said, would produce relatively cheap electricity, but the Premier, playing commercial favourites and trying to pick winners, favours more expensive power from another project which might or might not proceed even if he were successful in stopping Callide and/or Tarong.

We have an inspector of police in court describing the Minister for Mines and Energy as "irrational". The same description fits the Deputy Premier in regard to his intervention in respect of the electricity industry in this State. The same description fits the Government in relation to the Callide/Tarong/Chevron equation. This is Labor amateur interventionism at its very worst. I just say to the Minister and to the Government that they will not fix the problems that we have today by ignoring the problems that Queensland experienced in the early nineties.

We have seen admissions that this Government tried to stop Callide C. It called for the contracts and the lawyers said, "You cannot stop it." So this Government called for the contracts again and it went to other lawyers to see if it could stop Callide C, and it could not. We are seeing a Government that is playing favourites, a Government that is prepared to intervene—to intervene artificially—in the electricity generating capacity of this State to play commercial favourites for the Chevron project.

Time expired.

Multiculturalism

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (11.42 a.m.): Today I would like to present to the Parliament a definitive statement about the progress to date of the Multicultural Queensland Policy. When in Opposition, we said that there had to be a new direction in multicultural affairs in this State. Within a few weeks of Government, a new Multicultural Queensland Policy had been developed and launched by the Premier in August at the Multicultural Community Leaders Forum held in Brisbane.

The new policy is about access. All Queenslanders should enjoy equitable access to services and programs. It is about participation. All Queenslanders should enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from all aspects of life in Queensland. It is about cohesion. All Queenslanders should share responsibility for the continuing development of Queensland as a cohesive, harmonious society.

The State Budget identifies a total budget allocation to Multicultural Affairs Queensland of \$3,793,000 for the financial year 1998-99. This includes an allocation for the management of the Multicultural Affairs Queensland program and the Yungaba administration program. A total of \$1,443,000 has been allocated to the

Multicultural Affairs Queensland program, which is made up of a local area multicultural partnership, and that is some \$525,000—and I will expand on that program in a later speech—multicultural assistance programs, some \$445,000; and the ethnic school program of some \$130,000. Other grants include the International Year of Older Persons program, \$150,000; the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters subsidy, \$64,000; Commonwealth/State joint research, \$9,000; the Ethnic Community Council of Queensland, a grant of \$100,000; and the Arts Council, \$20,000. The remainder is allocated to: Yungaba, \$581,247; and the Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland \$1,767,706.

I have established the interdepartmental committee on multicultural affairs, chaired by the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The interdepartmental committee, which has already met, works to ensure consistency in implementation of the principles and strategies of the Multicultural Queensland Policy across Government. Of particular importance to me will be what agencies deliver for regional multicultural Queensland. Through working parties chaired by relevant portfolio representatives, the committee also develops supporting strategies including those on multicultural opportunities in trade, investment and business. With this in mind, the Government is calling together leading business people from the Queensland multicultural community to meet and work through a range of ideas and initiatives which can lead to more jobs for Queenslanders.

I mentioned before Government agencies. The new policy includes the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society, which has been endorsed by this Government and by Ministers at the Commonwealth, State and Territory levels and by local government leaders. Government service providers in Queensland need to have a reporting mechanism in place which ensures they are accountable for implementing the policy, for example, on an annual basis reporting on what and how they have achieved under this policy. The Office of Multicultural Affairs Queensland—the Public Service—has been given more strategic responsibility by me to work with all Government agencies.

MAQ, better known as Multicultural Affairs Queensland, will assist these agencies to implement the new policy and monitor other agencies. Under the policy, all Government agencies are expected by this Government to provide the necessary resources from their

own budgets to meet the following core principles of this policy. One of the keys if not the key aspect of the policy is community consultation. Since I became the Parliamentary Secretary with carriage of Multicultural Affairs for the Government, I have assumed an inclusive approach. By this I mean that I have had an open-door policy to meet with both individuals and community groups in relation to what the policy covers and, for that matter, what the policy does not cover.

Can I just share with you, Mr Deputy Speaker, some of my experiences to date such as the day three community women put to me that they wanted this Government to ensure that equitable outcomes needed to be a focus for a multicultural Queensland and that issues relating to settlement of newly arrived migrants and racism be addressed. Moreover, they said that the Government, communities and service providers should develop culturally inclusive programs and services to ensure that newly arrived immigrants are taken into the fold of our society and are not subjected to racism or discriminated against. While visiting a learning support facility for newly arrived immigrant students, the point was made to me that racism also exists within the multicultural community and that collectively we have to help the multicultural community to deal with this particular aspect of intraracism.

Another perspective I see as critically important to the new policy is that of including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as part of the Queensland multicultural fraternity. Clearly, though, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are special to this place. With my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I want to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait people feel that they can be part of multicultural Queensland and share the fruits of a Multicultural Queensland Policy. As the Premier indicated at the Multicultural Community Leaders Forum in August, the Government is committed to doing something about racial vilification. To this end, work is well under way to either amend legislation under the current Anti-Discrimination Act or possibly write new legislation for the Parliament. I will keep honourable members informed of this matter as it progresses.

Let me say that since June I have met with 91 delegations, most of which have come from the multicultural community, including those I met with at Community Cabinet sessions around the State. I am also well into

a schedule of meetings with a number of lord mayors about how the policy will assist local government authorities to access funds under the Local Area Multicultural Partnership Program of this policy. The LAMP Program implements the major strategic component of the cultural diversity support strategy.

I am also in the process of inviting key multicultural community representatives to work with me in a multicultural task force to monitor the implementation of the Multicultural Queensland Policy. This task force would complement the work done by the interdepartmental committee on multicultural affairs. I am looking to the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland to assume a far more comprehensive leadership role under this policy.

There are specific areas of need under the policy which need to be addressed. These include: support for new and emerging multicultural groups to access legal and justice services, health, education, housing, training and employment and other areas; and recognition of the special needs of women from diverse backgrounds. I believe that the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, together with other lead multicultural community organisations, can assist to build the capacity of communities to more participate in the new policy. Through the provision of funding under the policy, the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland can also help the Government to assist these new and emerging organisations to actively participate in the consultation and planning that Government agencies, including local government, undertake to improve their service delivery capacity.

In conclusion, I have to say that, like the Premier, I am fully committed to multiculturalism. We have to send a clear signal to all Queenslanders—and to all Australians, for that matter—and overseas that our State is about strength in cultural diversity. Significantly, the multicultural community throughout Queensland has warmly received the new Multicultural Queensland Policy, as I hope all members of this Parliament have done.

Water Storage, Irvinebank

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (11.51 a.m.): Fair and equitable treatment by Government departments is totally necessary for the public to have faith in their system of government. Currently, people have no faith in our system, and one of the reasons is that

Government departments are often heavy-handed, unfair and unjust in their decisions. In the Army, we had an RSM who was there, for all intents and purposes, to protect the men from the officers. He was there as a buffer. And trust me; I used him quite often. This system has worked in the Army for centuries and provides not only a buffer for the common soldier but also a buffer for the officers from the soldiers themselves.

I believe that the Minister responsible for a Government department should take on the role of an RSM and act as a buffer between the people and his department. As an elected member—a member who was put there by people in his electorate—he should have some sort of feeling about what the people of Queensland are going through, and he should provide a service to the people of Queensland in interpreting their feelings to the department. He should be there to ensure that citizens are protected from what they perceive to be a cold and sometimes heartless Public Service in their pursuit of economic rationalism.

Today, when giving notice of a motion, I listened to some interjections from Government members to the effect that what I was saying was really damaging stuff. I am not here to damage the Government. I am not here to try to do any underhand and nasty stuff. I am here to get answers for people in my electorate. What I sought today was an answer to a question. As the Minister for Mines and Energy clearly stated, this has been an issue for many, many years—a lot longer than 10 years. No resolution has been obtained by him or by previous Ministers. Both sides of the House are implicated in this. I asked for an answer. I did not come in here to move a motion of no confidence in the Government. I did not come in here screaming and yelling. I asked for some answers, and I asked for some fair treatment.

This is why people are dissatisfied with their Government. This is why the voters of Queensland turned against both parties at the last State election. That is why 1.2 million people in Australia voted against the current party system in this country. The simple fact is that the people are dissatisfied with the lack of accountability. Today the Minister made an outrageous statement that the people are not interested in who is to blame. That is one of the most incredible things that I have heard here today, and I have heard some pretty incredible things. The fact is that the people are interested in who is to blame. The people are seeking answers, and they are seeking those answers because they are hurting

directly from the decisions made by Government in the pursuit of economic rationalism. To say that they do not want to know who perpetrated these acts and that they want the situation resolved is partly true. Yes, they want the situation resolved and they want it resolved fairly and justly. That is when I come to another important fact.

Yes, the Government may have a legal leg to stand on in doing what it is doing. I accept that, legally, yes, the Government may have a point—although I would like to see that debated by a QC. But the simple fact is that what the Government is doing is not fair. When people come to my electorate office, I do not ask them where they are from, what they do or anything like that. I listen to their case and I ask myself: is it fair, or is it not fair? And nine times out of 10, the cases that they bring to me are simply not fair. If a citizen of this country cannot expect fair treatment from his or her Government and cannot expect answers and situations to be resolved in less than 10 years by successive Governments and by different Ministers, then what are we? We are not a Government for the people, of the people, by the people; we are a ruling dictatorship that goes about heavy-handed actions, making decisions with total disregard for people's feelings and what they are going through.

This is especially pertinent in the township of Irvinebank—a once-thriving town that lived on the tin mining industry, which was supplied by independent miners; it had nothing to do with big business. It was totally people driven—jobs, jobs, jobs and all that sort of stuff. It was in the heart of the Atherton Tableland in an incredibly remote and rural area. That area has been totally and utterly destroyed, not by economic rationalism or by a loss of income or by a loss of markets; it has been totally destroyed by Governments. That is what it is all about. That is why One Nation is here today. But I am continually amazed that no-one listens. Even right here and right now, I could be talking to the walls. No-one is listening. That is why I was sent here to this Parliament.

Mr SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. I was listening very carefully to the member for Tablelands.

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

Mr NELSON: There probably is a point of order.

An honourable member: Don't argue with the Chair.

Mr NELSON: I should not argue with the Chair. However, there are a few members—but I should not be so——

Mr Hamill: Presumptuous?

Mr NELSON:—glib as to lump everyone into the same bag. I am sure that there are members of the Government—because we all know that the Labor Party is factional—who do listen, who do care and who do have some genuine interest in this issue.

I want to put it on record here and now, before we debate that motion tonight, that all I seek—and this is totally pertinent to the subject matter of this Matters of Public Interest debate—are some answers and some fair and just treatment. This is not going to bring down any Ministers or cost the Government votes. As a matter of fact, the people who brought this to me are staunch Labor supporters. Anyone can look at the record of voting in Irvinebank and see that. The simple fact is that it is going to provide some fair treatment for the people of my electorate. Not only that, it might wise up some of the hard hearts sitting opposite and on this side of the House.

I am here as a messenger from the people of Queensland and the people of Tablelands—like it or not—and so are the other 10 members sitting around me. Our message is that what is going on in this country is not working. The people are not happy. That is blatantly obvious to me, regardless of politics, and it is blatantly obvious to many people—1.2 million people in the Federal election and 428,000 people in the State election. The numbers are there. The attitude is there. What they are saying is, "Wake up and listen. Hear what we have to say. And in the Matters of Public Interest debate, please provide to us the Government that we deserve." I also want to put on record that, if the Government does not do this, if it continues to take away people's jobs, if economic rationalism drives people to unemployment queues, if people can no longer hope for any sort of guaranteed success in their future, and, on top of all the hardship that they already have to deal with, if they have their political voice taken away from them, as a person who has studied history, I ask: what are the outcomes of that? Every single time people have had that done to them, the outcomes have been horrendous for the Government and for the country that has imposed those things onto the people.

I bear a second warning to this Parliament: do not continue to harass, deride and denounce the vote for my party, the vote against the party system, the vote against

economic rationalism, the vote against privatisation and the vote against the current direction of successive Governments in this country and do listen, because, if members continue to ignore the people of this State and the people of Australia who are discontented and not happy with what is going on in their country, members risk a lot more than a loss at an election or a loss of votes; they risk the ultimate sacrifice any Government can pay, that is, the loss of control over the attitudes of the people of this country and the loss of direction of this country as a whole.

Personally, I will not stand here and watch my democracy and a country of which I am an incredibly proud citizen be destroyed by Government attitude and Government inaction. I ask for answers to my questions, not rhetoric. I do not expect to be patronised and put down; I expect answers to legitimate questions. I expect them not as a member of Parliament but as a citizen who votes and who expects the Government to be totally open, transparent and accountable.

Multiculturalism

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (12.01 p.m.): Recently I attended a function at the Italian Centre to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the acceptance of the policy of multiculturalism in Australia. We celebrated 25 years of cultural diversity, increasing social harmony and a sense of belonging. Twenty-five years ago, the policy of multiculturalism received bipartisan support from both sides of the Commonwealth Parliament. Today, the fabric of multiculturalism is under serious threat. It is threatened by the advent of One Nation, which is creating social division focused on the issues of cultural diversity and race. That has led to the scapegoating both of immigrants and the policy of multiculturalism. Social cohesion is also threatened by Government policies that stress global competitiveness and a competition policy that has been embraced irrespective of its impact on citizens and society and that has led to the acceptance of increasing levels of unemployment and sharply declining levels of job security.

Throughout my political career I have been a staunch defender of multiculturalism. For 25 years, multiculturalism has succeeded in addressing the questions of settlement, cultural diversity and social cohesion. During the 1950s and 1960s, the official Government policy for migrants was that of assimilation, that is, of becoming similar. It was generally accepted. An indication of that is that I willingly

became Jim rather than my Greek name Dimitri. Throughout my years at school, university and the workplace, it became fundamentally important for me to belong. As a result, I wanted to contribute and play a meaningful role in shaping the cultural, social and economic fabric of my adopted country.

There can be no doubt that one's culture is shaped by one's environment. It is my belief that cultural differences are skin deep only. Cultures simply derive from different life experiences. During the 1970s, the process of assimilation was replaced by one of integration. That led to the bipartisan support for the policy of multiculturalism. Back then, as now, those opposed to multiculturalism made their voices heard. In 1979, six years after integration had been accepted and multiculturalism endorsed nationally, the then Queensland Minister responsible for migrant affairs, Norm Lee, attacked multiculturalism. He used the very arguments that are being used today. He argued that—

"We shouldn't have two kinds of Australians—those born here and those from overseas who make no effort to slot into our community. They remain more involved with their own ethnic background than with their own heritage."

In another comment Norm Lee said—

"Some migrants are confused, spending all their time in their own ethnic groups, speaking their own native language always, and making no effort to live like ordinary Australians."

In 1979 as the member for South Brisbane I made a speech in the Queensland Parliament to rebut those claims, a rebuttal that I think is still very relevant in the current political climate. I said—

"What is the Minister saying? Is he saying that all migrants should adopt the language and culture of Australia? Is he virtually ascribing to assimilation rather than integration?"

Does he not understand that cultures evolve and enrich themselves by drawing on the resources of other cultures around them? In any case, can the Minister define to me what Australian culture is? Migrants who come to Australia make a conscious choice in doing so. They want to belong. They want to be Australian. They want to contribute to making this a great nation. They accept that their first duty as Australian citizens must be to Australia. But an Australian-Italian is simply that. He cannot stop being Italian

and become Australian as the Minister stated.

We live in a nation that is a migrant nation in that forty percent of our population are the products of post war migration. We have come together, the new and the old, to build a new Australian society.

If this society is to work and become great we must learn to respect each other's ideas, cultures, and lifestyles.

We can learn from each other, and make choices of what to accept from our own culture."

During 1979, Norm Lee, then the Minister responsible for migrant affairs was also quoted as saying that he saw no room in Australia for a multilingual society as it created divided loyalties. I responded to that in Parliament by saying—

"If we force migrants to reject their language, we will deny them the dignity that they desire so much. Taking away their language says to them that they have nothing worthwhile to contribute. It forces migrant communities defensively in upon themselves."

It is only with the short-sighted policies of assimilation that we create in Australia exactly the situation of hate and suspicion in which Norm Lee in 1979 and since 1996 Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party expressed their fears of the creation of divisiveness.

With regard to concerns being expressed then and now about language, I said in my 1979 speech that we cannot accept multiculturalism unless we accept multilingualism. We would be saying that all we have to gain from other cultures is a few recipes, some exotic dances and cheap labour. It would reduce multiculturalism to pizzas, the Zorba dance and factory fodder.

The backlash against multiculturalism gained substantial momentum in 1996 with the election of Pauline Hanson. The year 1996 was a year of distressing social division that focused on the issues of cultural diversity and race. The pathetic leadership shown by John Howard during that time has led to the continuing questioning of the benefits of multiculturalism.

The opponents of diversity need to understand that the aim of multiculturalism is to break down the us-and-them syndrome rather than to divide. The role of multiculturalism is to create a cohesive society that values unity in diversity, community

harmony and a sense of belonging. It is important to understand that Pauline Hanson and One Nation have not caused social unrest but capitalised on it. An article written by Bob Ellis in the Sydney Morning Herald commented on the substantial One Nation vote in the 1998 Queensland election. I have heard many times in this House that over 400,000 Queenslanders voted for One Nation. Bob Ellis reflected on the split personality of One Nation. He called one half the savage half and the other the civilising half. He said that the savage half is obviously associated with guns, Aborigines, hanging and putting Asians on a boat and sending them home. The civilising half voted for One Nation as a protest against economic rationalism that favours profit over people. Globalisation and competition policies reject the economic goal of equity in favour of the single goal of efficiency. Such economic rationalism is used to justify higher unemployment levels, destroys job security, has created havoc in regional Australia and, as a consequence, has impacted very adversely on our society and social cohesion.

It has been estimated that fewer than 30% of Australian workers are globally competitive. That means more than 70% do not have the available skills to compete successfully in a globalised market. For those workers, Government must play a protective role in shielding them from a loss of income and social capability. It is unfortunate that the bosses have declared war on their workers and that they are winning. The greed of the shareholder is immeasurable in today's world. It is the job of Government to protect those who cannot protect themselves from the impact of globalisation and competition policy with new forms of Government intervention which will deliver economic certainty and social inclusiveness.

The increasing inequities of wealth distribution that the developed world has experienced during the past two decades must not be allowed to continue. We cannot continue with that disparity of wealth, with the top end of town getting all the cake and people having great difficulty with their job insecurity. The pursuit of the common good, respect for human dignity and a fair go should be part of any civilised agenda. Now more than ever, political leadership is vital to encourage economic certainty as well as a common commitment to mutual understanding, respect for diversity, tolerance and a great pride in being Australian. People need to understand that economic inequality and economic security have the propensity to divide Australians—not a discriminatory

immigration policy that gives Asians equal access to Australia nor the level of immigration that creates jobs rather than destroying the jobs of those already in Australia.

People such as refugees who have already lost one home should not be threatened with the loss of their new home. It saddens me that refugees have been particularly targeted by One Nation. The half a million refugees who have already come to Australia have helped to make our country stronger, richer and more interesting than it otherwise would be. Our view of refugees should not turn solely on calculations of self-interest. We are supposed to stand for human liberty and we must sometimes defend our principles at a cost to ourselves.

In conclusion, the detractors of cultural diversity claim that it is not the role of Government to fund separate "tribes". Nor should it be. However, opponents of diversity need to understand that the aim of multiculturalism is to break down the us-and-them syndrome rather than divide. The role of multiculturalism is to create a strongly cohesive society that enjoys community harmony and has a sense of belonging—a society committed to one Australia; a multicultural Australia which, in every sense, Australia truly is.

CJC Investigation into Allegations of Misconduct by Member for Nerang

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (12.10 p.m.): I rise to inform this House that the CJC has finally conducted its investigation concerning the alleged appointment of Pat O'Connor as a consultant. I table a letter from the CJC to that effect. Members may remember that on 24 April last year I resigned from my ministerial portfolio as a direct result of an article that appeared on the front page of the Courier-Mail. That article was headed, "Minister faces CJC misconduct investigation over consultancy." The article stated—

"Housing Minister Ray Connor's role in a controversial consultancy deal for a former government adviser will be investigated by the Criminal Justice Commission."

Members may also recall that, in turn, there followed in the Parliament a series of allegations by members opposite. Those allegations could be summed up generally as being that the consultancy was a sham and that the payment of Mr Patrick O'Connor was simply laundered through a solicitor's trust account. Unbeknown to me at the time, the

acting Labor Leader, Jim Elder, made a formal complaint to the CJC. The first I was aware of this complaint was a front-page story in the Courier-Mail the following April. In that article, the head of the Official Misconduct Division, Mr Michael Barnes, was quoted as the "CJC spokesman" who confirmed that "there was an ongoing investigation into the matter."

It is Liberal Party tradition that a Minister under investigation by a judicial or semijudicial body such as the CJC should stand down. Owing to the media coverage and in the best interests of my family and the coalition, I not only stood down but also resigned from my portfolio. On the basis that it has caused my resignation as a Minister of the Crown, members, in common with me, would have assumed that the investigation into this consultancy would have been expedited—that it would have been completed quickly and the findings announced publicly.

That was not the case. Members may recall that the complaint was made in December 1996. It is now October 1998—almost two years since the complaint was made. What is of most concern to me, and has been since the newspaper article appeared, is the fact that, ever since, Barnes has been in charge of the investigation. Right from the start I have complained of Barnes' involvement in this investigation and the inexcusable delays. Through my lawyer, I brought to Mr Clair's attention Mr Barnes' direct involvement in the story leaking to the press and Barnes' political affiliations. I also detailed to the CJC Senator Abetz's complaint that Mr Barnes had misled a Senate committee by concealing his membership of the Labor Lawyers Association. That is dealt with in Senate Hansard of 31 May 1995. Barnes said—

"I am not a member of the Labor Lawyers and am not and never have been a member of any political party."

I table the relevant passages of Hansard. Barnes has since personally acknowledged his past membership of the Labor Lawyers Association, and I am informed that Mr Barnes was not only a member of the Labor Lawyers Association but also held executive positions.

Even after Mr Clair's attention was brought to these facts, he was not prepared to remove Mr Barnes from this investigation. So we have a long-term, senior member of the Labor Lawyers Association involved directly in the leaking of sensitive information to the media that brought about the demise of a coalition Minister. In turn, Mr Barnes was placed in charge of an investigation into the

same Minister. It was not only totally inappropriate that a Labor operative be investigating this matter but also, given Barnes' involvement in the leaking of the information, it was incomprehensible that he would be allowed to continue. Throw in Mr Barnes' performance before the Senate committee and the whole thing is absurd. Is it any wonder that Barnes dragged this on for two years?

There is now a new twist to all of this. Even if the events that were complained of were proven, they did not—and I repeat, they did not—constitute official misconduct on the part of any elected official. That is not just my advice; that is the opinion of the CJC itself. The questions are: when did the CJC become aware of this and why did it take almost two years for it to come out?

I have languished on the backbench now for approximately 18 months as a direct result of this matter. I have had to face a party preselection and an election with the public perception that I was under investigation by the CJC for improper conduct. On a number of occasions, Mr Clair was informed of the urgent need to have this matter finalised. A dozen or more letters have gone each way between my lawyers and the CJC trying to expedite the finalisation of this investigation. Only now, when there are days to go before Mr Clair retires as chair of the CJC, is this matter being finalised. One wonders why all of a sudden there is some urgency.

I have now made a formal complaint to the PCJC about the issues surrounding this investigation. Did Mr Barnes have the advice that there was no case to answer locked in a safe? Is this another case like that of the Carruthers inquiry, when Messrs Cooper and Borbidge were put through a multimillion-dollar witch-hunt while the CJC also had similar advice locked in a safe? Has the CJC's much-belated completion of the inquiry into this matter more to do with Mr Clair's retirement? Are they afraid that the incoming chairman may have an attitude totally different from the way in which this matter was handled?

Probably the most concerning aspect of this whole sorry affair is that the CJC had not only not found any evidence to prove that the consultancy was improper but also that, even if the events that were alleged were true, it would not constitute official misconduct. The leaking of this story to the press ended my ministerial career. According to the Courier-Mail, the publication of the investigation—

"... was enough to tip"—

my—

"career over the edge, towards the back bench and, most probably, on to the political scrap heap."

So what the CJC spent almost two years investigating, even if it had found it to be true, would not have amounted to official misconduct on my part. I will sum up the matter. Mr Barnes, a Labor operative who was directly involved in the leaking of this investigation to the press, proceeds to investigate me. Mr Barnes and his subordinates then spend almost two years and, quite obviously, spend hundreds of times more than the original consultancy cost investigating an alleged act that, even if they had found that it had been true, would not have constituted any unlawful conduct or official misconduct on my part.

The CJC has not found that the consultancy was a sham. The consultancy was an election commitment and the matters that the CJC investigated did not give rise to suspicions of official misconduct. The consultancy was of low cost—\$10,000—and was awarded and conducted totally in accordance with the State Purchasing Policy. However, the most important questions still remain unanswered. Why did I lose my Ministry as a result? Why did the CJC allow Barnes to spend almost two years investigating this matter?

It is now only reasonable for Mr Barnes to stand down, as I did, from any position at the CJC while the PCJC investigation is under way. Hopefully for him, the PCJC will not take two years to investigate his involvement in this investigation and the leaking of the information to the Courier-Mail.

Average Age of Members of Parliament

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (12.18 p.m.): I welcome the announcement today of the new Federal shadow Cabinet. I think members will agree that it is a youthful, reinvigorated team poised to take Government at the next election. In particular, it has a very strong representation from Queensland Labor members. Clearly, that new shadow Ministry, having an average age of 45, is the future of Australia. In comparison, despite a substantial reshuffle, the tired old Howard Government still has an average age of 50. In this place, the average age of members, calculated from data published in the biographical guide to members that was distributed to electorate offices recently, is 48.1 years.

The member for Tablelands has complained long and loud about this place being ageist, particularly when the Speaker, the Honourable Ray Hollis, was elected to his high office. Of course, he was elected to that high office because of his experience and many years of good service to this place. I rise to inform members that this is in fact not the case as far as Labor members are concerned. The average age of Government members is 45.95 years, compared to the average age of coalition members which is 51.78 years. On average, Labor members are some five years younger than members opposite.

Mr Briskey: And more intelligent, too.

Mr MUSGROVE: And, dare I say, possibly a little more good looking, energetic and enthusiastic with a genuine vigour for government.

Mr Briskey: And caring.

Mr MUSGROVE: Indeed. Clearly, this is a Government for today and for the next millennium. This is a Government of energy and enthusiasm, not a Government that is past its prime and waiting to be put out to pasture. I trust that members of the coalition will lobby the Howard Government to ensure that there are enough nursing home places for them in the not-too-distant future.

A Government member: They'll have to pay.

Mr MUSGROVE: Indeed they will. Of course, members of the National Party are somewhat more mature than the rest of us, with an average age of 52.08 years. However, they had better not hobble off to retirement too soon because, while National Party shadow Ministers have an average age of 48.08 years—somewhat older than their Labor counterparts—the National Party backbench, that is, the future of the National Party, is a very fatigued 56.45 years. That is unbelievable. The future of the National Party in this place, its backbench, is some eight years older than the current shadow Ministry.

Mr Hamill: Is this a regression analysis?

Mr MUSGROVE: I will come to that. I was pleased that during the Estimates Committee B hearing the Minister for Emergency Services informed members that CPR training will be made available to all members as part of the CPR 2000 initiative. I inform members of the coalition that I will put petty politics aside and avail them of CPR should they require resuscitation. I wish members opposite good health in their old age. If a member of the National Party shadow Ministry were to drop off, chances are that he

or she would be replaced by a somewhat older member. Sadly, we all know what that means: as we grow old, we are not quite up to the responsibilities of our office at a certain point—some members more than others. Our memories may fail us. For example, the member for Southport cannot remember whether or not he was aware that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority trust fund was heading for a \$118m deficit. Thankfully, the member for Surfers Paradise, the Leader of the Opposition, has put him out to pasture, dumping him from the frontbench before he forgets how to tie his shoelaces. I am sure that members can see the problem facing the Leader of the Opposition. From his own party he must choose between members who are past their use-by dates and those who are starting to reek.

The average age of Liberal Party members in this place is 51, compared, once again, with the average age of Labor members of 45.95 years. Members may well wonder how Liberal Party shadow Ministers stack up against their backbench. Does the Liberal Party leader, the member for Moggill, face the same dilemma as his National Party counterpart, the member for Surfers Paradise? The answer is: yes and no. The Liberal Party in this place is generationally and intellectually static. The average age of Liberal Party members is 51. The average age of Liberal shadow Ministers is 51 precisely.

Mr Hamill: It's a small sample.

Mr MUSGROVE: The average age of Liberal backbenchers is also 51. When calculating those figures to the second decimal place, I was struck by the homogeneity of Liberal Party members. As of 8 October, how could the average age of Liberal Party shadow Ministers, the backbench and all Liberal Party members generally be precisely 51.00? The honourable Treasurer has hit the nail on the head. I checked the figures, I rechecked them and I came up with the same result: 51.00. As I am sure the Treasurer would appreciate, that is statistically quite unlikely. How is it possible? The answer is that there are so few Liberal Party members left in this place. Of course, the member for Clayfield, who is having a nice yak at the moment, lost his little youth wing in the last State election, including the barrel boy from Springwood. I am sure he looks forward to a good conference as he faces that loss.

While the National Party may have a backbench that is starting to dribble, at least it has enough members to achieve a bit of diversity. Of course, some members are particularly keen to cling to their youth long

past their prime. I must say that I chuckled when I saw that the member for Hervey Bay used his electorate car allowance to purchase a great big Corvette. Unfortunately the member is not present, but I wish him well in his great big car that contrasts so well with his physical and mental attributes. Some of us go doorknocking and some of us have street stalls, but the member for Hervey Bay just goes cruising.

Of course, the member for Tablelands claims that the Government is ageist for not allowing him to become Speaker in his first Parliament at the tender age of 25 years. As the youngest member of the Government and, may I also say, the youngest member of a mainstream political party that is not in fact a company, I can tell him that the important thing to remember in this place is that we are a diverse group of representatives of the Queensland community. I hope that the member will not find it condescending or ageist when I say to him: sit down, listen and you might in fact learn something.

Unemployment

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (12.28 p.m.) In the few minutes remaining, I rise to comment on the current unemployment situation in this State. It is rather ironic that after four months in which this Government has been in office, we face a situation where unemployment in Queensland has risen considerably to 9.2% for September. Of course, prior to the Government taking office, all we heard from the Labor Party was jobs, jobs, jobs. Each morning the Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, told us that the first thing he would be thinking about each morning when he woke up was jobs, and the last thing he would be thinking about each night before he went to sleep was jobs. Of course, very little more has been heard about the situation since that date.

Instead of getting on with creating jobs in the State, we have seen a blow-out in the jobless figures. It is quite alarming when one considers that unemployment in Queensland has risen from 8.6% in August to 9.2% in September, which is 0.3% higher than the 8.9% figure recorded in 1996 when the former National/Liberal coalition Government came to office. That Government generated more jobs than anywhere else in Australia. In fact, 39.2% of new jobs generated in Australia were generated in Queensland. During the coalition's term of office between February 1996 and May 1998, some 94,000 jobs were

created in Queensland. Nationally, some 239,600 jobs were created. During Labor's term of office from June 1998 to August 1998, the number of employed persons in Queensland actually decreased by some 1,800 people, while nationally the number increased by some 65,000.

The point is that this Government has turned its back on the jobless in this State. We have seen that already after its four short months in office. How soon it forgets its election commitments and undertakings to the people of this State. If the Premier had been serious about this matter, instead of being a media junkie, trying to get a headline at every turn and making statements in the media, he would have got on with the job of encouraging the private sector to create long-term jobs. The Government's Capital Works Program is \$25m less than that contained in the former coalition Government's May Budget Capital Works Program. From this Government we are seeing a lack of commitment to long-term job creation at a time when we should have such a commitment. The former National/Liberal coalition Government had that commitment. As the jobless figures blow out, we see that this Government lacks that commitment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! The time for the Matters of Public Interest debate has expired.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (12.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Industrial Development Act 1963."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (12.31 p.m.): I move—

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

The Industrial Development Amendment Bill is an important initiative aimed at supporting the establishment of businesses in Queensland and, through them, providing jobs for Queenslanders. As part of our policy statements before the last election, we gave a commitment to "ensure the provision of efficient infrastructure, including serviced industrial land, which effectively meets the changing needs of industry"—Business and Industry New Directions Statement. The introduction of this Bill affirms this Government's commitment to promoting business development in this State and meeting its election promises.

The Bill seeks to amend the Industrial Development Act 1963 by removing redundant provisions, making the methods of dealing in industrial land more efficient, and streamlining the manner in which associated funds are handled. The primary objective of the Industrial Development Act was to enable the granting of financial and certain other land-based forms of assistance to industry in Queensland. However, it is an old piece of legislation and has required significant amendment to bring it up to date, eliminate unnecessary and redundant provisions and provide the basis for the efficient and accountable administration of the industrial estates.

For example, the Industries Assistance Board was dissolved in 1986 by operation of the Queensland Industry Development Corporation Act 1985. As a result, the capacity to provide loans and loan guarantees under the Industrial Development Act has not been available since July 1986. The removal of provisions such as these will not only bring the Act up to date; it will also be a more focused and clear legislative framework for my department's land-based services under the Industry Location Scheme.

A key feature is the expansion of the definition of "industry". This will mean greater flexibility in the administration of the scheme, allowing a wider range of businesses to locate or expand on the industrial estates, creating diversity and jobs and ensuring that the businesses located there are able to access services and facilities not previously provided on the estates, such as banking services. The changes are particularly important to support the effective development of the technology parks which need a broader range of supporting infrastructure to enable them to become technology hubs for the State.

Care has been taken in developing the broader definition of "industry" to ensure that the strategic positioning of the estates is not

compromised. Each estate has a strategic development plan which defines the types of industry to be located on the estates. This ensures that mutually supportive and appropriate industry structures can be developed on the estates and will facilitate the development of clusters of businesses to gain maximum leverage for business growth and sustainability and job creation.

My department continues to address market gaps and strategic planning failures. The establishment of a commercialised business unit to deliver property services has maximised returns to Government on the Property Services Group assets, which are valued at around \$320m. Commercialisation also provides the levels of accountability in the use of these assets which the public of Queensland demands.

Whilst the majority of the amendments are aimed at cleaning up the Act and removing redundant provisions, there are a number of important amendments which seek to—

- clarify and increase the flexibility of my powers as the corporation sole of the Minister for Industrial Development so that the powers adequately reflect the stated objective and practices of the corporation;

- provide an expanded definition of "industry" to reflect contemporary industry structures and to enable the siting of supporting infrastructure, such as information technology; and

- establish a revised Industrial Estates Construction Fund in accordance with the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977 and remove the Estates Maintenance Fund to simplify financial systems and to increase accountability and transparency in the administration of the corporation's funds.

It is my view that the adoption of the amendments to the Industrial Development Act by this House will result in a more efficient and effective arrangement for the administration of the industrial estates in Queensland. These estates represent a sizeable Government asset and foster the development and expansion of industry in this State. Consequently, it is essential that they be managed in the most efficient manner possible. The objective of the Industry Location Scheme is to ensure that business and industry is encouraged to locate in Queensland because appropriately zoned land and infrastructure is available at a competitive cost. It is my firm belief that these

amendments will enable us to achieve this objective. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (12.36 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Health Act 1937 and other various Acts."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (12.37 p.m.): I move—

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

Cancer of the cervix is one of the most preventable and curable of all cancers. Despite this, 350 Australian women die each year from invasive cancer of the cervix, and a further 1,000 women undergo treatment for various forms of the disease. It has been estimated that if every woman in Australia had a Pap smear every two years, more than 90% of cancer of the cervix could be prevented. Most women who develop cancer of the cervix either have never had a Pap smear or have not had a Pap smear for many years.

Experience interstate and overseas has demonstrated that the most effective proven method of intervention to reduce the incidence rate and deaths from invasive cervical cancer is through adopting an organised approach to cervical screening of women at risk. Pap smear registries provide an essential element in the infrastructure of an organised approach to the prevention of cervical cancer. One of the main objectives of this Bill is to establish such a register in Queensland. An organised approach to cervical cancer screening and prevention requires that all aspects of the screening pathway are carried out effectively and reliably. This includes recruitment and recall, Pap smear taking and reporting, follow-

up and management of women with abnormalities and monitoring.

Cancer of the cervix is a condition where the cells of the cervix go through a number of changes before developing into cancer. During this stage the disease can be treated and cured in most cases. Early cell changes on the cervix can be detected by the Pap smear test before they develop into cancer. Cervical smears will detect abnormal cell changes which are precursors of cervical cancer. Appropriate management can then be carried out.

Screening for cancer of the cervix using the Pap smear has been available in Australia since the 1960s. However, the majority of cervical screening occurred in an opportunistic way, without well-defined coordination within and between the various components of the screening process. This unstructured approach has resulted in screening rates which are lower than desirable, particularly among indigenous women, older women and women from rural and remote communities.

In 1988 the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council established the Cervical Cancer Screening Evaluation Steering Committee. This committee was charged with reviewing existing efforts to prevent cancer of the cervix in Australia, evaluating pilot projects under way in various States and Territories and presenting options for change. All Australian States and Territories, with the exception of Queensland, currently have fully operational Pap smear registries. The Queensland Pap Smear Register will be similar to other registries in all significant respects.

This legislation seeks to achieve a balance between maximising the participation of Queensland women in the Pap Smear Register and accommodating privacy concerns by ensuring that women are made aware of their right to opt out of the register should they choose to do so. Therefore, this Bill proposes that women will automatically be included on the register unless they make a request to the contrary.

In recognition of the importance of protecting the privacy of women whose information is held on the register, the legislation imposes statutory duties of confidentiality on the employees of Queensland Health, Pap smear providers and pathology laboratories involved in collecting Pap smear information and maintaining the register. There are substantial penalties for individuals or organisations who do not comply with this duty of confidentiality.

The Queensland Pap Smear Register will be a central database of Pap smear results in Queensland. The register will contain the results of all Pap smears, normal and abnormal, and, where relevant, the results of related histology or other clinical management. The register will provide a reminder service to women overdue for a regular screening Pap smear and act as a safety net for women with abnormalities detected through screening. It will also maintain an accurate and complete history of Pap smears and cervical biopsies for Queensland women.

The register will assist individual women by providing a back-up reminder service and ensuring that women are aware of recommended follow-up action if a cervical abnormality is detected. In addition, it will provide accurate and comprehensive screening histories to health practitioners involved in the woman's clinical management and laboratories interpreting a woman's smear and making clinical management recommendations.

These services are expected to increase the number of women who regularly participate in cervical screening, improve uptake of recommended follow-up and provide information to allow health practitioners and pathology laboratories to make more informed decisions regarding the clinical management of their patients and clients.

This Bill includes another amendment to the Health Act which is also an important element in the fight against cancer. The purpose of this amendment is to improve the management of information relating to cancer currently collected by Queensland Health by transferring responsibility for the daily maintenance of the Queensland Cancer Register to the Queensland Cancer Fund.

The Queensland Cancer Register was established in 1982 in response to the need for Statewide information on cancer, which was identified by community, State and national organisations such as the National Cancer Clearing House, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research and the Queensland Cancer Fund. The main aim of the Queensland Cancer Register is to collect data to describe the nature and extent of cancer in Queensland.

The data from the Queensland Cancer Register is integral to the fight against cancer because it is used in the planning of cancer treatment and prevention services, monitoring survival times of cancer patients, assessing the outcomes of treatment, education of health professionals and members of the general

public, and in research projects on the causes, treatment and prevention of cancer.

The transfer of the Queensland Cancer Register to the Queensland Cancer Fund will be of significant benefit to cancer research because the Queensland Cancer Fund has undertaken to establish a Cancer Epidemiology Research Unit and to provide funding for the research unit of at least \$200,000 per year. The allocation of this level of resources to epidemiological cancer research will optimise data usage and analysis in Queensland. Similar arrangements have been in place in New South Wales and Victoria for many years and, as a result, these registries have been able to publish more timely data than Queensland can currently provide.

The Bill recognises that personal health information such as that stored on the Cancer Register is sensitive and private and that the right to collect this information is accompanied by a responsibility to protect the privacy of this information. While allowing the Queensland Cancer Fund to maintain the register, the Bill places strict duties of confidentiality on the Cancer Fund, limiting the fund's authority to release identifiable data.

In the day-to-day management of the register, the Queensland Cancer Fund will only be authorised to disclose information in two circumstances. The first is to permit the release of information back to parties who have provided information to the register in order to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the register data. The only other situation in which the Queensland Cancer Fund will be permitted to release information from the register will be if the information is in a form which does not identify any individual. Any other disclosure of identifying information would first require the authorisation of the chief executive.

The third major amendment proposed in this Bill has arisen in response to the restructure of Queensland Health in 1996. It rationalises the division of statutory powers within the department between the Chief Health Officer and the chief executive. This will ensure that the statutory powers conform with the current organisational arrangements in Queensland Health. Under the amendments, the chief executive, who is the accountable officer for Queensland Health under the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977, is also fully accountable for public health matters, which are a core function of the department's activities. The Bill proposes that the chief executive will be responsible for all public health powers and functions, except the

declaration of public health emergencies and the establishment of public health inquiries, which will be the responsibility of the Minister, on advice of the Chief Health Officer and chief executive.

To ensure the delivery of public health services is overseen by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner, it is proposed to establish a second high level statutory position under the Health Act 1937—the Manager, Public Health Services. The legislation requires this position to be occupied by a medical practitioner.

The licensing of private hospitals will remain with the Chief Health Officer, in order to avoid any suggestion of a conflict of interest if the chief executive were to license such facilities which may be in competition with public sector facilities for which the chief executive is responsible. The Chief Health Officer position will continue to be a statutory position providing high level medical advice to the Minister and the director-general on health issues, particularly ethics, research issues, quality and standards. The Chief Health Officer will continue to be a member of the Medical Board, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Council and the Radiological Advisory Council.

These amendments will greatly enhance the effective and efficient delivery of public health services by Queensland Health and promote the full integration of policies in public health, community health and acute care. Finally, the Bill makes a number of machinery and minor amendments to various Health portfolio Acts to ensure the effective operation of those Acts.

The Bill contains minor amendments to the Nursing Act 1992 relating to notification arrangements for nurses notifying the Queensland Nursing Council of changes in a nurse's particulars. It also contains an amendment to correct an anomaly in the by-law making power under the Speech Pathologists Act 1979. When an amendment was made to the by-law in 1995, an error occurred omitting the requirement for Governor-in-Council approval when making by-laws. A retrospective amendment is therefore required to correct this error.

There are also a number of machinery amendments included in the Bill, such as the repeal of provisions relating to food and other services within the Health Services Act 1991 following the finalisation of the sale of the Wacol frozen food facility. A machinery amendment is also required to overcome a

technical error in the drafting of the Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Act 1979 to permit the enforcement of the Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists By-Law 1992 by the Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Board of Queensland. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Miss Simpson, adjourned.

CONSUMER CREDIT (QUEENSLAND) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 September (see p. 2430).

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (12.49 p.m.): The Opposition will not be opposing this Bill, given that the former Attorney-General and Minister for Consumer Affairs introduced it into the House earlier this year. We understand that there is some urgency for this Bill to be passed, given that the deadline is 1 November this year. It has taken some time, I understand, to have all States and Territories agree to this legislation. I note that Western Australia has drafted its own legislation and has since passed that legislation, but we will not be opposing the Bill. We support the Minister in her endeavours to ensure that the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Amendment Bill is passed and we applaud her for reintroducing a Bill that was introduced previously by the former Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs.

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) (12.51 p.m.), in reply: I thank the shadow Minister for his support. I am very happy to acknowledge the hard work done by the previous Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr Beanland, in framing this legislation. As the shadow Minister said, there is a sense of urgency, and I thank him for his support and for the opportunity to introduce this into the Parliament today.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

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) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Ms SPENCE (12.52 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, lines 8 and 9—

omit, insert—

'(2) Sections 4, 8(3), 9, 13, 14, 16(3), 18(1) and (2), 20, 22, 31(1), 34, 35(3), 36(2), 46, 50, 51, 60, and 65(3) to (6) commence on 1 November 1998.'

Mr BEANLAND: I do not want to hold up proceedings, but could the Minister just explain the difference between this amendment and what was contained in the Bill that came into the House? I say that because I have just received this amendment and I am sure that the shadow Minister has also. I would just like an explanation of the differences. It will only take a moment.

Ms SPENCE: Certainly. The sections enumerated in Clause 2(2) of the Bill are those which are to commence on 1 November. They bring the special transitional regulations containing Division 3 of Part 2, the Consumer Credit Regulations 1995, into the Consumer Credit Code to make them permanent. In effect, this amendment includes three additional sections which are also to commence on 1 November. They are section 31(1), section 50 and section 65(3). They are special transitional regulations. Section 67(3) amends section 61 of the Code to reduce the number of days notice which must be given to a debtor in the event of repayment charges from 30 to 20.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Ms Spence, by leave, read a third time.

Sitting suspended from 12.56 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 6 August (see p. 1735).

Mr SANTORO: The Opposition will be opposing most strenuously the amendments contained in the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave)

Amendment Bill 1998. It will be doing so for quite a number of fundamental reasons, including that the provisions of the amendment Bill represent the breaking of a promise made by Mr Beattie, Mr Braddy and the Labor Party, when in Opposition, in relation to the method of funding training initiatives within the building and construction industry. The amendment Bill seeks to change the objects of the Bill in a most fundamental manner and in a way that runs contrary to the objects of the original Act, which received bipartisan support. The proposed amendments threaten to undermine the long-term actuarial soundness of the fund and will inevitably lead to increases in the levy in the future.

There also exist within the building and construction industry considerable differences of opinion in relation to the alleged skill shortage within the building and construction industry. There exist considerable differences within the building and construction industry as to how the industry can best go about addressing this alleged skill shortage. There is considerable division within the building and construction industry as to how any surplus within the Portable Long Service Leave Fund should be used in the overall interest of the building and construction industry. For example, some significant sections of the industry believe that any surplus should be used to further reduce the rate of the levy, with a view to reducing the cost impositions on the industry and, through this, reduce the price of housing, particularly housing for first home buyers.

The Opposition will also contend that the Government has no mandate and, indeed, sought no mandate to amend this Act of Parliament as it is proposing here today. There has been no meaningful consultation with the industry in relation to the amendments, and it is claimed that there has also been no consultation with the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Board prior to the announcement by the Minister. Of course, those are just a few of the many other reasons that the Opposition will be outlining in terms of its attitude towards this amendment Bill.

In the time available to me, I wish to elaborate on the stated reasons for opposing the amendment Bill. In doing so, I will in some cases refer briefly to issues which will then be taken up more extensively by other speakers on the non-Labor side of Parliament during their contributions. I wish to particularly refer to statements made by the Honourable the

Minister in his second-reading speech and, in doing so, again appeal to him and the Labor Party to do the decent thing in this place, that is, to be intellectually and factually honest about what they say not only in relation to the issues which are being canvassed within this amendment Bill but also about other issues which they may raise. I say this because, in his second-reading speech, the Honourable the Minister makes statements which seek to either rewrite history or to ignore history. In addition, he demonstrates himself to be extremely miserly in giving credit to the coalition Government's performance and achievements in the area of training and, in particular, to the support which the Borbidge/Sheldon coalition Government gave to training initiatives within the building and construction industry.

Honourable members who have been in this place for some time will recall that both in Opposition and in Government, both within the Parliament and outside of the Parliament, I acknowledged—and continue to acknowledge frequently—those good things that were done by the previous Goss Labor Government. Unhappily for Queensland, I was not able to do so with great frequency. However, when I was able to do so, I paid credit where credit was due.

Mr Welford: Name an example.

Mr SANTORO: One example was the bipartisan support that the Opposition gave to the then Goss Labor Government when the Act that this Government is trying to amend today was introduced. We thought that it was a reasonable thing to do. In fact, we gave credit for that and transformed that credit into support for the Bill. So if the honourable member does not want to demonstrate his relative immaturity, he should listen and learn how good politics should be acted out.

Unfortunately, what is being demonstrated not only in this amendment Bill but also right throughout the range of the new Government's initiatives and statements is a very cynical attempt to deny credit to the coalition Government and to rewrite history. I do not believe that this augurs well for the Government's stated intention to restore faith and trust in the way that this place operates and improving people's perception about the essentially honourable nature of what we, as elected representatives, are and, indeed, should be all about.

The Honourable the Minister, in his second-reading speech, stated that in October last year the Honourable the Premier—the

then Opposition Leader—made a commitment to the building and construction industry that—

"When elected, the Government will introduce a package of initiatives which would revitalise the industry and stimulate the creation of new jobs."

What the Minister conveniently fails to state is the commitment made by the then Opposition as to how—and I stress "how"—such a package of initiatives should be funded.

In the abovementioned speech on 13 October 1997, the then Leader of the Opposition informed the Construction 2001 Conference of the following—

"I am pleased to announce to you today that Labor will introduce a modest, tightly targeted, training levy equal to 0.05% of construction costs within six months of coming to office. The levy will be collected by the Building Industry Long Service Leave Authority to maximise compliance and be administered by Construction Training Queensland. A 0.05% training levy, combined with the existing long service leave levy of 0.5% would equate to the previous rate of long service leave levy of 0.2% which was being collected from the construction industry up until July 1997."

The then Leader of the Opposition went on to say—

"In reality, the training levy simply offsets the reduction and the long service leave levy so there is no net impact on the cost structure of the industry compared to its position four months ago. Around half of the \$4 million raised through the levy would be used as incentives to employ apprentices."

That was a very firm commitment which was again reiterated by the then Leader of the Opposition in a speech which he made to the Parliament, when he said that—

"Labor will introduce a modest, tightly targeted training levy equal to 0.05% of the construction cost."

He went on to state further that—

"... this has the support of the construction industry."

A similar commitment was made by the then shadow Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations—now the Minister—to another construction industry conference, when he said—

"Labor will introduce a modest, tightly targeted training levy in the building and construction industry."

Of course, what the Labor Party did in Opposition was to make a very strong commitment to the introduction of a training levy. It is instructional, in view of the Beattie Labor Government's abandonment of such a commitment, to briefly look at why the then coalition Government was, and remains, opposed to such a levy. The reasons were quite simple.

First and foremost, the introduction of a training levy did not, and still does not, enjoy total building and construction industry support. A very large component of the building and construction industry—this component mainly represented by the Housing Industry Association and other associations of independent contractors—remains totally opposed to the introduction of a training levy, and it is particularly for this reason that the then Goss Labor Government, during its six years in office, did not introduce such a levy despite the very strong, regular and constant prompting by some sections of the building and construction industry for it to do so. That was its track record in Government.

We on this side of the House became extremely cynical when we heard the Minister in his second-reading speech state—

"Regrettably, the rhetoric espoused by my Opposition colleagues while they were in power came to nothing because their words were not supported by policies and programs of substance. They constantly refused to heed industry advice regarding the need to produce a training levy."

When the Minister makes those statements, he proves himself and his Government to be hypocrites, because for six years in Government they also constantly refused to heed the so-called industry advice regarding the need to introduce a training levy. I would say to the Honourable the Minister and his Labor Party that they refused to take such advice for a very good reason, the same reason that the coalition Government took into consideration, that being that industry support for a training levy was very much divided. It is that sort of attempt to rewrite history and to denigrate former Governments that brings the practice of politics into disrepute. The Minister and his advisers should be very conscious of that when they compile their rhetoric for future contributions in this place.

Irrespective of what the Minister says, a very sizeable section of the building and construction industry remains strongly opposed to the introduction of a training levy. It is for this reason that the Minister has avoided introducing a training levy per se and is going about raiding the reserves and funds of the Portable Long Service Leave Fund. By doing so, he has still managed to offend the same sizeable part of the building and construction industry that he would have offended had he imposed his promised training levy. I believe that that is something the Minister will come to regret. I will elaborate on that point shortly. Irrespective of which way he goes, the Minister proves himself to be a loser.

Another reason that the Minister has not proceeded with the introduction of a training levy is that training levies in other States have a mixed record of achievement. That is an issue on which other speakers on this side of the House will elaborate later in the debate. They will speak about the dangers inherent in the provision of training funds from levies on builders and the construction industry that are similar to those being proposed by this Government. The fact is that such milking operations do not have a good record in relation to real achievement. As experience in Western Australia and other jurisdictions indicates, they are at risk in relation to actuarial soundness. Where highly prescriptive interventionist Governments are concerned, primarily their only benefit is that of public relations tools.

Honourable members who exist outside the ambit of the Labor whip—and that is a majority of members in this place—would want to be very sure of the Government's genuine expectations for the scheme that it proposes before they accept the veracity of the arguments put forward by the Minister. They will want to be sure that sufficient emphasis is placed by this Government on the strategic needs of the industry in this State. They will certainly want to be assured that the specific interests of organisations represented on the governing body of the scheme are not overly emphasised. In short, honourable members will want to see the colour of the Government's money on this amendment. They will not be impressed if it is simply another Labor stunt promoted in the interests of the ALP and its mates. I will come back to those issues throughout the remainder of this contribution. Other speakers will also refer to them.

I have been discussing the first reason that the Opposition will not be supporting this amendment Bill, that being the Government's

breaking of a promise to fund its training initiatives via a training levy—a promise that was made very easily in Opposition for the sake of cheap politics. But now, in the hard cold reality of Government, it is easily and quickly abandoned by the minority Beattie Labor Government in favour of an even more gruesome funding method that, in turn, constitutes the second major reason that the Opposition will oppose this amendment Bill.

Of course, I am talking about the amendment Bill's intention and attempt to change the objects of the Bill in a most fundamental manner and in a way that runs contrary to the objects of the original Act, which, during the original debate of 28 November 1991, received bipartisan support within this place. The fundamental object of that Act was to provide for an equitable and efficient system of portability of long service leave in the building and construction industry. The proceeds of the portable long service leave levy as administered by the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Board were meant to be utilised for the provision of retirement benefits for employees within the building and construction industry.

I think it is fair to say that, at the time that that particular Bill was being put through the House, the Opposition was lobbied strongly. Strong representations were made to the Opposition by various entities within the building and construction industry, particularly employers, that it not support the Bill. We weighed up those representations very, very carefully in Opposition. It is fair to say that the then Goss Labor Government expected the then coalition Opposition to oppose the introduction of a portable long service leave commission underlined by statutory force within this place. We did not do that, because we saw merit in what was being proposed.

From a personal point of view, given that members of my family have been involved for a lifetime within the building and construction industry as builders labourers, as people whom that Bill—which is now the Act that the Government is seeking to amend—sought to target, I saw the sense of incorporating within legislation provisions for portable long service leave to be paid to workers within the building and construction industry, given the itinerant nature of that industry and the often impossibility of workers within that itinerant industry accessing portable long service leave provisions. We did that despite very strong representations from our traditional constituencies and our traditional supporters, because we thought that there was merit in the proposal.

This amendment Bill changes that fundamental object of the Act that the Government is seeking to amend in a way not originally intended by the Goss Labor Government and in a way that hitherto has always been opposed by the union movement, the Labor Party and, of course, the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Board. It is probably appropriate during a debate such as this to mention that when I was the Minister responsible for the administration of this particular Act that the Government is seeking to amend I sought to put my toe in the water. At the urging of some of the larger elements within the building industry, I put to the portable long service leave board at a meeting that perhaps the coalition Government should consider siphoning off funds from the Portable Long Service Leave Fund the way that the Minister is seeking to do now. As the word got around that that had been floated—not as a matter of intent or policy or as a matter that we would do so irrespective of opposition—the reaction by union representatives on and off that board to that suggestion was enormously against it. I had conversations with some members in this place on the opposite side of the political fence who have a very genuine interest in the building and construction industry. They said, "If you want a bloody nose from us, if you really want the union movement to mobilise—particularly those involved in the building and construction industry—you touch the fund that provides for retirement benefits for our workers."

Owing to the position of the then Opposition during the years of the Goss Labor Government and its rationale for supporting the portable long service leave provisions that were legislated at that time, we decided that we would honour those commitments, that we would not interfere with the fund in the way that this amendment Bill is seeking to do. I hope that the ordinary members of the union movement, particularly those unions that are involved with the building and construction industry, can hear of this contribution and of the way that their union representatives on the portable long service leave board are selling out. It is no good the Minister or members opposite saying that they agreed because the fund has sufficient funds, because in his second-reading speech the Minister could guarantee only that the levy would not go up for a certain number of years. He commits himself to only a certain number of years. On behalf of the Opposition, I go on the record to say that when the coalition returns to Government, if because of the provisions that

are contained in this Bill there is pressure on us to maintain the level of benefits that that fund is paying, we will think very, very seriously about succumbing to pressures to increase the levy.

In this debate we give fair warning to the Minister and to the other members opposite that the coalition will not be bulldozed into supporting an increase in the levy because of the raise that this Government is initiating on that fund and because of the other provisions which it hopes to get passed, including an increase in the eligibility criteria for itinerant workers within the building industry and an increase in the quantum of benefits that are paid to those workers. We go on the record to say very strongly that we will not be bludgeoned or blackmailed into implementing this Labor Party policy if it is passed by this Parliament. We will not keep on slugging those components of the building and construction industry that resent totally what this amendment Bill represents, which is a very strong departure from the original objects of the Act and a deliberate raid on the fund, which is supposed to be providing secure retirement benefits for workers within the building industry, and which the union movement is allowing to occur without not even a whimper of an objection. We go on the record and give that warning to members opposite, particularly those who have at heart the interests of those whom they seek to represent and those whom they claim—in a mealy-mouthed manner—to represent, particularly in this case, the workers in the building and construction industry. In their hearts they believe that this should not be going ahead and may even consider siding with the Opposition to defeat this inequitable amendment Bill that the Minister has put before them which, unfortunately, either deliberately or unwittingly—probably both—they have decided to swallow.

Obviously, by now honourable members opposite will appreciate that I believe that this amendment Bill represents a cynically motivated raid on one of the union movement's and the Labor Party's most sacred hollow logs on the basis that there exists within the Building Industry Portable Long Service Leave Fund sufficient excess reserves to justify this raid and to use some of the proceeds of the portable long service leave levy for purposes other than those that were originally intended and legislated for by the Act that is being amended. What is most worrying about this particular aspect of the amendment Bill is that, on the Minister's own admission, this very move undermines the long-term

actuarial soundness of the fund. This admission is contained in the Minister's second-reading speech, which I quote very deliberately for the information of honourable members—

"Independent actuarial analysis shows that the transfer of moneys from the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Authority surplus and the reduction and rationalisation of the long service leave levy and threshold will avoid any increase of the long service leave levy for a period of 11 years."

That is what the Minister said. He does not say that it will be self-funded indefinitely, he does not say that beyond 11 years there will be no need to increase the fund; he just says "11 years". This admission, tucked away towards the end of the Honourable the Minister's second-reading speech, illustrates clearly the difference between the approach of the coalition Government and that of the minority Beattie Labor Government when it comes to the administration of the portable long service leave levy provisions contained within the Act that the Labor Party is trying to amend and displace today.

In fact, it was the coalition Government's plan to phase out the long service leave levy in total within a few years. Experience in other States, including and particularly New South Wales, shows that, given the relatively high level at which the levy was pitched originally, the fund has accumulated sufficient funds to make it self-sufficient in terms of meeting its obligations to retired workers within the building and construction industry. The abolition of the levy would have been welcomed by industry as a much-needed reduction in cost and, in turn, would have been greeted by building and construction industry services as a move that would have lowered the total cost of building and construction activities.

However, we have an admission that this blatant raid on a hollow log—a sacred ALP and union hollow log—will eventually require not only the maintenance of the portable long service leave levy in perpetuity but also an increase in this levy in 11 years' time. If the Minister believes otherwise—or if his advisers believe otherwise, they should advise the Minister to say that—obviously the levy will be kept in perpetuity and there will be no increase beyond 11 years. Even putting aside the still undefined impacts of the amendments that are being put forward in terms of the eligibility and the quantum criteria—I have not seen much evidence in this place or anywhere else

of the impacts of those additional changes, including the amendments which were circulated just before lunch—we do not really know what financial impacts those amendments are going to have. However, even without those as yet untested impacts, and putting aside those untested impacts, let the Minister guarantee to this place that the levy will be kept in perpetuity and that it will not be increased. Or maybe the Minister should be honest and elaborate further on what he said in his second-reading speech, that is, that beyond 11 years there is the suggestion that there will be an increase. That is the challenge to the Minister; if he does not come up with a response, he will be judged by the words that he uttered in his second-reading speech and by what he undoubtedly will fail to utter in his reply.

When I was Minister, the advice that I was receiving from the board was that the levy would soon be able to be eliminated. However, the advice that the now Minister is receiving from the actuaries, and presumably from the board, is that this Minister and his Government's meddling with the portable long service leave levy arrangements will necessitate the maintenance of a levy and, indeed, an increase further down the track, particularly beyond 11 years. This is a shameful indictment on a Government that is prepared to raid hollow logs, which in this case are hollow logs sacred to the very people whose interests it is supposed to be looking after, that is, the itinerant workers within the building and construction industry. In doing so, the Government shamelessly acknowledges the need to maintain a levy and also to increase it down the track. This is a reprehensible action and one of the major reasons the Opposition cannot support this piece of dishonest trickery by this Minister and his Government.

In reality, we have the imposition of a training levy by stealth, the undermining of the pool from which the retirement benefits of workers in the building and construction industry are derived and the alienation of a major section of the building and construction industry that has seen and will continue to see through the Minister's cynical manoeuvring in order to deliver on a promise made thoughtlessly during a desperate election campaign when anything was said by the then Beattie Labor Opposition in order to win votes. What is even more shameful about all of this is the way in which the union movement has rolled over in order to suit the political convenience of its Labor mates in the Parliament. The union has also betrayed its

constituency. It is no wonder that many union members continue to walk away from a union movement that is increasingly not representing their legitimate interests. I know also—and I have intimated this before—that there are several Labor members in this place who in their heart of hearts agree with what I am saying. It is a pity that a strict and thoughtless adherence to party loyalty does not enable them to express views which I know they hold dear.

I now wish to turn to an issue raised early in the Minister's second-reading speech, and that is the debate in relation to the alleged lack of skills within the building and construction industry. In his speech, the Minister quoted statistics that seek to justify the proposition that skills shortages exist within the building and construction industry. I and the other members of the Opposition resent the slant—indeed, the overt suggestion—in the Minister's speech that for some reason the skills shortages that have been talked about today are the result of inaction by the coalition Government. I will again quote directly from the Minister's second-reading speech—

"The statistics speak for themselves. In 1996-97 around 2,000 apprenticeships were required to maintain the current level of skills in the industry. After drop-outs and recommencements, only 796 apprentices remained."

Of course, the Minister was not candid enough to admit that the figures he was quoting for 1996-97 were impacted upon overwhelmingly by the policies of the Goss Labor Government in the preceding six years.

Again I quote from the Minister's speech, and honourable members opposite should listen very carefully to this—

"Between 1993 and 1996, spending on training in the industry fell from 1.63% to 1.38% of gross payroll nationally. This amounted to \$14m, a fall of approximately 30% investment in training by employers. In Queensland we accounted for \$8m, or 56% of the national decline."

Again, the Minister very conveniently managed to eliminate from his thoughts and the words that he uttered in his second-reading speech the fact that the period that he is talking about was the period that the Labor Party was in Government. Part of that time was also when Labor Party policies impacted significantly upon the level of spending and the development of a training culture within the building and construction industry, and indeed

elsewhere within the economy where that training culture had to be developed. It is this type of misrepresentation and innuendo that brings much discredit upon the Minister and his rationalisation in support of the amendments that we are debating here today.

Like all other major commentators on training within the building and construction industry, the Minister should acknowledge that there is broad agreement that training levels within the building and construction industry fluctuate according to the economic and activity cycles within the industry and that, during the most violent fluctuations of the activity cycles during the past ten years, it was a Goss Labor Government that was in power. He should also acknowledge that it was the Minister's then Government that had the opportunity to do something significant to reverse the cycles and their impact. That a considerable amount of money was put into the building and construction industry by the previous Government, and that this contribution was maintained and indeed augmented by the coalition Government is perhaps one of the reasons why during the past 12 months we have seen a slow but sure and steady increase in the number of apprentices and trainees who are being employed within the building and construction industry. I am happy to give the previous Goss Labor Government some credit for the upturn that is occurring now, as I give the Government of which I was a member some credit. In the interests of honesty and accountability, the previous Minister should have done the same. His departmental advisers have told him precisely what I have stated in this place.

A comparative study of apprenticeship new approvals across all industry groups over the last four years will tell the Minister that although all industries have experienced a drop in apprenticeship new approvals, the building sector experienced the largest decrease over the period 1994-95 to 1996-97, which are predominantly years of Labor Government in Queensland. However, the Minister also knows—and if he does not it is his own fault and undoubtedly means that he has not read the brief—that this negative trend has reversed and the building industry has begun to experience a significant increase in new approvals. There has been a 33.3% increase for the period 15 September 1997 to 14 September 1998, when compared with the same period in 1996-97. The industry, which is being so heavily criticised for its lack of training capacity, is pulling out because the previous two Governments had the foresight to put

money and real resources into this area which was recognised as a very important component of the Queensland economy. That was done. However, I also find regrettable the statement made by the Minister, which I have quoted previously in this debate and I again quote—

"Regrettably, the rhetoric espoused by my Opposition colleagues while they were in power came to nothing, because their words were not supported by policies and programs of substance."

That statement shows the meanspirited side of the Minister, who again refuses to acknowledge the contribution that the coalition State Government made to the funding of the training needs of the building and construction industry in this State.

Putting aside the massive and record level Capital Works Program that the coalition Government put in place for three consecutive Budgets, there can be no serious doubt raised by the Minister or anyone else in relation to the extent and the quality of policies that were implemented by the coalition Government, which significantly assisted in helping the building and construction industry to meet its training needs. In fact, on behalf of the previous coalition Government, I could boast much about many initiatives including: the coalition Government's support for the Federal Government's new apprenticeship initiative, which encouraged work-based training, and more flexible and short-term training arrangements; the introduction of vocational education subjects into the school curriculum, which means that young people can attain real, practical skills while still attending school; the establishment of one-stop apprenticeship centres; and during the term of the previous Government the allocation of \$10m to the Construction Training Centre. I divert momentarily to again place on the record that the Budget of the coalition Government allocated substantial funding to that construction and training centre, yet in all of his rhetoric and media releases the Minister takes it on board as a new initiative. That Construction Training Centre was funded very handsomely by the previous coalition Government.

I also mention—and Government members should listen very carefully to this when doubting the contribution of the previous coalition Government to the training needs of the building and construction industry—the very substantial financial contribution to the overall training needs of the building and construction industry through the State

Training Profile. Under coalition policies, the building and construction industry received 11% of the total publicly funded training, even though that industry employs 8.4% of the State's work force. Those statistics and those initiatives, which are only a few of the vast range of initiatives that we introduced, clearly demonstrate the bona fides of the Borbidge/Sheldon coalition Government in relation to the building and construction industry. Those initiatives occurred within the current Minister's area of responsibility.

In other areas of ministerial responsibility colleagues of mine at the time introduced initiatives such as Construction Queensland. The previous Government allocated on a yearly basis 150 unit dwellings from the public housing program for group training schemes, something that has also been duplicated in the Labor Party's policy. The only difference is that for a while the Labor Party sought to portray it if not as a new initiative then certainly as an initiative that goes beyond the commitment of the coalition.

My colleagues on this side of the House will speak shortly in a critically constructive manner about the ALP policies, as well as the policies of the coalition in relation to the building and construction industry. I place on the record the fact that the above achievements were the result of a joint and cooperative effort between Government and the industry, including—and I give credit where credit is due—the trade union movement. I do not wish my statements to be misconstrued as my wanting to take all of the credit for those achievements in training in the building and construction industry. It was, it still is and in the future it will be a cooperative effort. Nothing that the Minister or his lackeys say will bring any credit on this Government other than that which it earns within the very tough environment of the building and construction industry. People like me will hang around. People like me will make sure that we keep this Government accountable, not just in this place but also in the community, and particularly within the building and construction industry. The Minister can say whatever he wants in his reply and the propaganda can flow; however, we will circulate these statements, including the one I am now making, broadly and widely. We will allow the people within the industry to judge the previous coalition Government and our attitude towards the industry.

If the Minister persists in seeking to rewrite history and cynically deny credit and distort the facts, he will not be taken seriously. That is the

case now and it will continue to be the case as he sits down at tables and uncomfortably tries to justify the statements that he has made in this place and the statements that he will undoubtedly continue to make, unless he comes to his senses. In fact, I am able to state confidently and openly that during my time as the Minister for Training there existed between the building and construction industry and the coalition Government extremely good relations that saw much good achieved when it came to the development of training within that industry. I say again: let us give credit where credit is due and let us not simply seek to destroy the record of achievement in an area of Government policy which should be essentially bipartisan.

Perhaps the most plausible aspect of the Minister's speech is that statement in which he says—

"While I do not contend these initiatives will be panacea, resolving all the industry's skills problems overnight, they are a positive step in the right direction, ensuring a strong skills base is developed to take this industry into the 21st century."

This qualification by the Minister is a wise one, for I believe that even early in his term as a Minister for Training he has come to realise that developing a training culture not just in the building and construction industry but indeed throughout the entire economy will be one of his more daunting and challenging tasks. That is because, as the FitzGerald Commission of Audit found, up to and including 1996 there had been a great neglect of the training needs of a growing Queensland economy by Governments on either side of the political fence for over a decade. The Honourable the Minister should not forget that this period included six years of very hard Goss Labor Party Government. The Minister will soon come to realise that throwing money at a training problem is not the simple solution that the Minister and his advisers may think it is.

Mr Schwarten: Throwing no money at it is no answer, either, and that is what you did.

Mr SANTORO: I take that interjection from the Minister.

Mr Schwarten: How many people have you trained?

Mr SANTORO: We trained a record number of people, as I have outlined in this place. We had allocated \$2.5m per year—recurrent annual funding—within the coalition's final Budget to fund initiatives in the building and construction industry. If the honourable member had been listening, he would be

forced to acknowledge that our record is a very distinguished one.

The Minister should take heed of the advice tendered to the Opposition and undoubtedly to the Government by the Housing Industry Association. I quote from a presentation by Mr Warwick Temby, the Director of the HIA in Queensland, who stated—

"There is no evidence that it is a shortage of funds that is generating the training problems in the building industry. HIA's view is that these real training issues confronting the building industry should be addressed in a strategic way before any additional funds are allocated.

Some of the issues that need to be addressed are slowly being dealt with. These include more flexible training packages and contracts of training and the development of rigorous systems of recognition of informally acquired skills.

However, the other vital issues yet to be addressed include—

the inflexibility of the industrial relations system to respond to the change in relativities in the wages between apprentices and contractors;

the need for employees to take some responsibility for the funding of their own training needs;

the need for the training bureaucracy to recognise the enormous amount of informal training that occurs in the building industry; and

the financing of the TAFE sector and private providers."

Honourable members who are fair in their assessment of the previous Government's efforts in the area of training will appreciate that most of the issues and matters that are referred to in the above representation of the HIA were being dealt with by the previous coalition Government with considerable force and policy integrity.

Some of those issues require the application of goodwill and the cooperation of the union movement if they are to be resolved in the best and long-term interests of the building and construction industry and in particular its employees. It remains to be seen just how progressive the Minister and his Government will be in tackling the abovementioned and other difficult areas of policy if the issues confronting training and the building and construction industry are to be addressed seriously.

So far the only evidence that we have seen in this place that the Minister is seeking to impact in any real manner on training in this State is the regressive and negative impact that he had on the training culture when he took out of the ambit of Queensland Workplace Agreements industrial arrangements that could be worked out for part-time apprenticeships for people at school under the age of 18. I have received many representations from schools and group training companies that regard that action by the Minister as being a very regressive one which significantly compromises group training schemes and the ability for young people under the age of 18 to get into school-based and part-time apprenticeship arrangements. I think it is a disgrace for a Government that is so concerned about equipping young people and the work force generally with real skills and particularly assisting young people coming out of schools to abolish provisions which enable those young people to get into school-based part-time apprenticeships. That will make it very hard for them to access the labour market because they lack the skills that they otherwise would have had.

It will be interesting to see what industrial arrangements the Minister is beginning to facilitate in order to make up for that collapse of arrangements that he so proudly boasted of when he got some amendments to the previous Government's industrial relations legislation through this Parliament. Those questions are unanswered within the work force. Group training schemes, schools, individual employers, several members—not many, but at least two members—of the union movement have confided that. I am not saying that just for the sake of saying it. They regret the inflexibility that is now in the IR legislation as a result of the removal of those flexible provisions in the coalition's legislation.

The Opposition also takes considerable exception to another statement made by the Minister which again reflects his loose use of words and facts. He stated in his speech—

"... we have taken this action to assist the industry meet its skills needs because we would not and could not sit idly by and watch skills shortages develop at a time of record unemployment, particularly for young Queenslanders."

In using this statement to justify the amendments that the Minister is trying to push through the Parliament, he is again, in a very convenient way, to put it at its kindest, utterly and totally ignoring the achievement of the coalition Government in the area of employment and unemployment.

It is a matter of record that on 11 June, just two days before the last State election, the coalition Government was able to make the following boasts—

that 97,700 new jobs have been created in Queensland since the coalition came to Government;

that a record number of Queenslanders on that date were in employment—an all-time record level of 1,616,100;

that Queensland's employment growth for the year to May 1998 was 4.3% compared with a national growth rate of 2.1%;

that Queensland's growth and full-time employment accounted for 33.2% of all full-time employment growth in Australia while new part-time jobs in Queensland represented 41% of the national total;

that youth unemployment for the month of May 1998—the month before the election, as measured on 11 June—had fallen to 25.3%, the lowest rate since July 1996; and

that the coalition Government in March 1998 gave Queensland its lowest unemployment rate, 8.3%—the lowest since July 1990—in more than seven years.

How the Minister can therefore make the statement in his second-reading speech that he again made during the recent Estimates committee hearings is beyond my comprehension. I could be forgiven if I had allowed myself to descend into the depths of cynical despair. But I did not do so, for I regard it as my duty, as indeed do all members of the coalition, to set the record straight whenever Ministers such as the Honourable the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations do not get it right, either inadvertently or deliberately.

It is important also to record in this debate the stark contrast between the coalition's achievements and Labor's last term in office, when 58,000 Queenslanders lost their jobs and unemployment soared by 65%. In fact, the last Labor Government gave Queensland its highest unemployment rate—11.1% in July 1992—since the Great Depression.

In fact, the Goss Labor Government presided over a disgraceful increase in the unemployment rate from 6.7% in December 1989 to 9.4% in December 1990, and the number of unemployed under the Labor Party increased from 94,100 in December 1989 to well over 160,000 when the Labor Party lost

office in February 1996. More will be said about the comparative employment policies and creation under non-Labor and Labor Governments by other speakers during this debate.

Let me assure all honourable members opposite that, as they implement their industrial relations policies, workers compensation policies, environmental protection agencies and anti-training policies, including this one, and as the unemployment rate becomes more and more elusive in terms of that 5% target, we will come into their electorates—each and every one of their electorates—and we will remind the people in those electorates very directly just what hypocrites and what cynically motivated individuals members opposite were when they cynically exploited the public psyche and promised a 5% unemployment rate and employment growth when they knew that the policies that they were going to the election with could not achieve that rate.

Often what we say in this Parliament does not get reported, but I will make one promise during this debate: we will remind each and every one of the constituents of members opposite of this, and they will have to squirm unless they desist from implementing policies such as the one that they are implementing today. Then with bipartisan support we actually may get employment growth and the unemployment rate in this State trending in the right directions. All the talkfests, all the community forums, all the invitations to community people, including in particular small business, to come to meetings and to give them advice about the unemployment rate and to give them advice about how they can lower unemployment in an endeavour to gain their interest in terms of creating jobs will not be assisted by amendment Bills such as this and by the Government's intentions to amend Acts of Parliament such as the Workplace Relations Act and other legislation put through this place. We will make them suffer because of the cynical way that they went to the electorate and duped people into believing that they had the policies and the vision to create more jobs and to get the unemployment rate and the employment creation rate trending in a way that is favourable to the community, particularly to those tens of thousands of people who are seeking employment. We will absolutely worry the hell out of members opposite because we are going to do it.

I now wish to turn my attention to the administration of the fund, including the

establishment of a Building and Construction Industry Training Fund and its administration by Construction Training Queensland. I have several concerns with the arrangements proposed by the Honourable the Minister and I do know that some of these concerns are, in fact, held by a number of associations in the building and construction industry as well as by people involved with the provision of building and construction training within TAFE Queensland.

I think that it is fair to say that there is considerable disquiet within the industry about Construction Training Queensland obtaining what virtually amounts to monopoly control of the provision of training for the building and construction industry in Queensland. This control is being partly vested in Construction Training Queensland by the provisions of this amendment Bill as well as by a policy decision which, if it has not already been made, is soon to be made to transfer all building industry training currently undertaken by Yeronga TAFE to BIGA, the group training scheme administered by Construction Training Queensland.

The training by BIGA is conducted at the Queensland Construction Industry Skills Centre at Salisbury and it was in response to the aforementioned concerns that earlier on this year as the Minister for Training I commissioned independent consultants Coopers and Lybrand to undertake a review of the operations of the Construction Industry Skills Centre with a view to, amongst other things, ascertaining the degree of compatibility between the current vocational education and training policy and practice and the Queensland Construction Industry Skills Centre Project and also reviewing the founder's commitment to achievement of the aims and objectives of the Queensland Construction Industry Skills Centre Project.

The concerns that had been expressed about CISC centred around allegations that the skills centre and associated interests have somehow strayed from the initial objectives and commitments which led to the creation of the centre. This report was completed towards the end of the coalition's term in Government and is now in the possession of the new Government. I understand that it raises questions and concerns which might well impact on the way that this House views the Minister's intention to vest the administration of the fund to Construction Training Queensland.

This issue will be elaborated upon further by other speakers on this side of the Parliament. I would ask the Minister to inform

the House of the outcomes of the aforementioned review by Coopers and Lybrand. In fact, during the course of this debate or during one of the breaks, I would appreciate receiving a copy of the aforementioned report, together with a detailed briefing so that the concerns that have been expressed to me about possible conflicts of interest and doubts about the ability of the CTQ to administer the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund can be assessed by me on behalf of the Opposition in the context of the findings of the aforementioned report.

I have requested copies of this report through questions on notice and through correspondence to the Minister but a copy has not been forthcoming. I suspect that the Minister has something to hide, that that report, in fact, is not complimentary to the organisational and administrative set-up which the Minister is attempting to establish and that that is why he will not release that report. That is something that will come back to bite him, and unfortunately it will come back to bite the parties who are part of the apparatus that the Minister is setting up.

Having said this, I give notice to the Minister and the Government that I intend moving an amendment during the Committee stage of this debate that, if a Building and Construction Industry Training Fund is, indeed, established after consideration of this amendment Bill by the Parliament, such a fund be monitored not just by independent trustees but also by the Queensland Auditor-General. I see this as being an essential amendment, particularly when honourable members consider the comments that the previous Auditor-General made in his annual report and other reports about the past administration of CISC under the previous Labor Government. I see this as being particularly relevant in view of the fact that I believe that the Minister, his officers and his colleagues have publicly treated the parliamentary process, including the process that we are going through here today, and members of this House with absolute utter contempt.

I refer honourable members to the inclusion on page 7 of the 1998-99 Draft Training Plan of Construction Training Queensland of a clear indication that the results of this debate have been well and truly pre-empted. The document states that the trustees of the fund have established a management agreement with Construction Training Queensland—CTQ. In other words,

the trustees have obviously been chosen, perhaps secretly by the Minister and his advisers, and have set up their own arrangements prior to 23 September when this training plan was printed.

In passing on that particular point, I say that it is no wonder that people such as me become fairly obsessive about what the Minister does in terms of the accountability of this place when members of Parliament, including shadow Ministers, are treated with utter contempt. All that I can say is that we will just work harder and we will become even more obsessed with getting the truth out. There are plenty of people out there within the industry and the community who will assist people like me. Eventually members opposite will have an uncomfortable time in those seats and, as a result of that discomfort, they will not be in those seats for any longer than they deserve to be, and that is not very long at all.

I draw the attention of all members to the Hitchen review of the training levy operating in Western Australia. This review indicated the absolute necessity of ensuring that those administering training levy funds were independent of the specific interests of member organisations. Consequently, the Western Australian Government advertised extensively for expressions of interest from suitable people who could fill roles on the board established to manage the funds. Mr Braddy, the Minister, it appears, would rather rely on a much less transparent process. Who are these trustees who apparently have already been chosen and what management agreements have they already drawn up with their parent organisations? They are questions which the Minister should answer in his reply. Perhaps they will be answered by the honourable member for Bulimba, who I have been noticing has been rearing to go; I will listen very carefully to the contribution of the honourable member for Bulimba, who knows that I respect his views. I may not always agree with them, but I respect his views because at least they are sincerely held. He has been in the industry—and more so than anybody else in this place.

Not only has this pre-emptive action occurred but, within the department, the Minister has also approved the development and wide distribution of a leaflet that describes the issue of this levy and its financial management as a fait accompli. Again, this utter contempt for the Parliament and the parliamentary process I do not think gives much credit to the Minister or those people on the other side who support him.

I think it is obvious to honourable members opposite. I have heard them squealing, whingeing and complaining, mainly because we have been hitting the mark. There are people out there who have provided us with information, who want to assist us as we assist them to look after their industry. We know that those opposite are upset because they know that we know.

We will continue to pursue this Minister and this Government in the interests of transparency, openness and accountability and, in this particular debate, in the best interests of the building and construction industry, which was neglected by the previous Labor Party administration and which is now heading down the same track under this new Minister and this new Government.

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.30 p.m.): I rise to support the initiatives contained within the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill. I wish to comment on some remarks made by the previous speaker, the member for Clayfield. The previous speaker said that industry does not really support the initiatives taken by this Government with regard to the moneys being made available for training. To my knowledge there is only one association that does not agree.

I have been lobbied by the industry over a long period, including when the member for Clayfield was Minister. He will remember that I spoke to him about this matter. I will not canvass the discussions we had on this matter because they are confidential and I will not betray confidences, but I know from what he said that there is only one association in the building industry opposed to this at the moment, that is, the HIA. That is one association in an industry that would have around 22 or 28 associations representing various people. One association is opposed to it and its opposition at the moment is lukewarm at best. It is starting to bleed off. When this proposal starts to become a reality, the opposition really is not there at all.

The member for Clayfield also said that there was bipartisan support for portable long service leave when it was introduced into this House. I take that comment with a grain of salt to a certain extent because I was not a member of this place when that measure was introduced, but we certainly had the numbers here. We did not need the support of anybody else.

The construction and building workers in this State waited for 20 years on the coalition Government—particularly the Liberal Party,

which made commitment after commitment to the trade union movement and to the workers of this State and then welched in the run home to the judge. As soon as it got into Parliament, it walked away from us and left us like a shag on a rock—for 20 bloody years!

Mr Santoro: Oh, come on.

Mr PURCELL: It's not "Come on" at all. Every State in the Commonwealth had it before Queensland did. That was through the efforts of the coalition Government and the HIA. The HIA was the only group opposed to it then, as it is opposed to this, so what credibility does it have? What does it care about workers and training? It wants low-skilled, low-paid workers in its part of the housing industry. It does not want people trained, because it will have to pay them more money! It just wants to put more money in its skyrocket. Any assertion that the HIA opposes this along with employers, if there are others, I take with a grain of salt.

For you to say in this place now that there is not a skill shortage indicates that you do not know this industry. Down my way they are paying \$100 an hour for a fully qualified boilermaker to do work—\$100 an hour! And we haven't got a skill shortage? You are living on another planet.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! The member will remember to address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr PURCELL: He is living on another planet. The member should come out and talk to those who employ people and are looking for skilled workers at the moment. We are a net importer of skilled labour when we should be an exporter. We are importing skilled people, because we do not have enough people here to do the work. I will give one bit of credit to the Opposition.

Mr Santoro: Give us the figures on skills shortages.

Mr PURCELL: I will. I have some figures. I will give them to the member. He will read them and weep. The previous Minister did make moneys available for training for the building and construction industry.

Mr Santoro: Lots of money. Come on, give credit.

Mr PURCELL: I just said that the member did make moneys available. I can assure him that the trade unions made money available also. They gave their share. The group that fell down the most was the employers. It has been pretty tough for them. I am talking now particularly about the training centre at

Rocklea. It has not put up its share, but I am sure that it will when the industry turns. It will put up its hand and make good. I assure the House that trade unions have certainly done their part with regard to putting money into training in this State.

Nobody trained builders labourers in this State until the builders labourers put their own training centre together. They have put up millions of dollars, along with the CFMEU, to train unskilled people for this industry. The reason we have millions of dollars worth of problems at the Gold Coast at the moment—there are concrete cancers and buildings falling to pieces—is that no training was done to create skilled labourers and so forth. Buildings are just falling to pieces. I suppose I should not complain, because it is making work for builders labourers, but it is costing owners millions of dollars.

It is no secret that the building and construction industry is currently experiencing a shortage of skilled labour and will continue to do so if measures are not taken to address the decline in apprentices entering the industry and to provide additional continuing training for those workers currently employed in the industry. Along with the industry, this Government is concerned at the sharp decline in training and at the high rates of withdrawal from apprentice training programs. Without improvements in training outcomes, industry will not be able to generate an adequate number of qualified tradespersons in the building and construction industry to ensure its future viability.

Over the period 1993 to 1996, the building and construction industry experienced a national decline in training efforts by employers of around 30%. Of particular alarm is that Queensland is disproportionately represented in this national decline, contributing over half, or 56%, of the decline. Employment of building and construction apprentices in Queensland is a major issue for this State.

Apprentices in the building and construction industry have been dropping out of training courses at an overall rate exceeding 40%. In addition, it is estimated that approximately 60% of the work force does not achieve any form of accredited training qualifications. I can say that the vast majority of form workers in this town when I came into this place—in excess of 80%—were builders labourers with nail bags on. They were not tradesmen or carpenters; they were builders labourers with nail bags on. Good on them. They got very proficient at putting up decks

and they worked very hard. They went up onto the tradesmen's rate and we let them go out of the builders labourers union. They become skilled and proficient at doing something from repetition, not from any training or from efforts made by anyone else.

The Government is also mindful of the fact that Queensland needs to plan for the expected drain of skilled construction employees to interstate construction projects, particularly in the lead-up to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. This is already happening. The skilled trainees, particularly in the high skilled areas, are bled off. That is why such a high premium is being paid for highly skilled boilermakers and so forth.

The industry requires plans to sustain itself, adjust for emerging technologies, meet its skilled trade shortages and build its viability. Yet until now, it has not been doing this. Notably critical in this State are the trades of painting, plastering and bricklaying—trade shortage areas that are currently impacting on the profitability of Queensland projects and thereby the viability of businesses and the Queensland economy and our community.

The Government's strategies are designed to arrest the unacceptably high levels of attrition from training and the low take-up rate of apprentice training. To this end, our commitment is to offer the industry support through the creation of incentives and initiatives that will replenish this vital work force. In response to these issues, the Government has moved quickly since taking office to work in close cooperation with industry to revitalise training and to start to correct the skills shortage situation before there is further and possibly irreparable damage. It is vitally important that an industry training fund is established—a fund that will inject on average \$5.4m per annum into training incentives and initiatives for the building and construction industry. Through this initiative the Government is creating new opportunities to train and incentives to continue to train, and giving a conviction to this industry that it can invest from its own resources into its own future.

The establishment of the training fund is but one of a raft of initiatives which Government, in consultation and cooperation with the industry, is assisting to intervene in these trends. In addition to the creation of a training fund, which is expected to boost training by up to 3,000 apprentices over three years by supporting employers to take up additional training effort, the Government is also committed to enforcing the 10% policy for

all Government construction projects. This policy will require that 10% of all employable hours for capital works projects, including contracted housing work, will be undertaken by apprentices and trainees. This is expected to result in an estimated 900 additional apprenticeships over three years.

In addition, the Government has set a target to employ 6,500 additional apprentices and trainees in public sector agencies, including local government. It is expected that, of these, approximately 500 will be apprentices and up to 90 would be employed in the building and construction industry. A further initiative of Government will see an additional 600 apprentices employed over a period of four years in housing projects under the Housing Industry Trade Training Program administered through the Department of Housing. So it is fair to say that this Government is acting quickly and putting its commitments to jobs and training up front to assist in revitalising training and employment opportunities in the building and construction industry.

Another positive initiative that emerges from these initiatives to assist the building and construction industry is the improvements that will result from workplace health and safety in the industry. It was the previous coalition Government which moved the collection of the workplace health and safety notification fees on building and construction work to the Portable Long Service Leave Authority to increase the compliance rate within the industry. This move facilitated increased compliance but, up to now, these arrangements have resulted in much confusion within the industry, particularly with the two different thresholds and levy rates that are applied on building and construction activity.

With the introduction of an all-in rate of 0.2% for both portable long service leave and workplace health and safety fees, with a common leviable threshold of \$80,000, the Government will be able to employ an additional 15 workplace health and safety inspectors in the construction industry. The previous speaker was trailing his coat when talking about raids on portable long service leave. He knows as well as I do that the best way to collect money in our industry is the way in which it has been collected for the portable long service leave. The member recognised that when he collected more money for the occupational health and safety officers. He certainly would agree—if he was not on the other side of the House—that that would be

the way to collect it for training people within the industry, too.

In the 1997-98 financial year, the Division of Workplace Health and Safety investigated five fatalities and 101 serious bodily injuries in the building and construction industry throughout Queensland. As a result of these investigations, the division issued 616 warnings, 866 improvement notices and 340 prohibition notices. The incidence rate of injury and disease in the Australian construction industry, based on workers compensation data, is 12.8 occurrences per 100 employees—far higher than the all-industry average of 2.6 occurrences per 100 employees. In fact, it is 49.2% higher than the all-industry average. Honourable members should note that these figures are extremely conservative, given that the data does not cover those persons who are engaged in the industry but operate within the definition of "worker" under the workers compensation legislation. The previous Minister knocked out probably 80% of the workers of this State from coverage of workers compensation. Therefore, those figures would not be picked up in workers compensation.

We thus have an unacceptably high rate of accidents and injuries in an industry which employs up to 8% of the Queensland labour force. From these amendments, the proposed increase of a workplace health and safety fee of 0.125% and a threshold rate of \$80,000 is anticipated to raise approximately \$14m in the 1998-99 financial year in comparison to \$12.7m in the previous year. Of this, approximately \$1m will be spent on the cost of employing an additional 15 workplace health and safety inspectors, representing an increase of nearly 40% in the number of inspectors. This increase will start to address the concerns that there is a significant non-compliance in this industry, which in turn leads to unacceptably high rates of injuries. Our aim is to achieve a significant reduction in the amount of injury and illness occurring in the building and construction industry with a corresponding reduction in costs that then flow onto the wider community through health and rehabilitation systems.

The other initiatives contained in this Bill, including the improvements to portable long service leave entitlements to building and construction workers, will assist in reducing some of the inequities currently experienced in this industry. Greater access to entitlements—down from 15 to 10 years—will mean that more employees will actually get to realise their leave benefits. In addition, for those PPS

workers who supply labour, this will mean that they will access long service leave entitlements for the first time ever in Queensland and rectify some of the inequities with portable long service leave schemes in other States. That is not before time. When this scheme was first mooted, I thought that those people who worked for cash in hand, PPS workers or itinerant workers should always have been in that scheme, because they never had an opportunity to get any benefits other than the cash that they get in their hands, such as long service leave and other entitlements that other workers get. I believe that the Labor Government will be able to improve the scheme and the conditions for those people covered by portable long service leave.

Most importantly, this Bill will contribute to the employment of a future generation of young Queenslanders. And that is principally what Governments should be on about. Working together with industry and with the support of industry, this Government is getting on with the job.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA)
(3.47 p.m.): I rise to speak against the portable long service leave amendment Bill, which is another regressive act of the minority occupants of the Treasury benches that runs directly counter to the real interests of Queensland and Queenslanders. Specifically, I want to speak about the dangers inherent in the provision of training funds from the sort of levy on builders in the construction industry being proposed by the Government. The fact is that such milking operations do not have a good record where real achievement is concerned. As experience in Western Australia and other jurisdictions indicates, they are a risk to actuarial soundness and, where highly prescriptive, interventionist Governments are concerned, primarily of benefit as public relations tools only.

Honourable members who exist outside the ambit of the Government Deputy Whip's area of operations—a majority of members in this place—would want to be very sure of the Government's genuine expectations for the scheme that it proposes before they accept the veracity of the arguments put forward by the Minister. They will want to be sure that sufficient emphasis is placed by this Government on the strategic needs of the industry in Queensland. They will certainly want to be assured that the specific interests of the organisations represented on the governing body of the scheme are not overly emphasised. In short, honourable members will want to see the colour of the Government's

money on this amendment. They will not be impressed if it is simply another Labor stunt promoted in the interests of the ALP and its mates.

Every member of this House desires to see genuine and high levels of employment growth in Queensland for Queenslanders. It bears repeating at every available opportunity that it is not solely on the Government benches that this fundamental desire finds expression and overwhelming interest in finding employment opportunities—far from it, as the 60% of Queenslanders who did not vote for the Government well understand.

The argument is about method. It is about achieving genuine outcomes—real outcomes. It is not about unrealistic targets. It is not about bulking up the public sector in an attempt to get as near as possible to the outstretched handful of fingers that the Premier lit upon as his percentage unemployment aim. The issue of training and apprenticeships is too important to be used as a political football. Genuine private sector jobs growth is the aim of all sensible players in Government and the national debate generally. However, we have seen very little from the lacklustre Government opposite and certainly from the Minister most directly concerned, the honourable member for Kedron, that inspires confidence in an outcome that every Queenslanders could cheer.

The risk is that, in pursuing the policies it claims to be pursuing, policies that are designed to create large numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships—an objective we on this side of the House overwhelmingly support and, in fact, in Government pursued as a primary objective—this Government will instead take Queensland back to the industrial and job creation policies of Labor's failed past.

The people of Queensland deserve better than to have foisted on them a version of apprentice subsidy schemes that have missed the target set for them elsewhere. That experience elsewhere has resulted in findings that the quantum of funds required has led to an excess of applications over budgeted funds available for training schemes. In other words, they were a good idea but impossible to make happen on the level of funding available. We must avoid a situation arising in Queensland in which a similar unfortunate outcome results from the Government's well meaning—if also politically convenient—desire to play a role in creating employment for young Queenslanders.

Our proper course is to create a training regime in Queensland that is appropriate to the circumstances of the State and the exigencies of the times. It is true that in the mishmash of policy and spending responsibilities that currently exists between the States and the Commonwealth—and on which we await with heightened anticipation some sign of genuine Commonwealth interest in resolving effectively—training policy is in substantial measure dependent on Federal initiatives. However, it is also the case that the federated nature of this country means that it is possible for a State to avoid the pitfalls identified in a policy that has been implemented elsewhere.

The intent of most industry-based training funds and the levy arrangements put in place to support them is to provide greater opportunities for enhancing the skills of the existing work force and employee mobility. The new operating environment created by the presence in Canberra of a coalition Government takes training and apprenticeships substantially further down the road to real progress than was previously possible. The key role of private providers in the training sector as an integral leading element in the program—rather than an afterthought adjunct that some on the Labor side of politics think is the proper role for the private sector—has been cemented into place through the ANTA National Principles for Group Training.

Federal and State initiatives that impact on training and which might create flow-on effects for funding as proposed by legislation now being debated include new apprenticeships encompassing the vital principle of user choice. They include industry-based traineeships and entry level training support services in which the role of those bodies is to promote, market and increase the number of apprenticeships. They include the expansion of group training schemes under which Governments are to consider expanding their purchasing arrangements according to regional needs and priorities.

Our task in Queensland is to create mechanisms that work best for Queenslanders. It is simply not the case that the Bill now before the House will do that. As my colleague the member for Clayfield pointed out earlier in his contribution to the debate, the Bill proposes amendments to the existing legislation that will undermine the long-term actuarial soundness of the building and construction industry Portable Long Service Leave Fund.

The need to establish a training levy is not disputed on this side of the Chamber—far from it. The coalition in office introduced legislation to establish one. The minority Labor Government's amending legislation proposes to destroy that sensible initiative by the tired old ploy of finding a hollow log and raiding it. It does so in the face of considerable industry debate over what level of apprenticeships and, consequently, funding are required to service industry needs. That is the rub. This Government is obsessed with job creation.

Mr Purcell: It certainly is.

Mr HEGARTY: Good on it; so it should be!

The coalition Government was also obsessed with job creation—and with great effect, as we have seen by the record of our time in office when Queensland created 40% of all new jobs created in Australia. But we see clearly now what we have suspected since this Government came to office in June. It is obsessed with creating numbers to assist the Premier with his 5% unemployment plan—the plan that started off as a promise, became a target and then was sent off to the never-never land of wish-list politics.

In relation to the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Board and the amending legislation we are debating today, we see a further example of this smoke and mirror administration. We are looking at another expensive mirage. What is proposed is the exact reverse of good policy. In office, my colleague the member for Clayfield initiated a 25% reduction in the long service leave levy on builders and construction companies. Since the fund was established in 1992, there have been several other reductions because the fund was oversubscribed. Too much money was being committed. That created circumstances in which, based on actuarial advice, the projected long-term levy rate was forecast to be 0.15%.

The risk with the legislation now before the House is that, as has been seen with experience elsewhere, over time this de facto tax on the building and construction industry will have to rise to meet unfunded requirements in both training and its principal purpose, paying for long service leave for existing long-term employees in the industry. The experience elsewhere does not give cause for hope that Queensland under this Government—or the industry under the ministerial guidance of the member for Kedron—is any closer to perfection than ever. Studies in other jurisdictions indicate that apprenticeship numbers consistently fall below

equity in comparison with construction value. There may be many reasons for that failure of correlation, but it is an even bet that what is taking place in the construction industry is the same technology-based driving down of employee numbers that is a feature of every other industry. According to a new report by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, tradespeople were the second lowest growth group in Australia in the past 10 years, with a growth rate of just 6.4%.

There is no argument that we need more tradespeople. There is no argument—on this side of the House at any rate—that as a State and as a nation we need to give more emphasis to training people for jobs that accord with their aptitudes. Traineeships and apprenticeships are integral parts and absolutely fundamental elements of any policy to boost practical, trade-based training for long-term employment for young people. However, it is essential that traineeships and apprenticeships are planned for and funded on the basis of the likely rate of demand for the skills imparted by the training. In the history of Federal and State Governments, we have seen numerous examples of training schemes with no likelihood of a meaningful job at the end of the period of training. In other words, if the Minister meddles with the facts—and the fact in this case is that there is a definite limit to the number of building and construction industry entrants—he is likely to come a cropper. When the Government's political misadventure impacts adversely on the industries it is charged with supporting and promoting, it is doubly culpable.

As studies elsewhere have indicated and as commonsense should indicate even to people such as those opposite who have allowed themselves to become obsessed with their own fanciful forecasts, the primary driver of apprenticeship numbers in the building and construction industry is the level of industry activity. Here in Queensland construction is a far larger component of the State economy than in any other jurisdiction. We know that. We have had record growth in Queensland over a number of years. This is a happy outcome for our role as Australia's growth State, which, despite the activities of the present Government, is likely to continue. But the fact is also that such consistently higher levels of activity mean the potential to use building and construction as an engine for Government employment growth targets is significantly limited.

Mr Purcell: Do you know how many apprentice chefs we are going to be short in a

few years time when the Games are on? You would want to wait until the Games got here to train them, wouldn't you, you goose? You have to train them now.

Mr HEGARTY: The member should go on a diet and reduce consumption. I have been talking about the perception, underlined by a strongly held view within sections of the industry, that a skills shortage exists within the building and construction industry. It would be reasonable to expect that the Government, which is trying to push through this amendment Bill, would have some definite idea of the extent of the skills shortage in the building and construction industry—skills shortages which the Government is seeking to address. However, sadly this is not the case.

I ask honourable members to consider the following. During the recent Estimates committee hearing, a non-Government member asked the Minister to provide the committee with detailed statistics of the actual assessed shortage of skilled employees in the skill areas that he is seeking to address by various Government training schemes. In his answer, the Minister went on to provide a list of the entire range of industries that are eligible for training subsidies and also a list of industries with what he termed "current skills shortages".

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: They are very touching, but very hollow.

Mr Santoro: There was nothing specific.

Mr HEGARTY: No, it was a lot of rhetoric. Nowhere in his voluminous and not very helpful answer did the Minister provide the detailed statistical information that was required by the non-Government members of the committee. To underline this dreadful lack of preparation, on 14 October the Minister issued a media release titled "Survey to Identify Industry Skills Shortages." In the first paragraph, it stated—

"A joint government-industry survey of the State's top construction companies will identify major skill shortages in Queensland before more than 3,000 apprentice positions are created as part of the State Government's job initiatives."

In that release, the Minister stated further—

"Survey results will be used to target future training to meet the industry's needs."

The Minister stated further—

"We have to plan today to ensure we've got the skills to keep Queensland building and growing in the future."

Further, the Minister stated—

"While it was widely acknowledged that the industry was facing a skill shortage, specific skills gaps needed to be documented."

Mr Santoro: So is it fair to say he has not got a clue what he is talking about?

Mr HEGARTY: One would be led to that conclusion.

Mr Santoro: Skills shortages and nobody—neither the member for Bulimba nor the Minister—has given us a figure.

Mr HEGARTY: No. I think that we would at least be entitled to some statistical information.

As the shadow Minister has pointed out, we have an admission by the Minister that he is bringing on these training initiatives although he and his Government really do not have a clue as to specifically where the training moneys, which he is seeking to appropriate through this amendment Bill, are to be directed.

Mr Santoro: The member for Bulimba, who was going to provide us with the figures, didn't provide them either.

Mr HEGARTY: He is still working on his figures.

Mr Santoro: Is he working on the figures or his figure?

Mr HEGARTY: In view of the apprenticeship shortages, I think that he should be working on both, but that is another matter.

This is from a Government which, in Opposition, said that it was ready to govern, that it knew what it had to do, and that it had a plan. In reality, the plan was a hastily cobbled together 10-point plan which, at best, was meaningless.

Mr Santoro: But he is fleshing it out.

Mr HEGARTY: Yes. At worst, it is useless and the Government is now seeking to implement it on the run and without any real idea as to why it is going about implementing some of its initiatives.

Mr Santoro: He is doing a survey. The plans are coming together. He has forums, he has task forces, he has Bannikoff going for it all.

Mr HEGARTY: That will be very helpful in the aftermath—in the criticism—when the plan fails. I conclude by saying that it is essential that the Government give a fundamental and firm commitment to this House that its

proposed changes to the levy arrangements will not financially disadvantage the long service leave fund. It is also essential that honourable members hear from this Government a complete assurance that the building and construction industry will not be used as a cash flow contributor for the Premier's political jobs figures target. If we receive those assurances, it will give us a bit more confidence that this Minister and this Government are genuine in their target to reduce unemployment to 5% within the term of this Government. However, I believe that without the statistical backup information, it is very unlikely that the Opposition will be able to support this amendment Bill.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (4.04 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the proposed changes to the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991. That legislation was introduced by the Goss Labor Government in 1991 and took effect from 1 July 1992. It created a scheme to provide building and construction industry employees access to portable long service for service to the industry rather than to one employer. At that time, the concept was not new to Queensland; it had been promoted by Labor back in the early 1970s at a time when Tasmania already had an established scheme.

Unfortunately, although the concept was supported initially by the then coalition Government, I understand that it was subsequently dropped in the absence of full support from the industry. This was regrettable because every other State in Australia and the ACT proceeded to introduce their own schemes. Together, they established a national reciprocal agreement to give workers in their building and construction industries portable long service leave. This move had the added advantage of maintaining their skills base by encouraging workers to return to the industry after downturns and lay-offs. It is interesting to note that Queensland was the last State to introduce portable long service leave and we now face a disproportionately higher skills shortage than that of the other States.

When the Goss Labor Government gained office, it did not muck around with the issue: it established a working party comprising Government, employer and employee representatives to consider the best long service leave option for Queensland. The working party's recommendations were accepted and became the basis for the new legislation. After two decades of industry lobbying, Queensland's building and

construction industry employees finally had access to portable long service leave.

Our scheme has been such a huge success that in the past six years over 70,000 employees voluntarily took up membership. The scheme was funded initially by a levy on building and construction work. However, now that the fund has \$144m under investment, the majority of its income comes from interest earned through the Queensland Investment Corporation. Currently, that income is supplemented by a modest levy set at 0.1% of the cost of building and construction work. The reduction of red tape has led to an estimated saving of over \$3m for the Government. Additionally, industry compliance has improved, resulting in 18% more revenue from the workplace health and safety fee. Now it is time to pass the savings back to the industry. The changes will reduce the portable long service leave levy by 25% and the workplace health and safety fee on building work by over 28%.

Today, we are seeing the commitment of this Government to support an industry that is vital to Queensland. This is no piecemeal commitment, no half-hearted good intention, no mere feeble rhetoric; this is part of a comprehensive program to address problems that were ignored or even created by the previous coalition Government and the dilettante Minister whom it appointed. The Beattie Labor Government is targeting this central industry sector across the policy spectrum to provide a tailor-made, suitable regulatory environment to ensure its future success. These initiatives include the workplace-related policy areas of industrial relations, employment and training, workers compensation, workplace health and safety, portable long service leave and more.

In the area of industrial relations, the Government seeks to introduce to the building and construction industry workplace reform based on cooperation and consultation, not the confrontationist agenda that has been pursued by other Queensland and Commonwealth Governments. The electorate of Cairns, and I dare say other electorates also, want inclusive and cooperative workplace strategies that recognise the legitimate roles of both employer and employee representatives. This Government will work within the context of reality, not pursue some ideological agenda. We will recognise what we have already that works and build on it. We understand the imperative for workplace reform but we will pursue this with the backup of a secure safety net. We will ensure that traditional areas of

coverage are maintained to minimise demarcation issues. However, we will also encourage amalgamations of employer and employee organisations where parties consider those to be in the long-term interests of the industry.

In the area of employment and skills development, the Beattie Government's election undertaking was to break the unemployment cycle. We will create a massive increase in apprenticeships and traineeships. We are going to get long-term unemployed people working again and we have practical policies to achieve this. Our policies are active ones, where Government rolls up its shirt sleeves and does not wait forever for the market to do the work while people suffer.

Government policies include the 10% policy for Government capital works, where 10% of the labour hours in Government construction contracts will have to involve people in training. That is already happening in Cairns with work—and unemployment and training positions—having commenced on the \$28.5m Convention Centre extension. We are recommitting to the Housing Industry Trade Training Program, which will build the equivalent of 150 houses a year and train 200 new apprentices a year. We are creating the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund with the allocation of an estimated \$5.4m per annum, and \$3.6m in 1998-99 if this Bill is passed. It will supplement existing training efforts to provide additional relevant and needed training. At least half will go to employing apprentices. That will mean another 800 to 1,000 jobs per year—jobs for people who need jobs in an industry that needs people.

In the area of workers compensation, we have identified non-compliance in the payment of premiums as a major issue. In 1995-96, as much as \$50m—maybe even as high as \$100m—worth of premiums were not paid. The industry is concerned at the advantages that shonky operators are able to gain for themselves by not paying what they should. We will investigate the possibility of minimising non-compliance by levying premiums on principal contractors as a charge on projects collected by the Portable Long Service Leave Authority. Again it is a time for Government to act to ensure that all work is covered and that all employers are on an equal footing.

Taken as a whole, the proposed amendments provide a number of significant benefits to the building and construction industry. Firstly, the amount paid by the industry each year in fees and levies will drop

by \$2.3m. Low-cost housing will continue to be exempt. The disparity between civil and other work is removed, at no additional cost to any civil construction project. Mid-range housing projects will be brought into line with all other building and construction work. Twenty-five per cent of the work currently notifiable to Government can now be excluded, which means a huge reduction in red tape for the industry. Administration of the scheme will be simplified. It will be easier for levy and fee payers to calculate their payments. Forty per cent of the projects that are currently notifiable to the authority will have less to pay, and that is without taking into account the benefits that the training fund will produce within the industry.

In the State Government Capital Works Program, as well as reinvigorating the 10% policy that I have already referred to, we will insist that companies that win Government contracts must meet conditions that show that they are good corporate citizens. We will move to take into account bids from regional companies, emphasising regional employment and regional sourcing of supplies. They will have to have an enterprise bargaining agreement in place, they will have to meet their training obligations and they will have to comply with workplace health and safety, workers compensation and portable long service leave requirements. Government is the biggest customer of the building and construction industry and we will not be doing business with shonks. We will be rewarding the people who play fair and square.

The Labor Government believes in a coherent and comprehensive approach to this vital Queensland industry. We offer a broad program of policies that address the special difficulties of an industry that is central to the Queensland community and economy. In particular, this Government is out to break the unemployment cycle in this State. As a major employer, this industry is a priority and this Bill is one more step in our ongoing agenda of getting Queensland back to work.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (4.14 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon on the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill. The creation of jobs is one of the most important roles that Government in Australia can play at this point in time.

Mr Purcell: Hear, hear!

Mr STEPHAN: It is important. Gone are the days when, upon leaving school, we could choose where we wanted to work. Gone are

the days when we could safely say that we had a job for life. We must also remember that just a month or two ago the Beattie Government was elected on the back of a plan to reduce unemployment to 5% over three years.

Mr Braddy: Over five years.

Mr STEPHAN: Yes, it stretched a little after that, but that is what the Government was talking about. Depending on who the Premier was trying to impress at the time, he would mention one or two different figures.

The Premier's mantra was, "Jobs, jobs, jobs." He said that every morning he would wake up obsessed with jobs. However, I believe that the Premier has had some bad nights. It is not only that the Premier's obsession with jobs has been wanting, but he is not doing a very good job of lowering the rate of unemployment. For a man so obsessed, the Premier shows little enthusiasm and innovation. Members need just look at his Budget—the one that he ripped off from the coalition Government. In this Budget, unemployment is predicted to be around 8.75% at the end of the 1998-99 financial year, that is, the same level projected by the coalition. And what of the monthly unemployment figures? The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that unemployment in September was 9.2%, which is 0.6% higher than it was the previous month. That means that an additional 16,000 Queenslanders are out of work.

Regardless of how passionate it is, an obsession cannot in itself produce results. Actions themselves speak louder than words and in the case of job creation, the Premier needs to take action to ensure that he has good, workable policies. Unfortunately, the Premier's obsession for jobs does not extend beyond his commitment to the union movement. It does not extend to accepting the reality that the coalition's industrial relations policies were worked out to create jobs.

During the two years that the coalition was in office, more than 91,000 jobs were created. More than 91,000 Queenslanders were given the opportunity to work and earn an income during the term of the National/Liberal coalition Government. Let us compare that with the Labor Party's achievements during its term in office.

Mr Schwarten: Three months.

Mr STEPHAN: Yes, three months.

Under Labor, unemployment in Queensland rose to more than 11%. That is more than one in 10 Queenslanders

unemployed and unable to earn an income. The Beattie Labor Government has already started to head down the path of economic failure and high unemployment.

Let us take a look at the development of the Construction Training Centre at Salisbury. It is fair to say that the previous Minister for Training, the honourable member for Clayfield, received a great number of complaints from TAFE Queensland staff concerning the development of the Construction Training Centre at Salisbury. It was because of these complaints and others from the building and construction industry, and the fact that they were being ignored by Construction Training Queensland, that the previous Minister was motivated to employ Coopers and Lybrand to assess the extent to which the project was meeting current training needs and its capacity to meet future needs.

The complaints received specifically from TAFE fell into two major categories. The first was a perceived conflict of interest. The legislation setting up ITABs—Industry Training Advisory Bodies—quite clearly indicates that their role is advisory: to assess training needs in their respective industry, advise Government of those needs and provide suggestions as to how those needs could best be met. TAFE staff felt that the Construction Industry ITAB, by insisting that TAFE students attend the Construction Training Centre at Salisbury, was exceeding its legislatively defined role.

Yeronga TAFE teachers were particularly incensed when it was suggested that they and their students should all move to Salisbury, unnecessarily pay \$8,000 of public moneys in rent, leaving behind purpose-built workshops and buildings at Yeronga that the taxpayers would need to spend millions of dollars gutting and refurbishing before they could be used for other vocational education and training programs. The Minister now wishes to extend what many TAFE staff and others already regard as a serious conflict of interest situation by the ITAB, by using clause 8 of the legislation to appoint the ITAB as the legal entity to administer the public moneys being siphoned from the building workers' long service leave funds.

How does the Minister justify this in terms of the legislative role of the ITAB as a purely advisory body? Will he extend these additional responsibilities to other ITABs? For example, if the tourism, fishing or transport industries came to him with proposals for the State to keep diesel fuel taxes in place once they are reduced by the Commonwealth, will he entrust the ITABs to set up training centres and utilise

the funds from taxing diesel fuel to stimulate employment and training in their respective industries? No wonder TAFE staff view the current issues at Salisbury as a major cause for concern.

The second major area of concern by TAFE staff and industry groups that stimulated the decision to commission an external review by Coopers and Lybrand related to doubts as to whether the Construction Training Centre concept, as originally conceived, was currently relevant to training needs and likely to meet future needs in the industry. These doubts are shared not only by critics of the current centre at Salisbury but also by many keen supporters of the centre who are committed to its development and future relevance.

In their September 1997 report they had this to say about the new training environment that had developed since the Construction Training centre concept was first established—

"... the introduction of competitive tendering/user choice. This was not around when the decisions were made to build the Salisbury Training Centre. Both these features (user choice and competitive tendering) are the biggest obstacles in determining the organisational role and direction of the Centre.

... more on the job training as part of training packages, easy entry to the training market without the huge overheads associated with building colleges/skills centres by new entrants into the training market, perceived advantages of on-the-job training, the use of new training mediums, such as CDROM, CDI, Internet, Computer Based Training allowing flexible on-the-job training.

...

A clear distinction between Government as purchaser of training and as a provider through TAFE.

...

The most dynamic change that has affected training delivery is that construction companies and builders, large and small, have a new management and workplace structure. The major effect of this is that the concept of grass roots employees is diminishing along with the direct employment of apprentices and trainees.

...

Both the employee and the apprentices/trainees are being replaced

by labour-hire arrangements on a needs basis and the rapid growth of group training arrangements. A recent paper for ANTA revealed that this type of employment structure is widespread across those industries which have traditionally employed apprentices. These changes are rapidly becoming the norm. The main reason given by contractors surveyed for not being involved in training was that they could not provide continuity of employment."

It is ironic that, having abolished TAFE head office in order to decentralise vocational education and training decision making, the Minister is prepared to embark on a process which is designed to centralise all metropolitan building and construction training at one centre in order to fulfil a purely political commitment.

In the face of such well-founded concerns, the Minister is acting in a most negligent and deceptive manner in attempting to push this legislation through the House and pour more public moneys into this venture before members are provided with copies of the report. The Minister continues to refuse to make the Coopers and Lybrand report available to the shadow Minister and the Parliament. Every member of this House has an obligation to be fully informed about issues upon which we are required to vote. In light of this, the Minister needs to provide us, as members of this House, with sufficient information to assure all and sundry that the sums of money that have been earmarked for this initiative are not going to be used to prop up some form of educational white elephant.

Furthermore, the Minister has been deceptive by omitting to indicate in his second-reading speech that, while Western Australia has a training levy in the building and construction industry, it has failed to meet expectations. This failure has been so severe that a drastic overhaul of the WA levy has been required. There is no evidence that the Minister and his advisers have learnt anything from the interstate experience.

Another relevant point concerning the situation in Western Australia is that the training levy replaced the apprentice requirement in State Government contract work. This information was in an information paper entitled Experiences with Construction Industry Training Levies in the Various States, prepared in September 1995 for the Minister's predecessor. Minister Braddy has either not done his homework or has chosen to omit from his second-reading speech any reference to this rather inconvenient fact. Premier Beattie

and Minister Braddy have promised their supporters that this levy will be in place within six months of their ascent to power. There is adequate argument for this amending legislation to be delayed for a reasonable period of time.

Time expired.

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (4.34 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak to this legislation, having been involved closely with the building and construction industry in recent years. The Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill contains a raft of reforms which will realise benefits to both industry and building and construction workers. It is about time that something was done for training for building construction workers. That lot on the other side did nothing for them and now they stand up and whinge, carp and moan about the most innovative step that has been taken in the past 10 years in this State for training for construction workers.

In particular, this amendment Bill represents a culmination of industry lobbying and support for the creation of an industry-funded training scheme, with the principal objective of building the broadest possible consensus throughout industry for the establishment of this fund. So it could not be seen and promoted as a narrow sectional objective. The building of that consensus has taken years; it has been welded together year in, year out. That consensus now exists for this fund, and that is why we are moving on it. At the same time the Bill introduces important amendments which will improve workers access to portable long service leave and extend these entitlements to prescribed payment systems workers—PPS workers—who supply their labour only and who currently have no coverage. It is a balanced Bill for both industry and workers.

The building and construction industry is a pivotal industry in Queensland. It is pivotal to the employment of some 125,000 workers, representing around 8% of the Queensland work force. It is pivotal to Queensland's economic growth, contributing almost \$12 billion to the State's economy. However, the building and construction industry is facing severe and critical skill shortages and has been for some period of time, principally through the neglect of the previous Government, now in Opposition. This is something that the honourable members now in Opposition did nothing to arrest when, as I say, they were in Government. Instead, they chose to ignore the cries of industry at their

own peril. Not only did members opposite arrest the entire capital works project, funding and programs of the Goss Government when the now Opposition assumed Government two and a half to three years ago, they did nothing for the training of building and construction workers while that tap was turned off.

The building and construction industry is unique in a variety of ways. It is unique in its employment arrangements. The industry relies heavily on project-based work, with up to 40% of its work being generated by the Queensland Government, hence, the critical impact—the devastating impact—that the public works and capital works freeze that the previous Government enacted had upon the construction industry. That is why it is critically important that this Labor Government is committed to the actual implementation of an intensive Capital Works Program to help revitalise the industry and the economy of this State. It is also why, as a major employer and benefactor in the industry, Government cannot sit by idly and watch the industry decline.

Over the past decade in particular, there has been a reduction in the employment of apprentices directly by employers, accompanied by the continued growth in reliance on subcontracting arrangements. As a result, there has been a general reliance in the industry on group training companies to employ and train apprentices for the industry. However, even industry recognises that this is not enough. For the future viability and skills of industry, the major players recognise that all of industry needs to pull together and take responsibility for training up future workers—future tradespeople and skilled workers. The only way to ensure that this will be achieved is to establish a common industry-based training fund to which all of industry will contribute to the benefit of all of industry.

I take exception to some of the scurrilous lies being bandied about by the Opposition. It would have us believe that the Government is raiding the Portable Long Service Leave Fund—creaming the top off its profits, taking money from the workers' entitlements and leaving the fund in a parlous financial state. That is simply empty rhetoric from the Opposition side. Let us set the record straight. Let us look at the facts.

The training fund will be set up through a grant from the Portable Long Service Leave Authority to a trust fund which will be administered by Construction Training Queensland, the bipartite training advisory body for the industry. By transferring funds via a grant we can get the training scheme

operational from day one, from 1 January 1999. What this industry needs above all is action, and action now. That deadline will enable us to do that. It means that we do not have to wait another 12 or more months while we set up a separate levy and a separate scheme. The reality is that industry cannot afford to wait if we are to start addressing skills shortages and training needs.

The simple facts are that there is approximately \$119m in current surpluses within the authority, with approximately \$30m in commitments for long service leave entitlements, which are funded. That represents a 5 to 1 ratio of investment versus liability. The revenue from the authority's investments alone will be enough to ensure that long service leave liabilities are met. It is simply untrue to say that this initiative will place the funding for the authority at risk. I am advised through the Minister that this has been confirmed through the authority's independent actuarial advice, which is commercial in confidence.

Just to set the record straight, actuarial advice to the authority is deemed commercial in confidence simply because it is neither custom nor practice to release such information for public debate. The right and proper process for scrutiny of financial operations of an agency of Government is through the tabling of annual reports in the House and any subsequent debate.

The authority also advises that the actuarial advice has indicated that the levy for portable long service leave could have been either reduced or frozen for a period and still have left the fund in a healthy state. In fact, the conservative estimate provided to the authority is that the fund could have sustained a zero levy for a period of 10 years prior to the re-introduction of a levy of 0.12% to sustain current and projected liabilities.

Some may ask: so why not reduce the current levy? Reduce the levy or reduce it to zero for a period and we still have not addressed the fundamental problems facing the industry. Reducing the levy will not induce employers to take on more apprentices or to train their workers. This is an industry-wide problem and only an industry-wide solution will address it.

Key industry and business representatives support the establishment of an industry training fund in the manner proposed. So the question I put to members opposite is: why shouldn't you? Why should members of this House not support a viable proposition supported by the industry players?

It is interesting to note that the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Board, which is made up of representatives from the industry, including the Queensland Master Builders Association, the Housing Industry Association, the Civil Contractors Federation, the Australian Workers Union, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, and that exemplary trade union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, has never supported reducing the levy rate to zero. Instead, those same representatives, along with other industry representatives and regional businesses, have indicated that there is a need to establish a training levy to ensure the long-term survival of the industry, estimated to cost industry in the order of \$5m per annum in additional levies. They firmly support these initiatives.

Why would we then reduce the long service leave levy and set up a separate levy with all of its associated administration costs? It does not make good sense. If we had chosen to establish a separate scheme to administer a training fund—in effect imposing an additional levy on industry—it would cost in excess of \$2m a year to administer, compared with the estimated \$300,000 in administration through a one-stop collection process through the authority. When compared with the established \$5.4m per annum in funding that is proposed for training under this initiative, this cost would clearly not be justifiable. The current proposal to share the proceeds from the collection of the portable long service leave levy eliminates the exorbitant administration costs.

The authority is also of the view that the proposed changes are more than sustainable. It is not raiding funds or workers' entitlements; it is simply slowing down the rate of growth of the surplus excess which currently exists and surpluses which will continue to exist in the Portable Long Service Leave Fund. The proposed amendments also reflect the Government's commitment to reducing red tape by avoiding the duplication of services through having the authority as the sole collection agency, without any effect on its core business operations.

This is not a new idea. In fact, it was the coalition, supported by Labor in Opposition, that combined the collection functions for workplace health and safety fees with the collection of the portable long service leave levy. The only problem with its proposal was the differing threshold rates applying between the two, which resulted in an astonishing 30% error rate in collection, let alone the estimated

losses in compliance revenues through administrative errors.

We are taking a good idea, fixing the existing problems and building upon it through the concept of the one-stop shop for industry—a concept which has the majority support of industry—rather than imposing the collection of another levy or fee and imposing yet another administrative and regulatory function on industry. In addition, introducing a training fund instead of a separate training levy simply means an extra \$2m spent on training outputs, not wasted on administrative costs and overheads.

There is no raiding of employee or industry funds. Savings on these costs can be put directly into training. Training outcomes, not expensive administrative overheads, are what the industry training fund is about. It simply makes good business sense—something that this side of the House well understands. That is what the authority, with industry representation, determined based on the financial information available to it, and that is what the authority has recommended to Government. I have already stated that this is a balanced piece of legislation, based upon the consensus achieved across all sectors of the building and construction industry. It is balanced because it recognises industry needs, jobs for young Queenslanders and improvements in worker entitlements.

The Bill introduces important amendments which will see building and construction workers able to access their long service leave entitlements after 10 years, instead of the current 15 years. This is important when the average length of time spent in the industry is between 7 and 10 years. It will also extend long service leave entitlements to those subcontractors—PPS workers who supply their labour—in the industry who currently have no coverage or entitlements.

The other positive spin-off of the amendments proposed to the method of collection of the levy and workplace health and safety fees is the introduction of a common leviable threshold rate. It is worth noting that the current rates and threshold levels which are applied in the industry include a long service leave levy of 0.1%, a workplace health and safety notification fee of 0.1% on civil works, a workplace health and safety notification fee of 0.175% on any other building and construction works, a threshold of \$120,000 for housing and a threshold of \$42,000 for commercial, civil and other

residential works. These arrangements have led to the clearly unacceptable error rate of 30% in the completion of notification and payment forms. Needless to say, they have been the subject of numerous complaints from industry. They are confusing and they are inequitable.

The proposed amendments will overcome these problems by establishing a common levy and fee rate of 0.2% and an equitable threshold of \$80,000. The long service leave rate will be reduced to 0.075%, and an industry-wide workplace health and safety fee of 0.125% will be adopted throughout industry. This represents no net increase in fees and charges for the building and construction industry, a combined rate of 0.2%, or \$2 into every \$1,000, on all building and construction activity within the State, and with a reduced financial burden to clients of the industry to the tune of \$2.3m—a sum greatly valued by the industry. I am very pleased to say that these simplified administrative arrangements, which meet the majority support of industry, will also allow for the employment of an additional 15 workplace health and safety inspectors throughout the State. They are urgently needed to address the unacceptably high incidence of accidents which occur within this industry.

The amendments contained in this Bill are long overdue. The creation of an industry training fund will generate employment for an additional 800 to 1,000 apprentices each year, in addition to providing valuable upgrading of skills for existing workers within the industry needed to sustain a viable future for the building and construction industry in this State. The Bill also brings long service leave entitlements into line with those provided in other States and in recognition of the unique nature of employment within this industry.

As I said at the outset, this is a legislative move that has been based upon a consensus reached across the industry, principally through the commendable work done by Construction Training Queensland. For a period of eight or nine years, I had the great pleasure of working as a member of the executive of that body. I want recorded in Hansard the commendable and, in fact, exceptional work that has been done by Construction Training Queensland in the decade of the 1990s. In fact, without casting aspersions upon any other industry training advisory body in Queensland, the standards and benchmarks established by CTQ far exceed most achieved throughout other industry sectors in Queensland. In fact, it establishes a pattern of work throughout the

industry that could be well emulated by other ITABs throughout industry in Queensland.

Mr Roberts: The old electrical training board did an excellent job as well.

Mr WILSON: They did. I accept that interjection from the member for Nudgee, who would know well the excellent work done by the electrical training ITAB. There are many other ITABs. In fact, if there was ever really one initiative taken within the whole training reform agenda within industry in the past 10 years, it would be the establishment of the ITABs. With State and Federal Government representation on those bodies, we have been able to establish a forum throughout the industry, involving employers and employees and their unions, where they have been able to discuss and reach agreement on critical training issues that need to be advanced for the salvation of industry in this country without the intrusion of various industrial relations issues that ordinarily takes place in the industrial relations environment in this country. We have been able to corral the issues of training and skills training within the building and construction industry to find common agreement on how we move forward on this front.

The various industry stream committees that have been established under CTQ, particularly those with which I am most directly familiar within the civil construction area, have done an excellent job. I refer to the construction industry skills centre which has been established at Salisbury. If anyone on the other side of this Chamber wants to see a positive, innovative approach to training in this industry, they should get themselves out to that Salisbury training centre and have a look with their own eyes, instead of harping and carping about what they want to happen in this critical industry in relation to training. No-one will surpass the work that is being done by the Salisbury centre, which is looking for a cooperative joint venture with TAFE Queensland to achieve unparalleled advances on training within the building and construction industry. With the support of this legislation and the Beattie Labor Government, which is dedicated to jobs and training, I am sure that they will achieve it. I support the legislation.

Mr BLACK (Whitsunday—ONP) (4.54 p.m.): I rise to express my concern about the threat that this Bill poses to ravage the accumulated funds of Queensland building workers.

Mr Nuttall: Who wrote this for you? Why don't you say what you think?

Mr BLACK: The member should not worry about that. This is what I think.

Mr Nuttall interjected.

Mr BLACK: Why don't you shut up and listen for a while!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! That remark is unparliamentary. I remind the member that he should speak through the Chair.

Mr BLACK: I apologise.

The BCI Portable Long Service Leave Authority currently holds sufficient funds to be self-funding on a continuing basis. With this Bill, the Government seeks to use this fund underhandedly as a vehicle to introduce its training levy via the back door. The money in this fund belongs to the Queensland building and construction industry workers. It does not belong to the Beattie minority Government.

I am not sure how the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations managed to pull this confidence trick on the building workers union—how he has apparently obtained their agreement to get his hand into their cookie jar. The Portable Long Service Leave Fund of Queensland building and construction industry workers is, quite rightly, a sacred cow. It is vital to the futures of these workers and their families. It represents for them the same benefits as those enjoyed by workers in other industries and forms an integral part of their employment arrangements. It must not be tampered with in any way. If the Government wants a training levy, I am sure that employers would be prepared to contribute to such a levy, provided that the current one was discontinued and the accumulated funds were preserved.

Let us see some honesty and transparency here. Let us rule off on the existing long service levy and protect it for the benefit of those who have contributed to it. For the benefit of honourable members opposite, I am referring to the group when they claim to represent but have forgotten, that is, the workers. Let us implement a new levy at a lower rate and let us call it what it is: a training levy. In that way, with a reduced levy, employers will have a greater incentive to employ more people, the workers' benefits will be preserved under the existing self-funding accumulated fund, and the Government will be more honest and open.

We can only assume that the proposed strategy is designed to circumvent the Premier's undertaking to the Independent member for Nicklin that there will be no new taxes. A tax under any other name is still a tax.

One Nation will not be party to a confidence trick to attempt to hoodwink the interested parties in this Parliament. One Nation recommends honesty and openness. We suggest that the Government should try it some time. We cannot support the rape of a fund which belongs to Queensland workers, and we will not support a Bill which seeks to achieve certain ends by dishonest means.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.58 p.m.): The Bill before the House today is part of an overall reform framework whereby the Beattie Government delivers the reform so sadly lacking in the previous administration. It sets up a training, safety and employment framework for this industry, which provides employers and employees with a sound basis for moving forward into a future where competitive local and export performance will spell growth and prosperity for their industry. This security is based on strong skills, enhanced commitment from the Government through increased capital works, and greater employment opportunities for young people. Our youth need to know that there is a job for them when they leave school—jobs that are secure.

The Beattie Government has already achieved major reforms which will benefit the building and construction industry. These include the reinvigoration of the 10% policy, which will provide more jobs for young people—900 more jobs over three years; the expansion of the Housing Industry Trade Training Program—another additional 600 jobs for apprenticeships; the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program, which will provide subsidies to employers to employ more apprentices and trainees—estimated to be at least 90 apprentices in the building and construction industry in the public sector and many more in the private sector; and an additional 15 workplace health and safety inspectors for this industry to improve safety in the workplace.

The legislation being considered today is a key element in the Government's plan for the industry. By providing for increased training expenditure and enhanced long service leave benefits to employees, the Government is providing a more stable, productive work force. I will deal with the elements of the Bill in order. Firstly, the Bill deals with long service leave. It expands the definition of "worker" to include prescribed payment system—PPS—subcontractors who supply their labour and supervisors. This provision has been requested by industry for a long time and provides a far more equitable application of long service

leave to the industry. The proposed amendments also reduce the qualifying period for long service leave from 15 years to 10 years and make it easier for workers to accrue leave after 10 years' service from five yearly accrual to daily accrual.

Members should note that no additional long service leave benefit is being proposed, just easier and earlier access by workers to their entitlements. Those changes allow Queensland construction workers to have comparable benefits to their peers in other States—a very reasonable and appropriate provision. Why should Queensland workers be discriminated against?

The Bill provides for the establishment of the building and construction industry training fund. The proposal is for a modest fund equivalent to 0.05% of leviable building and construction activity annually. Based on a full-year building and construction activity level of \$10.8 billion in 1998-99, that would equate to \$5.4m of training funds. The actual funds that should flow from this legislation will be about \$3.6m based on eight months' activity in the remaining 1998-99 financial year.

As this Government is working with the building and construction industry, the fund will lead to more jobs for young Queenslanders. Over the full three years of operation of the fund, we fully expect an additional 2,500 to 3,000 apprenticeships and traineeships in the private sector. That will virtually double the number of apprentices in training in that industry and reverse the slide in apprenticeships evident under the previous Government. Unemployed young people in Mount Ommaney have told me that they are looking forward to having the chance to learn a trade under this scheme. Our opponents cry that we are raiding the Portable Long Service Leave Fund to pay for training. Clearly that is untrue and a blatant scare tactic on the Opposition's part. The Minister has already stated in this House and elsewhere that independent actuarial advice has been received that the long service leave fund will not need to review its position for at least 12 years if all the improvements are made. I might add that, during that 12-year period, the fund will have at least five reviews of its position as required under the existing Act. At the same time, the impost on industry will be reduced by \$2.3m per year and the industry will have a far simpler system. This is really some raid: improved services and entitlements, less cost and easier administration.

The members of the previous Government should admit that they are embarrassed by their lack of action in this industry and acknowledge the Beattie Government's action as one that will place Queensland industry at the forefront in Australia. Opponents of this legislation have also tried to suggest that the industry does not support the proposals. Again, that is clearly untrue. Industry has continued to call for the establishment of an industry-based training levy—now a fund—for at least five years. Recent meetings around the State by officers of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Construction Training Queensland and the Portable Long Service Leave Authority received virtual unanimous support from industry for the fund and other changes. That support was particularly strong in regional centres. Industry knows and acknowledges that those changes are to its benefit and have continued to work on planning for the training fund over the past few months in anticipation of its availability. I support the Bill.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (5.04 p.m.): I, too, would like an opportunity to make some comments about statements made by the Minister in his second-reading speech in relation to the performance of the coalition Government in the policy area of vocational education and training. He implied or made comments that indicated that he had drawn the inference that skills shortages within the building and construction industry are a result of inactivity on the part of the coalition Government during its 28 months in office. It is becoming an old story. Any impartial observer need look no further than the Minister's own speech to appreciate that the coalition Government in February 1996 inherited the problem created through years of Labor mismanagement.

Statistics quoted by the Minister show clearly that between 1993 and 1996, during the term of the late and largely unlamented Goss Labor Government, spending on training for the building and construction industry fell from 1.63% to 1.38% of the gross national payroll. Queensland accounted for an incredible 56% of the national decline. That happened under a Labor Government.

The Minister's inventiveness in seeking to deflect responsibility might work wonders in the Labor caucus room, but it will not do in the real world. When the Minister comes up with a disastrous outcome, he has no alternative but to cop the blame that is due. As usual, there is a big difference between the rhetoric and the

facts, and does the Minister not hate it when his good story is spoilt by the facts! The indisputable fact is that it was the Labor Party in Government that permitted the problem to arise; the problem the incoming coalition Government had to fix. This House will be interested to hear the following additional information on the Labor Government's performance when last in office in relation to the building and construction industry. It is a shameful record. It is a catalogue of failure. It is something over which those opposite should hang their heads in shame. It is something that everyone with children of an age to be entering the work force should be aware of and be concerned about.

The number of construction industry apprentices in training during the period 1990 to 1997 fluctuated somewhat, but the variations during that period were from a low of 4,401 apprentices in 1990-91 to a high of 6,285 in 1994, dropping again to 5,747 in 1995-96. In the last four years of Labor's previous administration, that is, 1992-93 through to 1995-96, apprentice and trainee withdrawals—that is, apprentices who started their apprenticeship but did not finish—from this industry grew as follows. In 1992-93, the figure was 580. The next year, 1993-94, it was 748. It leapt in 1994-95 to 1,056. In 1995-96 it almost again reached 1,000 with a figure of 907. What a sorry record; what an abject failure; what a great reason for no-one to take on trust anything this Minister or this Government says about commitment to the future and about a vision for the future.

In the two years of 1994-95 and 1995-96, an average of 1,000 apprentices withdrew from that industry. Within the first full year of the coalition Government, the rate of cancellations was down to just over 700. In other words, it was down to pre-1993-94 levels. Similarly, the number of apprentices and trainees in the industry who completed their training fluctuated considerably. In 1992-93, there were 1,246 successful apprenticeship completions. Two years later under Labor, that figure had dropped to 874—a reduction of 362 apprentices and trainees completing their training. Those figures clearly demonstrate the true picture of Labor's capacity to assist Queensland's nation-beating building and construction industries. The figures clearly demonstrate Labor's failure to assist in the development of Queensland when they were in office for six years and had ample opportunities to do so. The figures tell the story. Their record is clear. When Labor was last in Government, it failed miserably to address the training needs of the building and

construction industry. Now it has a second chance to do so and, apparently, it is intent on doing so by scampering back to the past in industrial relations law.

We on this side have no cause to feel confidence in the Government's ability to deliver outcomes that the private sector deserves. This legislation is certainly not the best way of going about solving the problem of training in the building industry. For the benefit of this House, and particularly for the benefit of members who are new to this place and who, owing to their very narrow background, may have had only the dubious benefit of a skewed Labor Party briefing on these issues, I would like to outline the level of completions achieved within the building and construction industry during the coalition's first full financial year in office.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The member would not know the meaning of the word. These figures for the 1996-97 financial year are the latest statistical figures. The member should listen to this because he would learn something. Once again, the facts give the lie to the Government's rhetoric. Once again, the facts get in the way of a good story. Those opposite would prefer not to know, but the facts are that in 1996-97 there were 1,335 successful completions—1,335 successful apprenticeships. That was an extra 461 successful apprenticeships completed—461 young people successfully completed their indentures, 461 more than did so in 1994-95, which was the Goss Labor Government's last full financial year in office, and almost 100 up on the best that Labor ever achieved in 1992-93. So much for Labor's record of enhanced employment opportunities! It prompts the cautious observer of today's Labor rhetoric to seriously question whether this party, now back in power and back in full propaganda mode, can actually deliver anything other than hot air. Can Labor deliver anything that is supported by fact?

On 13 October 1997, in a speech to the Construction 2001 conference, the then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, informed delegates that of the 1,607 apprentices who started their training in 1992, only 883, or 55%, completed their indentures. That is indeed a disgraceful fact, and a disgraceful fact of which the present Government must be reminded often. It is a disgraceful fact that this minority Labor administration, as the heir to the Goss Government which so failed Queensland, must accept a great deal of responsibility. It is a fact

that every one of us who are parents of apprenticeship-age kids should be concerned about—a 50% completion rate.

From the figures that I have provided, it is easy to see a reversal of the negative trend due to the diligent and effective policies and administration of the previous coalition Government and the high levels of confidence that that engendered in this and all other industries. Under the former coalition Government, in the 12 months to November 1997, new apprenticeship approvals for the industry increased by 10.6%. In fact, a comparison of the 1997 figures with those of 1990 indicate a 13% growth in apprenticeships for the industry. The former coalition Government introduced a wide and far-reaching range of initiatives aimed at increasing the building and construction industry's involvement in structured training. Under the coalition, part-time arrangements were built into the system of apprenticeships and traineeships so that the number of businesses that could for the first time consider employing an apprentice or trainee in their own right was widened significantly. The coalition introduced school-based apprenticeships and traineeships that allow young Queenslanders to gain relevant and useful industry experience as well as vocational qualifications while they are still attending school. The coalition introduced work-based delivery, significantly reducing and, in many cases, eliminating the need for apprentices and trainees to leave their own workplace to receive formal instruction. The coalition upgraded efforts to ensure the application of competency-based training across the full vocational education and training spectrum. All of those policies were designed to achieve positive results and they were in the process of doing so. The figures bear that out. They were doing so in accordance with a plan, and it was working.

Labor's disgraceful decision to raid the long service fund via a training levy—by using the workers' holiday pay bank—puts not only the fund at risk ultimately but also it adds unnecessarily to the bureaucratic overburden that successive Labor Governments traditionally impose on private companies, whose job is to make profits and thus build employment. If this Government is serious about increasing employment in this industry or in any other industry, it must first accept that companies and all employers have to make profits. It is simple: no profits, no jobs.

The building industry is cyclical. With the best will in the world, it is not possible to control fully the commercial cycle in a private

enterprise economy. Even in a mixed economy such as Queensland's where there is a public works component that comprises a greater proportion of work on hand or planned than exists in other larger economies without our developmental needs, there is a very strict limit on what it is possible to do to influence this cycle. It is important that we build up the skills base in Queensland. It is crucial that this build-up encompasses work skills in traditional manual trades and in areas that will remain at least relatively labour intensive. No-one on this side will argue with that proposition. However, we have yet to hear a convincing argument from the promoters of this legislation that the way chosen by this minority Labor Government, this transfer of holiday pay banked funds to an interventionist, Fabian-style mechanism for social engineering, is in any way the right way to go.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (5.16 p.m.): I wish to address the vital importance of training to the building and construction industry and the role that the proposed training fund can play in enhancing the industry to better reflect the skill needs of this State into the 21st century. It was extremely disappointing to listen to speeches by Opposition and One Nation members in opposition to this proposition, which will enhance the skills and employability of many employees within that industry. Their opposition goes also to the improvements to the long service entitlements that will flow from this legislation.

This industry contributes \$11.8 billion to the State's economy and employs 8% of the work force. Yet the training within this industry is falling behind the levels necessary to maintain a skilled work force. In 1996-97, only about 40% of the estimated 2,000 apprentices required to maintain the trade skills base remained in training. Nationally, between 1993 and 1996 employer expenditure on training fell 15%—a drop of some \$14m. Queensland's share of this drop was a disproportionate \$8m, or 56% of the national decline. When one considers its potential impact on the future of this State, this is a frightening picture.

For some seven years or eight years, the building and construction industry has been calling for a training levy similar to those that operate in other States. As far as I am aware, the only opposition to that that has been expressed to any significant extent has been from the Housing Industry Association. As honourable members may know, training funds exist already in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania and have been

successful in supporting the building and construction industries in those States. Although in the past Governments have been cautious, it is now time to hear this call and react. We need to provide an environment in which this industry can help itself.

The training fund proposed as part of this amendment is one positive step that the Government can take to show leadership on this important issue. The proposal establishes a mechanism to transfer a modest 0.05% of building and construction activity that can be levied, which in 1998-99 is estimated at \$10.8 billion, from the Portable Long Service Leave Fund to a training fund. This compares with the 0.25% levy which applies in South Australia as an example. This is a modest proposal and would equate to approximately \$5.4m in the full 1998-99 financial year.

As part of this proposal, the industry has agreed with the Government that the employment of young people will be a priority. As part of the Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives, this proposal is estimated to result in the employment of an additional 800 to 1,000 apprentices per year for the next three years.

The proposed subsidies to employers will assist in employing new apprentices and maintaining the employment of apprentices at risk of losing their jobs. Given the very high turnover of apprentices in this industry, this is a major feature of the fund. The subsidies proposed will be in addition to the existing subsidies from the Commonwealth Government and to those proposed under the Government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives. All up, this Government and the industry are working together to make a major impact on employment for young people in the building and construction industry. This will be a tremendous boost to the jobs of young people in the industry and to those aspiring to a career in building or construction. It will also go a long way to replacing the lost skills of those leaving the industry or being drawn south by the Olympics construction program. We must ensure that Queensland is not disadvantaged by the skills shortage at a time when the State needs the full advantage of a major public works program.

In addition, industry has priorities in the areas of upskilling existing workers, re-establishing a business culture that encourages training for the industry and promoting building and construction as a worthwhile career for young people. Upskilling existing workers in the industry is of particular importance to ensure that those workers get

adequate recognition for their skills and are not disadvantaged in the skills development process for the industry. The civil construction sector is one where this priority is particularly strong.

The commitment by industry, not just the building and construction industry, to training has been under a severe challenge in recent years. In the building and construction industry this has led to an ongoing decline in apprentice numbers and a general reluctance by the industry to embrace new training opportunities. Consequently, this industry has been disadvantaged relative to some others in terms of maintaining a skilled, stable work force, which are two imperatives for an internationally competitive industry. The training fund will provide an improved incentive for employers to increase their commitment to training and over time will re-establish a culture that is supportive of training within the industry.

Recent experience within the building and construction industry suggests that there is considerable difficulty in recruiting the best school graduates into the industry. This is a cause for concern as it means that the industry will struggle to meet its needs into the 21st century. In competing with other industry sectors for the best students, building and construction has to lift its profile as a worthwhile and rewarding career. This is another priority for the training fund, which will provide funds to develop additional career counselling materials for use in schools and at career expos. Additionally, professional development for school career counsellors will provide added awareness of the industry and its potential for young people.

The development of the proposed training fund has included industry breakfasts across the State to ascertain employers' current feelings on the proposed priorities. The outcome of those breakfast meetings has been extensive support for the proposal, particularly from regional Queensland. Regional industry leaders just wanted to know how soon the new initiatives would be available. Those breakfast meetings highlighted an additional area of need outside of Brisbane: the need for better on-the-ground marketing of new training arrangements and support for employers to take on apprentices and trainees. The training fund can also make a contribution in this area with support from existing industry bodies and regional officers of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Group training companies also can play a role in the expansion of these new initiatives.

I have outlined just some of the benefits that will flow to the building and construction industry and, in particular, to the employees from the introduction of the training fund. This will be achieved with no additional costs to industry and will be administered through the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Authority to minimise administration costs. The fund is industry money, redistributed efficiently for the benefit of all participants in the industry. The introduction of this training fund is overdue. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.23 p.m.): The Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill 1998 deserves the closest scrutiny because essentially it proposes to introduce a new tax—one of the new taxes that Labor, in its dishonest campaign during the June State election, swore it would not be introducing.

It has been very good to hear Government members speaking on this Bill. When talking about creating employment and new jobs, first and foremost it must be recognised that many of the people on the other side of the House have probably never employed anyone. The issue of employing people comes back to the factor of paying. Considering the depressed economy that this country is currently experiencing, we should be very understanding of what employers are going through. We should not merely be looking at what will benefit the unions.

Everybody in this House is well aware of the fact that we want to create new apprenticeships and we need to upgrade professional people in those fields. A while ago I heard the member for Nudgee refer to industry attracting the best school graduates. That disappoints me somewhat because while industry is attracting the best school graduates, what happens to the young people who may not be in a position to take advantage of that situation? I hope that the schemes that the Government is proposing will not just pick the eyes out of the flock in the hope that the rest will do the best for themselves that they can. The coalition is about giving a fair go to all.

So much for Labor promises. The proposed amendments to the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 1991 will break the spirit of the Premier's promise to the people of Queensland, if not the fact of his solemn undertaking. We are told by the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations

that the proposed amendments will create a Building and Construction Industry Training Fund and that this fund will contribute substantially to the provision of training for workers in the industry. In his second-reading speech, the Minister told us that the establishment of the industry training fund was part of Labor's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle election platform.

The policy and the legislation now before the House is a typical Labor answer to a complex economic problem. It conforms to Labor's one-eyed view of policy, that if there is a problem one does not pick on the employers.

Ms Bligh: What jobs plan did you follow?

Mr JOHNSON: The Honourable Minister for Families is having a little laugh to herself. For her information, as I said a moment ago, in this situation we have to think of the employers. Not for one half of one moment do I ignore the fact that we are talking about the public sector. However, there are two sectors involved: the public and the private sectors.

Mr Braddy: The MBA wants this. The master builders want this scheme.

Mr JOHNSON: The member should let me go on. You are laying back there like a log.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I remind the member to speak through the Chair.

Mr JOHNSON: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker. My point is that this is not about sucking the last drop of blood out of the employers, most of whom are currently on the bones of their backsides because of the downturn in the industry and the economy.

Mr Braddy: The builders want this scheme.

Mr JOHNSON: I have listened to the Minister and I know what he is saying, but he is not listening to me. I am talking about the current downturn in the economic situation, which is something that we have to take into account here.

There is nothing new about the fact that Labor cannot produce anything new. When I first read the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle document, I was struck by two factors. Firstly, I was struck by the superficial nature of the Minister's considerations in addressing this most worrying area of his portfolio. Secondly, I had an incredible feeling of having seen this before and of history repeating itself. I refer to the many similarities between the Government's present initiatives and those of its first Jobs Plan, which was introduced in

1992 when Mr Goss was Premier. I quote from the Beattie Government's current Jobs Plan, and this is highly significant—

"Between 1993 and 1996, spending on training in the industry fell from 1.63% to 1.38% of gross payroll nationally. This amounted to \$14m, or a fall of approximately 30% investment in training by employers. In Queensland we accounted for \$8m, or 56% of the national decline."

I say again: Queensland accounted for \$8m, or 56% of the national decline.

Mr Santoro: During the Labor Party's time.

Mr JOHNSON: That is absolutely right, as the member for Clayfield and the former very good and hardworking Minister for Training and Industrial Relations pointed out. We are now seeing the unions trying to dismantle the good things that he attempted to put in place. That quote was from the Minister's second-reading speech to the House in August this year. That was just one of the legacies of the Goss Government's first Jobs Plan. By comparison, the coalition's recently completed term in office is celebrated by record numbers of apprentices and trainee commencements.

We just heard my colleague the member for Callide elaborate on that achievement—1,335 apprentices in one year, or 461 more than Labor's best achievement in its time in office. Surely to God those figures speak for themselves. It is about time that members on the other side of the House started to give a bit of credit where it is due. They are knocking for the sake of knocking.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: What was that again?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind honourable members to interject from their correct seats.

Mr JOHNSON: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker; I certainly need protecting at times. The member for Townsville lives in the heart of one of the great industrial cities in this country, and it will continue to be so if he does not wreck it. It was your Goss Labor Government and you were a member of the Townsville community—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, I will defer to you, but I have to give my mate a serve first. It was them who tried to close the Townsville railway workshops. The railway workshops boasted somewhere between 6% and 10%—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I refer to a previous ruling by the Speaker that members must be referred to by their party and not as "them".

Mr JOHNSON: I meant the former Labor Government. We were going to see the total decimation of jobs in that city and the loss of the chance for young people to take advantage of skilled employment in those great workshops by way of apprenticeships in carpentry, plumbing, sheet-metal working, welding, fitting and turning and so on.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I will come back to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr JOHNSON: I have not finished with the honourable member yet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr JOHNSON: We saved the jobs in Townsville. We were on the verge of putting those apprenticeships back in place.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I take that interjection in relation to those 77 contract staff. It was in your Ministerial Portfolio Statements. It was launched in Townsville by the Opposition spokesman for Trade and Economic Development. I raised the issue in the House with the Minister for Transport at the time. Because we embarrassed you into it, you have had to go back and honour your obligation. I have to say to you that, during my time as Minister, we never had a strike in Townsville.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member to direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr JOHNSON: It was this Labor Government that had to kick those whom they believed to be their own in the guts. We had two-day rolling strikes in Townsville because you could not deliver on your policy. You wanted to renege on your policy. Nothing has changed on the Government side. We will keep reminding people that this Labor Government is not for the workers. It is the members on this side of the House who represent the workers. Most of us have been employers in the past. We understand the needs and requirements of workers. You have not got a clue when it comes to addressing the needs of people who are out there trying to have a go.

Mr Reynolds interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I would sit back and be quiet if I were you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have reminded the member a couple of times to direct his remarks through the Chair. My patience is running out.

Mr JOHNSON: I am very patient, too. It is not only about job security and putting people into apprenticeships and into trades through Queensland Rail or some other private or public facility; it is also about the security and quality of life that those people deserve and need. That is something that the member for Townsville is not supporting me on. It does not matter whether we are talking about people in Townsville, Ipswich, Bamaga, Birdsville or wherever; they all deserve to be appreciated and to be given a fair go.

In this debate today, other speakers on this side of the House have elaborated on the coalition's excellent performance in this key area of policy delivery and outcomes, and I am sure others will follow. With your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to make some specific observations of the minority Beattie Government's plans for increasing apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland. Firstly, the plan proposes to introduce 6,000 traineeships for young Queenslanders in the Public Service over three years. This is a rerun of the Public Sector Traineeship Quota Initiative tried by the Goss Labor Government in 1994-95. At the time, a cross-departmental quota of 400 trainees was established and linked to a subsidy of \$5,000 for agencies which engaged a trainee who was long-term unemployed and registered with both the CES and the Youth Employment Service. The present Government could not meet the quota. That was despite a Government directive, significant promotion and the provision of substantial subsidies. It could not get its department to employ 400 trainees. Let us look at the logic. The Government has resurrected that program, increased the unattainable quota fivefold, apparently withdrawn the subsidies and expects to reach the quota. Nice thinking by the Minister! He must have worked really hard to think of that one.

However, I would like to refer to a promise made by the then Leader of the Opposition, now the Honourable the Premier, in a speech to the Construction 2001 Conference in Brisbane on 13 October last year. One of the great leaps forward announced by the then Leader of the Opposition was his plan to provide 150 houses per year under the Housing Industry Trade Training—HITT—

Program for construction by 150 apprentices per year employed by group training companies. To its credit, the achievement of that figure will see the Government performing only marginally below the coalition's record when it was in office up to June. Though the recent Budget has changed the abovementioned statistical parameters, it really was not much of a promise by the then Leader of the Opposition. I say well done to the Honourable the Premier.

However, the Government also proposes 500 new Government apprenticeships at an annual cost of \$25m. Experience has shown that the public sector is largely unwilling to participate in providing apprenticeships over and above what is required within the work area unless the placement is heavily subsidised. The Government has recognised this and has provided for some of this subsidisation in the Budget. However, it cannot be denied that to take on apprentices in excess of what is required must lead to inefficient work practices, and this will undoubtedly be the experience in many areas of the Public Service. Let us look at an example from the private sector. Walkers in Maryborough is looking for contracts all the time. It is running 10% of its total work force as apprentices. That is a fantastic achievement. It employs some 800 people.

Mr Bredhauer: That's why we gave him the diesel tilt train that you complained about.

Mr JOHNSON: I am not complaining. I am talking about breaching the tender process. You know it, you clown! I have said it before and I will say it again.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I remind the honourable member to speak through the Chair.

Mr JOHNSON: I am speaking through the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Minister for Transport wants to interject. He knows the rules. I just remind him again that he breached the tender process. However, we will go on.

Next is a \$5m proposal to provide a \$2,000 cash bonus to private sector employees or group training schemes for each additional apprentice employed in the areas of skill shortages such as tourism, building and construction, and the metal and engineering industries. I have a few concerns in this regard. The Government's statements and the Minister's public utterances do not provide a definition of what will constitute an additional apprentice. However, there are a number of problems associated with making this type of assessment, including substitution of existing

workers as apprentices and the canning of those who would have been employed as apprentices as a matter of course. I might add that this does not equate to real apprenticeship growth, and the Minister and the Government should not pretend otherwise. By way of history, I say that traditionally State Governments have not entered into the provision of employer subsidies for apprenticeships or traineeship agreements.

Mr Braddy: What does this have to do with the Bill?

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister does not want to know about any constructive criticism.

Rather, the State has focused on ensuring that opportunities are provided in areas that meet the needs of industry and enterprise. Some members would be aware that, in the mid 1980s, the State Government offered a small range of employer incentives which proved difficult to administer. It was also difficult to demonstrate effective outcomes.

The Minister has provided no public evidence that the administrative structures necessary to overcome these pitfalls have been established. It may be of interest to the House to note that, under the coalition, the 1998 Annual Vocational Education Training Plan made provision for large allocations in the areas of skill shortages, including cooking, furnishing and food processing. Total allocations in these areas, including prevocational training, traineeships, apprenticeships and post-trade training was 49.2% greater than that delivered in 1996. This clearly showed a genuine and strong commitment by the coalition to help redress what were perceived skill shortages in the above vital areas of the economy.

To continue, the Government proposes 9,000 additional apprenticeships and traineeships in the private sector over three years, and I hope that it achieves it because, if it does, it is certainly going to be worth while. However, I doubt that the Government will achieve it. I find this proposal particularly ambiguous. Members will be aware that, on 5 September last year, the Federal Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs released the New Apprenticeship national campaign. As part of this, Queensland will receive \$126m for over 50,000 apprenticeships and traineeships over the next two years for the provision of incentives to employers, apprentices and trainees. Will the 9,000 additional apprenticeships and traineeships proposed by the State Government be in addition to the

50,000 provided for by this Commonwealth program?

With the time available I could continue, but the more that I look to the Labor Government's plan for our youth, the more I get depressed. Clearly, the Government made up of the members opposite does not have a genuine plan to create genuine apprenticeships and trainee opportunities, let alone a plan to create long-term and sustainable jobs. As my colleague the member for Clayfield stated, the minority Labor Government's policy priorities are in direct contradiction to its main objective—the jobs creation plan. I wish the Government well with its 5% unemployment target in the term of this Government and thereafter. However, the one thing I say is that we have to work together and we have to work together collectively with employers and unions. This Government has not done that to date.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (5.44 p.m.): In addressing this Bill, I want to take a couple of minutes at the beginning to commend a group training program in my electorate. Dave Burns administers the training scheme.

A Government member: He's a good man, Dave Burns.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: He has a big heart with the young people whose training he has overseen. I know that we have talked on innumerable occasions about opportunities to train. Dave is a very good bloke. He has been working hard—certainly well beyond his job description—on the group training. He has always been concerned about the amount of work that parliamentarians and others in the decision-making role invest in young people and he gets very frustrated when the rhetoric does not match the actions. In particular, there has been a long-term problem—not with any particular Government, but with a succession of people who have held the portfolio—in that he can see very productive opportunities for training that are being lost.

One of the issues that I have discussed with the current Minister for Housing and with the previous Ministers is a simple allocation of housing commission houses for the training apprentices to work on when they are returned from private enterprise. If there was a defined allocation of six houses a year in our area, he would probably put on 15 construction apprentices because he would know that there was work for them to fall back on when the private enterprise training ceased. We have

not been able to get that firm undertaking to date, although the current Housing Minister has advised me that he has that matter in train. The training of apprentices is something that we talk about a lot, and I think we need to ensure that anything we do is not only consistent with that intent but also transparent.

I want to thank the Minister for the access that I have been given to his officers and for the briefings that they have given me. I greatly value the opportunity to get up-front advice from a number of his officers here and also from his office staff. I want to raise just a couple of matters and I seek a response from the Minister, if possible, in his reply.

Although I do not have a great deal of concern about the long service aspects of the legislation, including the amendments that have been circulated, I probably have a fundamental concern with the proposal to take the training levy from the fund. Whilst I understand all the words that the officers are saying and the rationale behind it, I have a fundamental concern that has probably been raised on a number of occasions in the House while this legislation has been debated. I would just like to go through the issues, perhaps not in any order.

The HIA wrote to me some time ago—actually back in August—raising its concerns. It has several, and I would be interested in the Minister's response to those concerns. I have no doubt that the HIA has raised them with the Minister on a number of occasions. One of the concerns relates to the use of the Portable Long Service Leave Fund to fund training. The HIA does not have a problem with training; it has a problem with the fundamental issue of using what is an accumulating fund for a purpose other than the designated purpose.

It also has problems with the proposal to change the threshold. I understand that, prior to about May this year, the threshold for payment was \$42,000. In May this year the previous Government altered that and put in a two-tiered fee-paying structure: \$120,000 for houses, and it remained at \$42,000 for civil works. The Minister may correct me on that. The proposal under this legislation is to reduce the \$120,000 threshold back to \$80,000. I guess one of the pluses to that change is that the higher threshold has been in for only about five months. The HIA asserts that the new threshold will add \$200 to the cost of an average new home. I would be interested in the Minister's comment on that. We are talking about the \$80,000 to \$120,000 home price bracket; we are still talking about a lower

income group that will be affected. I would certainly be interested in the Minister's comments on that for the record. His officers have already commented on some of these matters.

There is another issue on which I would like the Minister's comments. The statement made at the Construction 2001 Conference has been quoted in this place a number of times. That statement certainly seemed to imply that the Minister is intending to set up a separate levy as a training levy. This Bill in effect still accumulates that same amount of money, but it appears that the Minister has shifted ground from setting up a separate levy to withdrawing that levy from the Portable Long Service Leave Fund. I would be interested in the rationale behind that change. The only reason given by the Minister's office was to avoid administration charges. I would be interested to know whether the Minister considered any other issues in changing what appeared to be the original strategy.

I guess the principle is that there be transparency in the proposal. I cannot find in the Bill that the Government has set an upper limit. If the current proposed structure is approved—that is, that money will be taken out of the Portable Long Service Leave Fund—apparently there will be no upper limit on the percentage that can be extracted. It leaves that fund vulnerable if the Government of the day decides to raise the percentage. At the moment it is set, but there does not appear to be any mechanism to ensure that what is set now is inalterable. It could just increase, as often occurs.

I ask the Minister for clarification of a matter raised earlier today in the speech of the shadow Minister for Employment. The shadow Minister said that there was a proposal to transfer all of the building industry training which is currently undertaken by Yeronga TAFE to the group training scheme administered by Construction Training Queensland. I would be interested in a comment on that specific issue.

Leading on from there, I raise an issue of concern to me. My involvement with Construction Training Queensland has been predominantly in the area of approvals for, say, gold cards for construction workers who have not done the course but are assessed on their skills. As far as I am aware, if people in my region or in any of the regions outside of the south-east corner, require assessment, they have to apply to Brisbane and an officer from Brisbane travels up, at cost, stays up in the region, does the assessment and then

either passes or fails the person on a skills-based assessment.

My concern is that there be a very obvious mechanism whereby Construction Training Queensland is required to allocate training dollars equitably across the State. Because this is where a significant number of people live, the pressure may be to give the lion's share of training to the south-east corner. My region has a huge problem with youth unemployment and has a great need for training. I am sure that is the case in a lot of regions. I am interested in the mechanism that the Minister sees will ensure that there is an equitable allocation of training dollars. The briefing from the Minister's office has clarified a number of issues about the structure of the training council and how it will be meeting—the fact that the final allocation of funding is signed off by the Minister—but I am interested in how the Minister sees it ensuring equity in that area.

I raise two other issues. Firstly, the amount of revenue from portable long service leave, based on the percentage formula, will vary from year to year. It is my understanding that apprenticeships are for three years, and for 1998—it is less than a full financial year—it is assessed that there will be \$3.6m in revenue. In 1999 that revenue goes up. In the year 2000 it reduces—not to the \$3.6m but below the 1999 level of revenue.

For training to be consistent and consistently available to apprentices that are put on, funding for training must be available in the subsequent two or three years, as is required. If there is a fluctuation in the funds available through the portable long service leave levy, how will that shortfall be made up? Is the Minister intending to fund it as a community service obligation or is there the possibility of apprentices being put on and subsequently having their indentures suspended or cancelled? If 50 apprentices are put on this year, those 50, plus any additional, have to be funded next year. I am interested to see how the Minister will do that, given the fluctuations in the funding that will occur with these cycles.

Secondly, it is said that the Portable Long Service Leave Fund is being used in this way because it is overcapitalised and there are actuarial statistics to prove that. If a line were drawn under the Portable Long Service Leave Fund and it were allowed to continue as a stand-alone fund and a new training program with a similar levy system as is proposed were established, how long would that Portable Long Service Leave Fund remain self-funding?

From the documents, I believe it would be 11 years before the current excess is fully consumed, in which case the levy would have to be revisited. I understand that the Minister will be going back to the fall-back position for the levy—the 0.2%. Would that Portable Long Service Leave Fund remain self-funding in perpetuity if it were left alone and just ruled off today? I have already raised the issue of the cap of the percentage that will be taken from the fund to ensure that this training levy does not continue to eat into the capital reserves of the Portable Long Service Leave Fund.

I have asked the Minister about a number of issues. I still have a fundamental problem with the principle of using the Portable Long Service Leave Fund for an alternative purpose without a clear definition of income and expenditure. I will wait to hear what the Minister has to say in response to those issues, particularly the cap to ensure that the funds are not eroded to the disadvantage of those who have contributed.

I reiterate my support, without any reservation, for the training of our young people. Whether it is through this mechanism or through a stand-alone fund where the money is still brought from what are proposed to be the current payers but in a more transparent and isolated manner is a moot point, but I fully support the need for training, particularly for our young people. They are our greatest resource. They are an investment—not for now but for the future. I think our State will be the stronger for the work we do on their behalf.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (5.57 p.m.): I rise to speak to this very important piece of legislation, the Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill. Honourable members would be aware that the previous National/Liberal coalition Government, in its 1998-99 Budget, in fact made provision for additional recurrent funding of at least \$2.5m for a range of initiatives aimed at addressing skills shortages in the building and construction industry. It is most regrettable that the minority Beattie Labor Government did not see fit to retain this most worthwhile initiative in this Budget.

We have seen here yet another saving made but at the same time a raiding of what is now the Portable Long Service Leave Authority, because the Labor Government believes it is a hollow log to fund, in this case, an election commitment. If the Government were truly committed to job creation, it would have found sufficient funding from

consolidated revenue for these initiatives. This coalition found the money. We had our priorities in the right order; the Labor Party does not have its priorities in the right order. The Minister is either too lazy or too powerless to convince the Treasury to find some money from consolidated revenue. That is quite appalling when one considers the amount of rhetoric we have from this minority Government in relation to jobs.

I believe this is a bad omen indeed for the building industry of Queensland. It sends a very clear signal about the economic ideal that we can expect from this Government. It is interesting to note that even the Capital Works Program in this year's Budget is \$25m less than the comparable May Budget from the National/Liberal coalition.

One of the important things to consider is what will happen if the Portable Long Service Leave Fund becomes deficient in some way. We have already seen what inaction and failures there were on the part of the former Goss Labor Government to rectify the situation of the Workers Compensation Fund. One has to ask the question: what will occur in relation to this fund?

I think it is relevant that the Minister indicate to this Parliament exactly what course of action he will take if the fund does become deficient in some way or he is advised by the trustees or the auditors that there are problems afoot. Will he immediately come to this House and start taking legislative action to rectify that situation or will he sit back and allow it to get into the same parlous state as the Workers Compensation Fund? I think that is a reasonable question in view of the history of these funds. I think we have to have the exact position clearly indicated. A major reform initiative of the coalition has been in this area of portable long service leave.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

WATER STORAGE, IRVINEBANK; ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That the Minister for Mines and Energy will formally apologise, and allow adequate compensation to be paid to, the Operators of the Irvinebank State Treatment Works. He must also contribute meaningfully to government decisions which ensure that Queensland has adequate and secure power, generated by projects, which create

infrastructure with the most attractive benefit cost streams, which are long lasting, which have high salvage values, and which create the highest number of long term and permanent jobs across the maximum number of regions and industries."

I intend to speak only to the first part of this motion, and I intend to speak briefly. Today the Minister told the House that he would quite happily speak on this subject to the Hillas, the people who used to operate the State treatment works. I am going to hold the Minister to that. I ask him to tell me when he will next be in Cairns so that I can hand that date on to the people concerned and they can speak with him. I also want to address some of the points that the Minister made this morning.

The simple fact is that those people have tried time and time again to deal with the department on numerous issues. I can present correspondence going right back to 1984 on the subject of how they have tried to address this issue through the Parliament. They have tried to do the right thing by answering the correspondence from the department. The department has not answered their correspondence, their allegations or their concerns about this issue; that is the crux of the matter. They have tried to get adequate representation from the department on the issues that are important to them, but they are not receiving it. So to say that they have not been answering correspondence is a lie. The only correspondence that they have not answered are the heavy-handed demands for the Ibis Dam to be handed over by them to the Minister and his department. The Hillas they do not intend to do that. They will not sign anything to that effect, because they feel that that is unfair treatment, especially when no thought is being given to their current situation.

I have had long meetings with these people. The simple fact is that they were not given the chance to back out. They bought into this in 1984 for approximately \$120,000—or that is the figure in the original agreement that they gave me. Slowly but surely the whole concept has deteriorated, with some incredibly shonky work done by the previous Mines and Energy Minister—my predecessor in Tablelands—and the repair work that was done on the dam.

For all those bleeding hearts who may be around the place, I point out that the dam was a heritage listed site. It was built in 1907 by a fellow called John Moffatt, who originally ran the place. It had in excess of something like 3,000 tonnes of concrete poured over it. It was

destroyed by the previous Mines and Energy Minister. The issue of whether or not that was legal is not something to be discussed here and now. However, the simple fact remains that the whole concept behind this is the unfair treatment by the department. Those people have tried time and time again to have their case heard on numerous levels. The answers that they have received from the department have been totally ignorant of the issues surrounding their situation and, again, have been completely heavy handed.

Maybe there is a legal precedence for the State to do this sort of thing. However, it all comes down to what I said this morning: fair and just treatment. We are a large organisation, and we are a State Government—

A Government member: You're not a Government.

Mr NELSON: I am sorry. We make up a Legislative Assembly that has an awesome—

Mr Sullivan: A Parliament.

Mr NELSON: This Parliament, or Legislative Assembly, has an awesome amount of power, and in exercising that power and making decisions we must never forget the people who are at the receiving end of those decisions. As I said this morning, it is my humble opinion that the Minister should be a buffer between the people and his department. He should represent not only the attitudes of his constituents but, through his whole party, the attitudes of the people of Queensland to his department and should give it some direction. The Beattie Government is jobs oriented. Therefore, it should try to make the Department of Mines and Energy jobs oriented, too.

All I ask is that the Minister provide me with a date when those people can see him, because they would dearly love to do that. Hopefully, we can bring some conclusion to this issue. I really would like to see this issue resolved. I would like a fair outcome for the people involved. I would like the department to get what it needs out of this, too. But in the long run, I want to see some fair activity and some answers. That is all I ask. I do not think that is too much to ask for.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—ONP) (Deputy Leader of the One Nation Party) (6.05 p.m.): I rise to second the motion put forward by the member for Tablelands. Media reports of late tend to confirm the fragility of our electricity generating infrastructure. It is patently obvious that our reserve generating capacity is

hopelessly insufficient to provide a reasonable buffer in times of breakdowns. We almost certainly face major disruption from power outages in the upcoming season of peak demand. Ongoing power outages cost millions of dollars to industry. They cost thousands of dollars to individuals and, quite often, cost Queenslanders their jobs and pose an unacceptable inconvenience to the citizens of this State. Even worse, blackouts can be life threatening to the ill and elderly.

There are two decisions which must be taken by this Government. Firstly, the poor economic performance which contributes to the continuing corporatisation of our essential services must be controlled. Uncontrolled obsession with profits, which inevitably accompany uncontrolled corporatisation, places unnecessary pressure on maintenance schedules and ignores social costs. Apart from the inconvenience factor, reduced maintenance equals reduced service levels and reduced safety standards. Assessment of all such projects must include an extensive socioeconomic impact study.

The second action required of this Government is to immediately upgrade the Tarong Power Station. In the design stage, provision was made for its future expansion. Such expansion can be accomplished efficiently, quickly and cost effectively. Expert opinion considers this option to be the quickest way to provide an increase in our State's generating capacity. Given the current extremely critical situation, surely this action is the only way to ensure that the people of Queensland need not live with the fear of major power disruptions for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

I believe that the gas pipeline from Papua New Guinea is a far inferior option on several counts. The time frame from inception to completion would be far too long to address the potential problems we are faced with now. Another factor is the very real danger the pipeline could pose to the environment and especially to some of the more sensitive areas of Queensland. Add to these problems the fact that, under the pipeline option, we would be dependent upon a foreign country for one of our most vital essential services and it becomes patently obvious that the gas pipeline should not be the linchpin of our power generating infrastructure. Need I mention Bougainville and Ok Tedi?

The Tarong option, though, has much to recommend it. Apart from the short lead time I mentioned earlier, which will quickly provide a much-needed buffer, there are numerous

other related benefits. Unemployment levels in the Wide Bay/Burnett area are among the nation's highest. The construction phase would provide a much-needed boost to employment in the region. There would be ongoing employment opportunities as well—jobs, jobs, jobs.

The Surat Basin contains a vast quantity of high-quality steaming coal with relatively low emissions. This resource is crying out for development and has the potential for major export earnings. Initial cash flow accruing from a contract to supply extra coal to Tarong would be a great incentive to establish the infrastructure necessary to commence the development of the Surat Basin and to begin a very strong export-earning operation. The benefits to the Queensland economy would also be enormous and widespread. My contention is that, while the Papua New Guinea pipeline may warrant long-term consideration as an additional power source, Queensland's need is immediate, and the best option to address that need is to embark on an immediate upgrade of Tarong.

The Mines and Energy Minister apologised to the people of Queensland for future load shedding. I respectfully suggest that the Minister stop apologising and seize the opportunity of the Tarong expansion to minimise the damage caused to industry and householders due to the department's lack of forethought and planning by both Labor and coalition Governments.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (6.09 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'That' (first occurring) and insert the following—

'this Parliament acknowledges the efforts of the Government and the Minister for Mines and Energy in particular for their efforts to ensure minimum disruption to power supplies in the current tight supply environment.

The Parliament notes the establishment of the maintenance task force and the summer readiness programme to give maximum reliability to power supplies in the short term. It also acknowledges the plan to provide an extra 441* megawatts of capacity by January 1999 and the provision of 303 megawatts of power at Oakey, 500

megawatts through the NSW interconnector and 840 megawatts of power from Callide C, all by the year 2001, to ensure supply in the medium term.

The further 6000 megawatts under consideration for the longer term will provide for the future energy needs of the State. The Parliament also acknowledges the need for the review of the electricity industry to improve the structure, particularly regarding distribution and generation, whilst maintaining the benefits of a competitive market. This Parliament calls upon all members to cease indulging in a culture of blame and get behind the Government's plan to provide a continuous reliable energy supply to the people and industries of Queensland.

The Parliament also commends the Minister for Mines and Energy for seeking final resolution to the longstanding issues surrounding the former Government operations at Irvinebank.' "

With regard to the comments by the member for Tablelands, I do not believe it is appropriate for me to discuss the details of an individual in this Parliament. It would not be right. Indeed, it would not be proper. I stand ready to meet with those people again at a mutually convenient time, provided that they are prepared genuinely to resolve the matter.

The politics of blame are over. The people of Queensland are simply sick and tired of the tit for tat about who is to blame. What Queenslanders require today is the knowledge that their Government has a plan and a strategy to handle the present situation. I have neither the time nor the inclination to become further involved in this self-defeating "blame-them" mentality.

Many claims were made today by the Leader of the Opposition, claims with which I disagree. While the Opposition has been harping, we have been moving swiftly to address both the current problems and to plan for Queensland's future needs. In terms of the immediate problem of meeting demand over this summer as well as the following summer, we have taken a number of actions. One of the first actions we took upon returning to office was to set up an inquiry into maintenance within the Government owned power stations. A summary of the report of that inquiry has been presented to me. The final report will be provided later this week.

The fragmentation of AUSTA Electric in particular resulted in a lack of coordination. As a result, we are in the process of investigating how the industry can be restructured to deliver better coordination and more reliable supplies. We also moved to fast-track the Queensland/New South Wales interconnection once we realised how precarious the electricity demand/supply balance had become. We have also moved to ensure that every effort is made to avoid load shedding this summer. To that end, I have established a Summer Readiness Project Team. That group is ensuring that the State's electricity system is in the best possible position to meet the expected record demand during the coming summer months. In essence, the Summer Readiness Project Team is investigating the best way to manage our existing generation assets to squeeze every last drop out of the system. While looking at maximising supplies, we are also preparing comprehensive information to help people to use electricity more efficiently, which will help moderate demand as well as help people to save money.

Beyond the current situation, supply constraints should ease as the 220 megawatt Calvale-Tarong transmission line is completed and new plants come on stream in early 1999, with new peaking plants at Yabulu, Mount Stuart and Swanbank, which is 37 megawatts, coming on stream in January and Boral's 75 megawatt plant at Roma coming on stream in February. In the longer term, Callide C and other projects on the drawing board totalling some 6,000 megawatts will secure Queensland's future.

Time expired.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (6.14 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment moved by the Honourable Minister for Mines and Energy. To have a safe, secure and reliable electricity system, it is vital that we have a Statewide transmission system capable of transferring electricity from the power stations located throughout the State to industrial and domestic consumers. Powerlink Queensland has responsibility for the transmission system in this State. It must be able to respond quickly and to provide the infrastructure needs for the industry. The transmission system is like a main highway for transporting power. That is why at an early stage the former Labor Government put in place plans to build a 500 megawatt interconnector between New South Wales and Queensland, known as Eastlink. That interconnector would have been completed on

1 October 1998 and fully operational by 1 January 1999.

Mr Seeney: Rubbish!

Mr MULHERIN: Is the member doubting Mr Jardine's comments?

If Eastlink had proceeded, commissioning power would have been available from 1 October 1998 as a source of power in situations of extreme power loss. That would have prevented load shedding caused by generation plant failure. The recent example of supply shortfall could, therefore, have been offset by the electricity from Eastlink. In all probability, Queenslanders would not have had to suffer load shedding. The current Labor Government is now endeavouring to rectify the current constraints in the electricity supply market caused by the previous coalition Government.

This Government is most conscious of consolidating the transmission system so that adequate supplies of electricity can be transmitted across the State's different regions. In particular, the current priority is increasing the supply of electricity between central and south-east Queensland. That priority was identified by the former Labor Government in 1995 when an interconnector between central and southern Queensland was proposed. That proposal was known as the Calvale-Tarong transmission line. This transmission line will take power from the Callide Power Station and transmit the power to a substation at Tarong. From Tarong it will transmit it to substations located around the south-east corner. The commissioning of the Calvale-Tarong transmission line by the end of November will reinforce the existing high voltage 275 kV transmission line between central and southern Queensland.

Mr Seeney: Tell the whole story. You talked about it but never built it.

Mr MULHERIN: Members opposite shut down Collinsville Power Station. They do not have a great track record.

That will increase reliability and allow for the transfer of an extra 200 megawatts of electricity to south-east Queensland. Currently, a large generation capacity is located in central Queensland close to coal supplies from the Bowen Basin. However, the demand of the south-east corner of our State is greater than the capacity generated in the south-east. There are limitations on the transfer capabilities of the existing interconnector between central and southern Queensland. The Calvale-Tarong line will enhance the

transmission system, allowing an increase in the amount of power transmitted to the south-east corner.

In early 2001, the interconnector between the New South Wales and Queensland electricity grids will have the capacity to bring 500 megawatts into Queensland with scope to increase to 1,000 megawatts in the future. That line, known as Westlink, is simply a postponed Eastlink by another name. This interconnector was not to have been commissioned until late 2001, but on entering office this Government sought to fast-track the project, so it will probably be available in the 2000-2001 summer peak.

The Government is concerned with securing a reliable supply of electricity for all Queenslanders. By reinforcing the State's transmission system, the Government will be one step closer to achieving that goal. I commend the Minister for Mines and Energy on his initiatives in trying to return reliable supply to the industry.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (6.19 p.m.): I move a further amendment to the motion—

"Delete all words after 'That' (first occurring) and insert the following—

'the Parliament of Queensland, acknowledging the economic future of Queenslanders relies upon an adequate supply of electricity, calls on the Government this calendar year to place before Parliament a blueprint that will ensure Queenslanders have an adequate long term power supply while maximising both job opportunities for Queenslanders and utilisation of Queensland resources.'

Mr Nuttall: Have you just supported Eastlink?

Mr MITCHELL: It is strange that the member mentioned that. In relation to planning, one of the issues that really needs to be put to bed is the planning of Eastlink. Basically, every time the mercury hits 30 degrees, members opposite dial up a new date for Eastlink. In February, in an interview on Today Tonight, the then Opposition Leader had Eastlink on line in February or March. On 23 February on ABC radio, the current Mines and Energy Minister said—

"Eastlink would have been up and running next week—or even this week."

Now we have had another warm day and, once again, according to the Premier and the Minister for Mines and Energy, Eastlink would have been on line now. When it gets hot, they find a new date for Eastlink. Of course, February, let alone March and let alone October are all nonsense dates, as is the claim this morning by the Premier that the former Labor Government had actually commissioned Eastlink.

The simple fact is that when Labor left office in February 1996, it was months away from even any formal commitment to the project. The environmental impact study was not due until June of that year. No deal had been done with Pacific Power. Also, a Senate committee had been savagely critical of the consultation process and the handling of environmental issues, signalling massive legal problems. According to the former Labor Government's own Cabinet documents, it was not going to make a decision until August 1996. The former Government still would have had to do a deal for power, win all the court challenges and then build it.

I know that at the moment the Government is sensitive to the description of the Mines and Energy Minister as irrational, but the simple fact is that any suggestion that Eastlink would have been available at any time in 1999, let alone in 1998, is absolutely irrational. There were too many ifs and buts and too many problems. Across south-east Queensland, protest rallies were planned. Those rallies were targeting marginal seats in the upcoming election. So the Labor Party was copping it from two fronts: Eastlink and the Gold Coast motorway.

I refer to an answer that I received during the Estimates committee hearing, which states—

"However, Powerlink Queensland is unable to speculate on other actions which may have been initiated later by affected parties, nor did Powerlink Queensland conduct any studies into the feasibility of accelerating the construction timetable."

So the Government knew that all of these problems existed and that Eastlink was not going to go ahead when it actually said that it was. There was Buckley's chance of Eastlink being ready by January 1999 even for trials, let alone for the transmission of 5,000 megawatts. An amount of 2,000 megawatts might be realistic, and even that would be optimistic when one considers the comments of the Government's own engineering

subcommittee on Eastlink, which reported in October 1994. On page 14 it states—

"Allowing two and a half years for construction the earliest an interconnection could be placed in service is June 1998."

I note the reference to two and a half years for construction. The Government claims that it could have done it in 18 months, taking a full year off the estimates of the engineers. This was not the estimates of politicians looking for a way out of a sticky problem, or the estimates of power bureaucrats being shoved into a corner by the politicians, but the estimates of the engineers. So the Government is actually overriding the engineers' report. The report went on to say—

"If route investigations were to await the outcome of the Queensland capacity decision at the end of 1994 the earliest date an interconnection could be placed in service would be June 1999 assuming a successful and timely outcome to the public consultation and environmental study."

Let me examine that mouthful in the context of "dial an Eastlink". The capacity decision was not made at the end of 1994—and this is the capacity decision that should have been made in 1991—it was not made until April 1995. So we have a four-year delay when they were first told about these sorts of things. We have heard enough of that through the media and through the Parliament. Then consider that the earliest possible date for an interconnection was June 1999, according to the engineers, which assumed a successful and timely outcome of public consultation and the environmental study. As has already been indicated, the final EIS was not going to be before the Government until June.

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.24 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Opposition. Tonight, what hypocrisy have we seen in this House! The Minister moved his amendment to the motion and called on the Opposition to move away from the culture of blame. If the Opposition does not keep the pressure on this Government, we are going to end up with the exact disaster that we have right here and now in four or five years' time.

Throughout the mid 1980s, the Labor Party, particularly some former shadow Ministers and Ministers—Mr Vaughan and others—talked continuously about Queensland having too much power. They blamed the

National Party Government of the day for creating too many power stations. However, when the Labor Party came to Government it inherited a magnificent situation: the Callide B Power Station was completed and Stanwell Power Station was well on the way towards completion. The Labor Party inherited an absolutely beautiful situation. Yet what did it do? For six years it mucked around, did absolutely nothing, and then towards late 1995-96, in blind panic it decided to throw the umbilical cord across the border to New South Wales in the form of Eastlink.

Today, what rubbish have we heard from the Government side in this Parliament about Eastlink. It never had a chance of being in operation by 1999. When the coalition came to Government in 1996, it still had six months to go at least before there was any formal written commitment by the Labor Government to Eastlink getting under way. Members should also consider all the protests and the court procedures that would have had to be undertaken.

Unlike Labor, which came to Government and inherited a wonderful situation of about 29% surplus power to allow for all of those times of peak demand—and the experts reckoned that something like 28% was required—when the coalition came to power, that surplus power was down to around 16% or 15% and deteriorating rapidly. It takes six years or seven years to plan, construct and commission base load power stations. It takes about four years or five years to put in the peak load power stations.

When the coalition came to Government, it inherited a disastrous situation. However, it acted immediately and put in place the peak load power stations in Townsville. Tonight, the Minister referred to those power stations in his motion. He should have recognised that those power stations were put in place by the former coalition Government. I believe that the commencement of those power stations was put in place within six weeks of the coalition coming to Government. The former coalition Government also had under construction the peak load station at Oakey and signed contracts for Callide C.

The Labor Government wants to slither away from its responsibilities and slither away from any criticism. There can be only trenchant criticism of the Minister, because he was one of the main reasons for the disastrous situation that the former coalition Government inherited—the Labor culture of not having sufficient or adequate reserve power supply. That is the problem that this State faces. That

has to be rammed home to make sure that everybody understands it clearly and so the mistake is not repeated.

However, there is every chance that it will be repeated, because we now have a Labor Government that, instead of making decisions about a new base load power station that can be started now and be finished in four years' or five years' time, such as North Tarong, Chinchilla, Millmerran, the Darling Downs and the Surat Basin, which uses Queensland's own resources, workers and staff, it is trying to pick winners in looking at all sorts of other alternatives. The Labor Government is running around looking at the possibility of getting away from the level playing field, putting on an electricity tax and having power purchase agreements so that the people it favours can get projects up. Consequently, Queenslanders will not only face a delay in the commencement of major base station projects but also in four years, five years or less, Queenslanders will be paying a hidden tax in their electricity charges because of the power purchase agreements that the Labor Government put in place to try to favour the special projects that it particularly wants to see.

If there is one lesson out of this, it is that Labor is incapable of managing and planning and making decisions to ensure that we have base load power stations and a reserve capacity of around about 25% to 28% for this State to allow for those peak periods that we strike. The Minister stands condemned for the time during which he was previously the Minister when he fiddled around and did absolutely nothing. Now we are seeing exactly the same performance from him. The criticism from the Opposition will continue. The Minister might not want to see a culture of blame, but we are going to make sure that he is made accountable and that he performs.

Time expired.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP)
(6.30 p.m.): Currently the Government is doing everything in its power to ensure that the lights stay on in Queensland. First and foremost, it is being honest with the people of Queensland about the potential shortages. A Summer Readiness Project Team has been established to ensure that the State's electricity system is in the best possible position to meet expected record demand during this summer period and to inform the public so as to ensure their cooperation in periods where reserves are tight.

Four working groups have been established and are currently investigating and implementing initiatives in the areas of

generating capacity, system security and market operations, Government initiatives and public relations. Those project groups are reporting to a steering committee consisting of senior industry and Government officials. To date the specific outcomes from those working groups include: the coordination of work to ensure that the Tarong unit currently out of service is back on line by November of this year; the rescheduling of major power generation unit overhauls to ensure that all of Queensland's capacity is available for the month of November, which is when the supply and demand situation is expected to be at its tightest; the initiation of processes to minimise Government power usage during emergency situations; and the implementation of a new operational strategy for Wivenhoe to allow it to better meet the high peak demands in the south-east Queensland region. Work is also being undertaken by the two Queensland electricity retailers, Ergon and Energex, to implement demand side management initiatives and seek interruptible supply agreements with some of the State's major power users. Finally, an energy efficiency campaign was put in place to provide the public with information about conserving energy over the period of tight supply.

I stress that the energy efficiency campaign is not simply a knee-jerk reaction to the current situation, but will provide the public with information that will deliver energy efficiency savings to all homes and businesses throughout Queensland, as well as reduce demand on the State's electricity system. To date the experience is that, with public cooperation, it does lead to a significant reduction in demand. Many of these initiatives are designed to ensure that the lights stay on in Queensland over the period up to the end of November. However, processes designed and implemented over recent months will be maintained to ensure that Queensland's electricity system continues to operate in an efficient and effective manner.

The summer readiness initiatives are already delivering greater flexibility and will deliver increased capacity as well as help to reduce demand on the electricity system. By the end of November, the commissioning of the strengthened Calvale-Tarong transmission line will reinforce the existing high voltage transmission line between central and southern Queensland. This will increase reliability and allow for a further 220 megawatts of electricity to be transferred to south-east Queensland. The lack of that line currently is a significant barrier to the efficient distribution of the available supply of electricity. In January

1999, the commissioning of two peak load power stations in Townsville and a gas turbine at Swanbank near Brisbane will add a further 478 megawatts of capacity to the system, increasing the State's reserves to 29%. A 75 megawatt gas power station to be commissioned in February by Boral will add even more reserve capacity to the system.

In short, the Government has a plan now to deal with the current constraints in the electricity industry. In 1995, it also had a plan to cater for electricity needs into the future, which included Eastlink and processes to ensure the construction of peak load and base load stations up to the year 2006. The Government has planned for the future needs of Queensland's electricity supply. Those plans were scuttled by the coalition during two years of inactivity and indecisiveness in that industry.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.33 p.m.): The Government's bid to amend the motion before the House is so hypocritical that it would be nothing short of laughable if the matter were not so serious. The Government is seeking to claim the credit for the coalition's planning to cover up the fact that it was totally incapable of any planning itself. All that it has achieved is to underscore that lack of planning. Labor members were in office for six long years and they did nothing.

We are told that the Government's strategy to keep the lights on now revolves around 400 megawatts from the two new power stations that are to come on line at Townsville in the new year. It revolves around the 300 megawatts to come on line at Oakey in the year 2000 and the 840 megawatts at Callide C currently scheduled to come on line in two 240-megawatt units in middle and late 2001. Everybody in this House knows that those were all coalition projects. Everybody in Queensland knows that every last one was a coalition project. Once again, the facts spoil the rhetoric. The Townsville projects were the result of tenders called by the coalition in March 1996. The Oakey project was the result of the coalition calling tenders in 1997 and the Callide C project was signed off by CS Energy and Shell Coal before the coalition left office in July, and wasn't it just as well!

There is absolutely no mystery as to why Government members want to pinch our projects. It is because they do not have any of their own—not a single one. For over six years earlier in this decade when in office, they did absolutely nothing to secure the future power supplies of this State. At the end of the previous Government's term, despite desperate calls for action from the QEC, the

only addition to the State's power grid occurred when some private investors built a 37 megawatt gas-fired power station at Barcaldine. If that had not happened, the record of the Government would have shown that not one solitary megawatt of power that was planned by the ALP was actually delivered in its entire tenure. That is a disgraceful abrogation of a Government's responsibility. Is it any wonder that the current Minister does not want to talk about who is to blame?

In 1991, in its submission to the Tully/Millstream task force, the Labor Government was told clearly and unequivocally by the then Queensland Electricity Commission that if it did not proceed with Tully/Millstream and build more coal, gas or distillate fuelled plant by 1997, the lights would probably go out. However, what did the Government do? For the next four years, it did nothing! It left it until it was too late to do anything at all about the crunch in 1997. By the time the then Government took some decisions in 1995, the options were pretty light—recommissioning decommissioned plant at Callide A and running an extension cord over the border. Under the coalition Government, the State had turned itself into the most efficient generator of non-hydropower in this country. However, throughout the later part of the 1980s, Queensland was reduced to running an extension cord over the border because members opposite had ignored planning requirements for so long. There simply was not another option open to try to keep the lights on and now we find ourselves in such a corner. Government members know that we are in such a corner and the Minister knows that we are in such a corner, which is why he is so keen to get his apologies in first.

The excuses keep coming. The Minister says that the problem is maintenance, yet he knows that the problem is capacity. Everybody with half a brain knows that the problem is capacity. The industry keeps telling Queensland that the problem is capacity. There is simply insufficient generating capacity in this State today to reliably meet summer peak demand because, in the early 1990s, the Labor Government and the current Minister failed to take any decisions that would have ensured that we had sufficient capacity in the late 1990s. I know it must hurt, but the fact is that if Queensland can get through the next couple of months without a major disaster resulting from that lack of planning, the projects that are coming on line that will start to give the people of Queensland some breathing space are the two power stations in Townsville, for which tenders were called by

the coalition in March 1996, and the projects at Oakey and Callide.

It really is hypocritical for members opposite to claim credit for Callide C, which is in my electorate, given that they have desperately tried to kill it off. We found that out at the Estimates committee hearing when the Minister tried desperately hard not to recall certain facts. He said that he could not recall putting the cleaners through those contracts, not once but twice.

Time expired.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.39 p.m.): I support the amendment to the motion moved by the Minister. I wish to speak to the second part of the amendment, which states—

"The Parliament also commends the Minister for Mines and Energy for seeking final resolution to the longstanding issues surrounding the former Government operations at Irvinebank."

The member for Tablelands spoke about this issue tonight. It certainly has been a longstanding issue. In speaking about the treatment works, we need to look at its history since 1981, when it first went out to tender. When we look at the history of the State treatment works, we begin to see that nothing is ever simple when it comes to the treatment works at Irvinebank. In 1990 a Bill was introduced to facilitate the sale of the State treatment works for \$120,000. As I said, the treatment works were first opened—

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. That statement is untrue. The original agreement was reached in 1984, not 1990. That is deliberately misleading.

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

Mr HAYWARD: If you were listening to what I just said, I said—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr HAYWARD: If the member had listened to what I was saying, he would know that I said that a Bill was introduced into Parliament in 1990. The member should read the history; if he did, he would know what he is talking about. The treatment works were first opened in 1884, when it was owned by private operators. Since 1884 it has been in either State hands or private hands depending on the price of tin over that time. In 1919 it became State owned. That was as a direct result of low prices for tin at the time. The State took over the operations basically to

maintain small miners in the Herberton district. Theodore was the acting Premier at the time, because Ryan was out of the State, and Theodore took the initiative to acquire the Irvinebank State Treatment Works. In the late 1920s it reverted to private enterprise and in 1934 the State Government assumed control.

In 1981 it went out to tender. By about July 1983, Mr Hilla was declared the successful tenderer. We are now 15 years on. A lot of things have gone on in that time. There was the Irvinebank State Treatment Works (Sale and Operation) Act of 1990, which is what I was referring to before. I thought the member would have made some effort to at least look up the history of this plant. That associated agreement required Mr Hilla to apply for a mining lease covering the State treatment works and the associated infrastructure. It also required that he provide bulk water to the township of Irvinebank. From recollection, it also required the Water Resources Commissioner to direct in the interests of safety that work be carried out on the Loudon and Ibis Dams. That was what the 1990 Act of this Parliament required. I am sure that the Minister at the time thought it was coming to some conclusion. But, of course, it has not, because Mr Hilla has never fully complied with the agreement conditions. In his original application for the mining lease, he sought to apply conditions which were outside the terms of the agreement, which was the special Act of Parliament in 1990.

A lot of time and effort has gone into this. Importantly, the amendment moved tonight by the Minister states—

"The Parliament also commends the Minister for Mines and Energy for seeking final resolution to the longstanding issues surrounding the former Government operations at Irvinebank."

As I said, it has been tortuous—

Time expired.

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—ONP) (6.44 p.m.): I wish to question the current methods of prioritising energy projects. I hope I can assume that currently those projects that will efficiently create the greatest benefit to the most Queenslanders with the longest benefit streams are regarded as deserving higher priorities.

I suggest that during this time, when most Queenslanders are experiencing a decline in their socioeconomic status, project assessments need to include socioeconomic impact studies. A positive socioeconomic flow-on to the maximum number of Queenslanders

will to some extent offset the outflow of profits from foreign owned ventures. In particular, as an exercise I address the relative benefits of the Chevron and SUDAW projects. Both projects have significant foreign equity. Indeed, most of the companies involved in Chevron can be traced back to one banking dynasty in the USA.

On 5 August, the Premier stated that the Chevron pipeline was the most important job creator in Queensland. I take it he meant Chevron and the Comalco project at Gladstone, which needs cheap power. Thus in relation to Chevron and SUDAW and the associated Nathan dam, I ask the Minister for a comparison of the benefits of both projects, including: firstly, a 20-year cost-benefit analysis; secondly, the life of each project; thirdly, the number of long-term jobs and incomes; fourthly, the sensitivity of the Comalco project to energy cost; fifthly, the salvage value of the infrastructure; sixthly, a risk assessment; and, seventhly, consideration of the carbon credits or debits. Perhaps these studies have been done. Certainly, such comparative studies are demanded by international funding agencies when they are considering projects in other developing countries.

The May 1998 report titled Moving Energy Forward released by Tom Gilmore defined the Government's changing roles. It identifies that although market signals are now the key drivers of the energy sector the Government retains an important role in providing a planning framework. Within this framework the key objective is to ensure that all Queenslanders enjoy maximum benefits and that these benefits are shared equitably. Dissemination of information is identified as being important to ensure consultation and an integrated decision-making process.

With the advent of Executive Government and the increasingly gladiatorial style of our Westminster system, it is becoming increasingly difficult for backbenchers to play a meaningful role in decisions so important to the future of our State. If one were to compare these two projects—Chevron and SUDAW—from a relatively uninformed and cynical position, I suggest that the answers to the earlier questions may be along the following lines.

Question 1: benefit-cost flows—SUDAW wins, with longer benefit streams in both agriculture and power. Question 2: life of each project—again, SUDAW, because of irrigation. Question 3: jobs—again, SUDAW, in terms of man years of employment because of the

irrigation component. Question 4: sensitivity to energy cost of the Comalco project—I cannot even guess. But let me ask: why is the ore from the Century Zinc mine to be sent to an old plant in Europe for refining and not to Gladstone? Question 6: risk assessment—Chevron, as the history of Bougainville and Ok Tedi do not argue well for security of investment and supply. Question 7: carbon credits—a cynic could argue that we are converting a currently unusable oilfield in PNG into a viable field by assuming responsibility for the associated carbon debits.

With the adoption of more transparent and more participative government, many of the suspicions and concerns of the rural electorate will be allayed and we will be become a more cohesive egalitarian society. I now ask: how has the Premier come to his decision that Chevron is the most important job creator in Queensland? Can he also assure us and Comalco that heavy reliance on Chevron is free of risk? I look forward to receiving some meaningful answers.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (6.48 p.m.): In cooperation with Queensland's generators—Tarong, Stanwell, CS Energy—as well as Energex and Ergon, this Government is embarking on a public campaign to raise awareness of the significant economic and environmental benefits that can be gained from conserving energy. That is an issue that we need to discuss.

Commencing in early November, the energy conservation campaign will send a clear message to the community that energy conservation and efficiency can deliver significant cost savings to both consumers and business. It will also raise awareness that improving energy efficiency offers the most immediate way of reducing environmental impacts of energy use and energy related greenhouse gas emissions. However, the Government is not just looking at short-term measures. The energy conservation campaign is part of this Government's broader strategy to achieve efficiencies in energy production and use in order to secure a sustainable and reliable energy future for this State.

To help meet this challenge as well as its commitment to improving community awareness in renewable energy and energy efficiency, the Government has decided to establish an Office of Sustainable Energy. This new office will play a significant role in delivering a range of new energy services and programs to Queenslanders. The Office of Sustainable Energy will be providing any number of important services which will include

provision of reliable and independent information on energy efficiency and energy conservation measures in the home, in schools and in businesses; the provision of energy efficient house plan assessments; the promotion and the facilitation of increased commercial applications of sustainable energy technologies; renewable energy programs, such as the recently launched solar hot water rebate scheme; the monitoring of future trends and challenges in the energy sector as they relate to sustainable energy objectives, and develop and implement appropriate response strategies—

Time expired.

Question—That Mr McGrady's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 41—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Clark, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszcuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 41—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: Beattie, Sheldon; Briskey, Slack

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

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

AYES, 41—Attwood, Barton, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Clark, J. I. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszcuk, Pearce, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 41—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rappolt, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: Beattie, Sheldon; Briskey, Slack

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

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (7.03 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Leckie Road Connection

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (7.03 p.m.): I wish to this evening raise an issue which, because of the decision by the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, will again become contentious within my electorate of Clayfield. I am referring to the Leckie Road connection as a transport corridor which, because of its very existence, represents the very real threat of a motorway or major road being built through prime residential areas of my electorate.

The existence of this transport corridor has for many years cast a pall of uncertainty over the suburbs of Woolloowin, Kalinga, Eagle Farm, Lutwyche and parts of Clayfield. It depressed real estate values and inhibited the willingness and ability of local residents to buy, sell and, most importantly, renovate their family homes to better suit their lifestyle. In recognition of these factors and in response to the aborted attempt by the previous Goss Labor Government to construct a motorway utilising the Leckie Road connection, the coalition State Government, at my urging, earlier this year made and implemented the decision to sell off the Leckie Road connection. This was, of course, a pre-election promise and I was proud that it was being delivered.

This decision by the coalition Government was greeted with appreciation and enthusiasm by the local community. However, the Government changed in June this year and I immediately sought the assurance of the new Government and the new Minister that the coalition's decision to sell off the transport corridor would be honoured. I sought these assurances on 4 August 1998 when I stated in the Parliament—

"... I want to place on record my desire and that of my constituents to have that process of selling off that corridor expedited and concluded as quickly as possible. I ask the new Minister for Transport to act with due haste and diligence in terms of maintaining that

commitment and the decision by the previous Government."

I sought the assurances in the Parliament again on 16 September during the debate on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill, when I again stated in the Parliament—

"On 4 August I asked the Minister whether he would expedite his decision and thereby provide some assurance to my constituents that the sale of the land is going ahead.

... my constituents require the Minister to take some action. The sale of those properties will certainly reaffirm the new Government's attitude towards the decision of the previous Government to sell those properties. I ask the Minister to be kind enough to address that issue in his reply."

The Minister responded that he would reply to the questions raised during the consideration of the earlier mentioned Bill at a more appropriate time. On 5 October I wrote to the Minister and, amongst other things, said to him—

"I also enclose for your consideration the Hansard record of a speech which I delivered in the Parliament on 16 September 1998. You will recall that in your reply to the contributions made by Members, you mentioned that you would be replying to our representations in due course. I will be grateful for your views and responses to the issues which I raised in my speech."

To date I have received no reply to my questions either in the Parliament or in my correspondence, which says plenty about the Minister's manners and lack of professional courtesy as well as his unwillingness to assist the community I represent in the Parliament. I remind him that when I was a Minister I always responded to his correspondence with courtesy and promptness.

During the Transport and Main Roads Estimates committee hearings on Thursday, 1 October, Minister Bredhauer, in response to a question from the hard-working shadow Minister, Vaughan Johnson, said—

"The Leckie Road corridor is an important issue. We have no intention to proceed. A number of properties were indicated for sale."

He went on to say—

"I was subsequently approached by the Minister for Public Works and Housing, who indicated to me that he had

a need for some public housing, emergency housing, etc. in that area—I am not exactly sure what the needs were. He asked us if we were able to identify three or four properties in that area that we might be able to make available for public housing purposes.

In the process, essentially we have got the best of both worlds, in my view. Those properties will continue to be used for residential purposes, which is an indication that we do not intend to proceed with the east-west corridor, the airport motorway corridor. At the same time we have been able to fulfil a need for public housing. Whilst the houses were not sold to the bidders, we have been able to make sure that those houses continue to be used for residential purposes."

This was a disgraceful answer which represents yet another betrayal by the Labor Party, and in particular by this Minister, of the people I represent and a total cave-in to the "build new roads at any cost" culture.

As long as these properties and the Leckie Road connection remain in the hands of the Government and the department, the threat of a major road or motorway will remain. It condemns my constituents to more uncertainty and more anguish; they do not deserve this treatment, particularly in view of the fact that the coalition Government had delivered to them the pre-election promise and was selling off the Leckie Road connection.

This decision by Minister Bredhauer and the minority Beattie Labor Government again puts the prospect of a motorway fairly and squarely back on the agenda. I call on the Minister to immediately proceed in finalising the sale of the Leckie Road connection as commenced by the coalition Government. I again reaffirm my personal commitment and that of the coalition to sell off the Leckie Road connection.

I have spoken to the shadow Minister, the honourable member for Gregory, who assures me that my determination has his total support. I place the Honourable the Minister for Transport on notice that, unless he delivers on the coalition promise, there will be uproar in the northern suburbs. If he thinks previous Ministers Elder and Hamill had a pretty hard time, he does not yet know what is coming. I will activate the community of the northern suburbs of Brisbane and this Minister, to his and his Government's detriment, even compared with the previous Goss Labor Government, will find out just what community-

based protest action movements are all about in the electorate of Clayfield, courtesy of its local member working closely with the local community.

TABCorp

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (7.08 p.m.): I rise to bring to the attention of the House a burning issue which threatens to corrupt the club industry throughout Queensland. For years we saw club after club go broke because we did not have pokies in Queensland. We saw the northern New South Wales clubs get richer by having Queenslanders spending money in their clubs. Why was this allowed? Because the Bjelke-Petersen Government complained about the corruption that would occur if pokies were played in Queensland.

All of this changed when the Goss Labor Government introduced pokies into Queensland. That Government also put in place the most stringent checks and balances to ensure that the fears of corruption would never be realised. However, this has all changed. We now have a piece of legislation presented and passed by the coalition Government. So we had one coalition Government saying, "Let's not have pokies because of corruption", and we had the most recent coalition Government violating the Goss Labor Government legislation and opening the door for corruption within the industry.

The introduction of license monitoring operators commenced in August 1997. Recent developments have seen many of the club industry's worst fears realised. The coalition Government's love of following "Kennett's Kingdom" has resulted in starting a process which could see the total destruction of the club industry as we know it. The legislation, and now the Machine Gaming Commission, allows the licensed operators to enter into contracts with clubs, which includes taking a large cut of their income. These operators, instead of being the protectors of the industry, are now the predators. I should say that, at the moment, there appears to be only one that is giving the rest a bad name, that is, TABCorp—the publicly listed company which is owned by the Victorian TAB. This company has offered clubs what appears to be the deal of a lifetime when, in reality, it will turn out to be the club con of the century. TABCorp offers organisations a club which TABCorp controls, apparently through its own directors and own managers. Clubs will be required to pay a large percentage of income back to TABCorp.

I shall summarise my concerns. The activity that TABCorp is undertaking is purely entrepreneurial, based on the way it is licensed to operate in Victoria, and is contrary to the white paper which led to the Gaming Machine Amendment Act 1997. The way it approaches the deal, the offer is that it takes 25% of machine revenue before any costs or taxes are taken out. Therefore, the club wears all the costs. TABCorp also wanted 10% of profit from gaming before interest and tax costs were deducted. Again, it is absolutely creaming the gaming income from the operation.

Anyone with any knowledge of the operation of clubs will recognise the basic fact that gaming is what makes the most profit. Other operational areas like food and entertainment are subsidised by gaming. Profits from gaming allow clubs to maintain their commitment to support community facilities and sport, as well as charities and local bodies. Normally, a new club will offer facilities in which the local community can participate. In normal cases, function rooms and entertainment areas are used by charitable and community organisations for activities such as bingo. There are no plans in any of TABCorp's developments for any function facilities which would be available for this type of activity. This whole scenario is very scary for the future of the industry. If this predator, motivated by profit and profit alone, is allowed to get a foothold in Queensland using these tactics, then the public's perception of clubs will suffer immense damage.

TABCorp has been involved in—to put it kindly—unsavoury tactics. Recently, it became involved with the Ipswich Jets at the Hotel Cecil site. It is my understanding that TABCorp first approached another Ipswich sporting organisation regarding the building and managing of a club. The club rightfully went and sought legal advice from a firm of solicitors, Rose and Jensen. It is my understanding that the club received advice that the deal offered should not be taken up. The next venture TABCorp decided to take up was the Ipswich Jets at the Hotel Cecil. It is my understanding that this was done after approaches by the hotel owners to get TABCorp involved. Lo and behold, the hotel owners just happen to be the solicitors firm, Rose and Jensen. If this is the way TABCorp and the kind of unscrupulous people they wish to be involved with operate, warning bells should be sent to all those clubs thinking of going with TABCorp.

We as a Government need to ensure that this ability of licensed machine operators to become investors, managers and profiteers in the club industry—and the hotel industry for that matter—ceases. Failure to do so will leave us open for corruption in the club industry. If we allow this to continue, members of the hotel industry will rightfully ask the question: why should they not get the same consideration as the licensed machine operators and have the same amount of pokies as clubs do? The community benefit we presently get from the club industry is threatened if we allow this privateering to continue. The short-term benefit will result in long-term destruction.

Parthenium Weed

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (7.13 p.m.): I rise to speak about parthenium weed, which is spreading right throughout the central part of Queensland. It has spread already into New South Wales and other States. I spoke about this subject in this place in about March 1984, and the problem still exists. The way in which this weed has spread is incredible, as are the efforts that have been made through all sorts of measures—chemical and biological—to try to control it. I have recently returned from a trip to Charters Towers, Clermont and Emerald, where anyone can see that this weed has blossomed like nothing on earth.

I wish to acknowledge Scott Dearden and his wife from Rolleston in Queensland. Scott is the project officer for the Parthenium Action Group, which has provided me with good information. The work that they are doing must be acknowledged. I also acknowledge Councillor David Bridgman, who has put forward some ideas for controlling this weed. I am concerned that the funding which that particular group has received in the last three years from the national Landcare program has been cut. They received about \$73,000 over the past three years to fund the control of parthenium. That funding has been cut, and all funding now comes under the Natural Heritage Trust. Recently, when the project group applied for \$88,000, they were told that funding was not for weed eradication. In fact, it is for weed eradication; creeping lantana managed to get through. Parthenium weed does cross over into other States. Therefore, I am going to make an effort to ensure that the funding is distributed properly, because productivity right throughout that area has been cut dramatically.

India has recently made some comments about this issue. India has parthenium, which starts in the Himalayas and covers virtually the entire country. Today we have wheat export contracts with India totalling 2.325 million tonnes. So far we have shipped 1.3 million tonnes, with another shipment due after July. The Indians have said that they will not renege on the contract, but they will insist on new quarantine standards relating to weeds. An Indian delegation identified seven noxious weed species in Australian wheat shipments—one of which was parthenium, which grows from the snow line of the Himalayas to the southern tip of India. The alarm bells should be ringing when a country that has parthenium from one end to the other does not want to buy our wheat because of parthenium weed contamination. That is a worry.

Some of the methods of control need to be spelled out, because a lot of work has been done in this regard. Parthenium was first discovered around Toogoolawah in 1955 and again at Clermont in 1964. Since then, with a season like we have just had, it is controlling a massive area of the State. Some insects are being used to control the weed. *Zygogramma* is a leaf defoliating beetle like a ladybird, except that it is cream and black. The epiblemma is the stem-galling moth—a Mexican moth that was introduced in about 1983-84. The *listronotus* is a stem-boring weevil. The *smicronyx* is a weevil that lives in the seed. *Carmenta* is a new one. It is a wasp that ringbarks the root ball from the plant. That does sound like a very good and promising biological control. It is something to watch. Now that insects have plenty to operate on, I believe that they will be able to control that spread.

Members should not forget the prickly pear, which dominated Queensland and much of New South Wales from about 1840 through to the 1940s, when *cactoblastis* was introduced and became very successful. It is still successful today in clearing country of that particular weed problem. *Puccinia Abrupta* is a rust that appears in the winter. That is also very good in the right conditions. We have many types of control that we need to encourage.

I want to come back to the funding aspect. If a Federal Government—of whatever political persuasion—cuts off funding for Landcare projects such as this, every one of us has to make a massive effort to allow those people who are trying to control parthenium weed in Queensland to make every attempt possible, and to fund them properly. \$88,000

for this year is all those people have ever asked for. But that has been knocked back, and those people are unable to continue the work that they have been doing. Therefore, quite obviously, we do have serious problems. Parthenium also creates health problems, such as dermatitis and many other conditions that have been caused among primary producers in that area. Surely we can make people sit up and take notice. I acknowledge those people who have done that work in the past.

Time expired.

Automatic Teller Machines

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (7.18 p.m.): Several weeks ago, I raised the issue of access to automatic teller machines in my electorate. Briefly, for the benefit of honourable members, I said that as banks are withdrawing their services from suburban and rural areas, they should provide the same quality of service as that which existed previously. Most automatic teller machines cannot be accessed by wheelchair-bound people. They find it impossible to key in their codes, and therefore the service is simply unavailable to them. Also, there are few services from automatic teller machines offered to visually impaired people. In addition, many people find that the deposit system for cash or cheques is not accessible, often due to the malfunction of the machine. So in that case there is no service at all offered to those people.

In effect, the banks simply pull out—as they have done in the suburban areas in my electorate—leaving customers with an inferior service to the one that existed previously. Tonight I will point out that the ATM system operating at Marsden in my electorate leaves people quite vulnerable. I will explain why. Last week, the bank that adjoins my electorate office was robbed. Since then, a security guard has been posted outside the premises. I support that enhanced security for those people. However, just 50 metres along the shopping centre, people have to queue up for the automatic teller machine service, which is completely exposed to the roadway and to everything else. It is only a few metres from the roadway and the car park. If the banks can find the money for a security guard—as I said, I support that—after a bank has been robbed, then they should enhance the security for people using automatic teller machines at any time of the day. The elderly, mothers with children in prams and other everyday folk who simply line up currently place themselves at

risk. Their hard-earned cash can be stolen from them easily.

The machine at Marsden should be fully enclosed so that people can carry out their transactions not only in privacy but also in complete security. I know the Police Service has been calling for greater security for people accessing ATM machines. It is time the banks recognised their responsibility to people, started treating their customers as people and provided improved security access for people using ATM machines. People are finding that there is no shortage of fees and charges from banks, but there has been a simultaneous decline in bank services and safety offered as the bank fees and charges have increased. It is no wonder that small communities are organising protest meetings about the loss of services. It is no wonder that people are looking to other alternatives like credit unions in southern States to step in and fill the gap left by the decline of the banks.

The fact is that on weekends—and, I am afraid, on weekdays for Marsden customers—people have no choice but to use ATM machines. They should have a choice about safety. Banks should regulate their own activities as part of a quality assurance for their customers and install safety measures to protect their customers. Customers should not be lining up like the ducks in a sideshow alley waiting for some thug to knock them down and have their hard-earned savings taken off them. It is time that a bit of old-fashioned decency and courtesy returned to the banking system, that is, the view that the customer comes first. I invite the banks to trial a safety first program at the Marsden Park Shopping Centre and give that hardworking community something back after the banking services have been stripped away from them. In that way, the banks would be returning some service to those people, a service that will provide safety for them. We are not asking for anything more than has been provided at the bank just 50 metres away. After it was robbed, a security guard was installed. I want to safeguard all those people who are using ATM machines who currently are vulnerable and who currently are exposed to any thug who wants to pull up in a car park.

Rehabilitation and Acute Spinal Units, North Queensland

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—ONP)
(7.23 p.m.): I am glad to see that the Minister for Health is in the House. Since 1990, the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association has

been lobbying for a rehabilitation unit and an acute spinal unit in north Queensland. The association has more than 1,500 members throughout Queensland, some of whom have been identified as currently having personal and lifestyle assistance needs. Currently, people with disabilities and their families have to reach crisis situations before there is any likelihood of assistance being provided. Most of the families in crisis receive no support. When families do try to cope without assistance, they often become more and more isolated from assistance and services, leading to extreme stress and family breakdowns.

Although the recent changes to the Medical Aid Subsidy Scheme have improved its selection of aids and appliances to the consumer, the funding for such equipment for replacement and backup are scant or nonexistent in some regions. The introduction of preventive equipment, such as standing frames and exercise equipment, needs to be examined to reduce the heavy cost of readmission to hospital. That type of equipment has the capacity to reduce hospitalisation and reduce the large cost to the health system.

State Government funding policies, particularly capped hour limits for personal and lifestyle assistance, do not recognise the difficulty of recruiting workers who live 200 kilometres or more away from the client. Urban service models are not appropriate for rural and remote areas. The only spinal injuries unit in Queensland is in Brisbane, necessitating families outside of Brisbane being separated for months at a critical time in their lives. A spinal injuries unit located in Townsville would alleviate the stress of long-term dislocation for north Queensland people and would enable health-care services to be accessed prior to crisis point.

Members of the Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association have been promised a rehabilitation unit in north Queensland for the past six years, and still they are no closer to gaining that type of unit. In November 1995, the then Minister for Health announced the acceptance of the recommendations by the consultants reviewing the need for a rehabilitation unit in north Queensland. Capital funds had been allocated to the project to commence in August 1997. It appears that even if space is allocated to a rehabilitation unit and an acute spinal unit at the Kirwan site, those units will not be operational until well after the new Townsville hospital is completed. In spite of the acceptance of the recommendations by the consultants and the

allocation of capital funds by previous Governments, there are no hard signs of any progress towards the development of a physical rehabilitation and an acute spinal unit in north Queensland. With the construction of the new Townsville hospital already under way, now is the perfect time to finalise that long, ongoing issue. A physical rehabilitation unit and an acute spinal unit are desperately needed in north Queensland now. If the Minister for Health were listening, she would take note.

Mackay Region Apprenticeship Employment Limited

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (7.26 p.m.): On Monday, 12 October I had the privilege, along with my parliamentary colleague the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Paul Braddy, to attend the 13th Annual Awards Night of Mackay Region Apprenticeship Employment Limited, or MRAEL as it is commonly known. In addition to the pleasant duty of presenting the various awards, the Honourable Minister also inspected and officially opened MRAEL's new skills centre. Built totally by supervised apprentices at a cost of \$1.8m, the skills centre includes a training kitchen, bar and restaurant for the hospitality industry as well as a computer room and general training rooms.

When MRAEL first hosted an awards presentation in 1986, two excellence awards were presented and host employers had been found for 19 apprentices. This year, 23 awards were presented in recognition of the company's 670 apprentices and trainees working throughout the Mackay region in over 40 different trades with 635 host employers. A group of Mackay people with limited financial support and a loan of \$6,000 from the ACTU Lend Lease Foundation established MRAEL in October 1985 in order to fulfil a need to provide a better skilled work force. Through the indenturing and training of apprentices and trainees by positioning them with host employers, MRAEL is able to place young Queenslanders in employment and train them for the future.

The excellence of training provided by MRAEL under the leadership of Peter

Broadhurst, Kim Wilson, Bill Firth and the board of directors was recognised in 1995 when MRAEL was named Ansett Australia Employer of the Year (Training Agency). As well as the 670 young apprentices and trainees employed, MRAEL itself employs 63 staff in seven offices in the Mackay and Townsville region and has a turnover of \$12m.

The importance of the many local sponsors of MRAEL's awards presentation cannot be underestimated. All are essential to the continuing recognition of young apprentices. Special mention must be made of the sponsorship by Northern Building Society of the Apprentice of the Year Award. The Northern Building Society has contributed sponsorship since the first awards night in 1986. That is 13 years of continuous sponsorship. I am also proud to be a sponsor of MRAEL's awards with the Tim Mulherin shield for the best trainer, being won this year by an old school mate, Kerry Woodman of Woodman's Mitre 10, a local hardware and building supplier. This year's Apprentice of the Year is 23-year-old Nathan Welch. Nathan, who obtained an OP of 1 in Year 12, studied law for a year but became disenchanted with that profession and decided he would prefer to work with his hands. Nathan is a diesel fitter with Carlisle Tractors in Mackay. He has just finished his four-year apprenticeship and has been offered a permanent position with Carlisle Tractors. His supervisor has stated that he was an outstanding apprentice, the best he had had in 30 years. Nathan is the son of well-known Mackay residents Bill and Toni Welch. Bill is an organiser with the Metal Workers Union and a member of the ACTU Mackay Provincial Council. I am sure that he and Toni are proud not only of their son but also of the fact that it was a loan from the ACTU Lend Lease Foundation that helped with the initial establishment of MRAEL. I would like to offer Nathan my sincere congratulations on his wonderful achievement. My congratulations also go to the executive and board members of MRAEL for the dedication and commitment they have shown and continue to show to the future of the youth of the Mackay region.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m.