

THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 1998

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

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I wish to remind honourable members that the annual meeting of the Queensland branch of the CPA will be held in this Chamber at 1 p.m.

MEMBERS' DAILY TRAVELLING ALLOWANCE CLAIMS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay upon the table of the House the annual report of the daily travelling allowance claims by members of the Legislative Assembly for 1997-98.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Nagoorin; Monto Road

From **Mrs Liz Cunningham** (288 petitioners) requesting the House to give the highest priority to bitumen sealing the section of road from Nagoorin to the bitumen sealed section on the northern end of Monto Road.

Russell Island, Shire Council

From **Mr Hegarty** (26 petitioners) requesting the Minister for Communications and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities to conduct a poll for an expression of opinion for the formation of a new Russell Island Shire Council as a matter of urgency.

Redcliffe, Police Beat

From **Mr Hollis** (3,814 petitioners) requesting the House to act on the advice of the CJC to the Queensland Police Service and initiate a trial police beat project for the whole of the City of Redcliffe.

Brookfield State School, Preschool

From **Dr Watson** (318 petitioners) requesting the House to erect a preschool at Brookfield State School that meets the Government's current regulations

Petitions received.

PAPER**MINISTERIAL PAPER**

The following paper was tabled—

Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Palaszczuk)—

Report of the Supply Management Working Group on the Extensions of Supply Management Arrangements to the Entire Queensland Dairy Industry.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Overseas Visit**

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: Last week, I undertook a four-day visit to three key areas of the People's Republic of China—a country which I regard as one of Queensland's, if not Australia's, most significant emerging trading partners. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen existing ties with China and develop new relationships as we move towards the next millennium, particularly as much of the rest of Asia continues to suffer the effects of a serious economic downturn. As the Treasurer informed this House earlier this week, even the Asian economic dynamo, Japan, is forecasting negative to zero economic growth in the short term.

Queensland's ties with China are therefore even more important now than they were when we established sister State relations with Shanghai nine years ago. Indeed, one of the key reasons for the visit was to sign the fifth memorandum of understanding with the Mayor of Shanghai, Mr Xu Kuangdi.

The importance of this relationship with Shanghai cannot be overstated. Queensland is indeed privileged to be in such a close relationship with what is regarded as one of the growth regions of Asia, not just China. The visit to China also provided me with the opportunity to continue to spread the message to our friends in Asia that Queensland is a tolerant, multicultural society that welcomes and encourages foreign investors and foreign tourists.

Two other key objectives of the visit were achieved in the south-western municipality of Chongqing. Honourable members may be aware that this municipality, which was the capital of China during the Second World War, is the most populous in the world, with 30 million people. It was here that I was able to return about 100 ancient Chinese coins to their rightful owners. The coins, some more than 1,300 years old, were found 20 years ago in

an urn in the abandoned Chinese goldminers' township of Maytown in far-north Queensland. Now, they have been returned to the Chinese and will be displayed in the Three Gorges Museum, again strengthening the cultural ties between Queensland and China.

Let me turn now to the other major achievement of the visit to Chongqing. Some honourable members, such as the member for Logan, would be aware that there has been an international competition to design the master plan for the reconstruction of the ancient city heart of Chongqing. As a measure of the scope of this project, honourable members may be interested to know that the estimated cost of this project is \$4 billion. The international competition has resulted in six consortia being short-listed for the project, including one from Queensland. During my visit to Chongqing, I was able to meet members of the Queensland consortium and to assist them in presenting their credentials to the Chongqing officials. I make no apology for standing up for Queensland companies and I wish the consortium, and other Queensland companies trying to do business in China, all the best and offer the assistance of the officers in our Trade and Investment Office in Shanghai.

As the scope of this visit was quite extensive—and much more extensive than what I have dealt with in this short statement—I seek leave to table a more comprehensive report with support material for the benefit of honourable members. I will table two copies.

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Greenhouse Strategy

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.37 a.m.), by leave: The Commonwealth has committed Australia to playing a part in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. At an international forum in Kyoto in 1997, Australia signed the framework convention on climate change. The so-called Kyoto agreement sets targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Under the agreement, Australia is committed to limit growth in emissions to 8% above 1990 levels by 2008-2012. The Commonwealth's primary tool for meeting this commitment is a national greenhouse strategy, which was finalised in June this year. The Prime Minister has asked every State and Territory to endorse this strategy.

I am pleased to be able to advise the House today that Cabinet this week gave approval for me to give such endorsement on Queensland's behalf. Accordingly, I have written to the Prime Minister advising him that the strategy has Queensland's support, and I table a copy of that letter. So Queensland is committed to contributing its fair share to the national effort to cut emissions, but it is a commitment made with a careful eye on protecting Queensland jobs and industries. In my letter, I have reminded the Prime Minister that Queensland has a high dependence on energy-intensive export industries and the State's international competitiveness must be protected. I have advised the Prime Minister that my Government requires that the Queensland implementation plan be based on certain principles. They are the full exploration of no-regrets options and market-based solutions, protection of employment levels in Queensland, maintenance of international competitiveness for Queensland's industry, and continuing progress on the introduction of competition reform in the energy sector.

As well, my Government believes that three other issues must be addressed for the national strategy to be successfully implemented. We must develop a domestic emissions trading system and we must do it quickly. This would be a valuable tool to help minimise the total national cost in reducing emissions. Queensland also believes that there must be quick action to develop a comprehensive system for forecasting greenhouse gas emission levels to help Governments and industry in their policy development.

Finally, turning the strategy into reality will require substantial resources. While the strategy provides a cost-effective mechanism for achieving reductions, Queensland considers it essential that the Commonwealth assist in funding programs that will be implemented cooperatively. Without Commonwealth funding, Queensland would find it difficult to meet these challenges. As I have said, Queensland is committed to playing its part in the national effort, but we are just as committed to protecting the interests of this State. I table a copy of that letter to the Prime Minister for the information of members.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Treasurer's Annual Statement

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: As the House

will be aware, the Treasurer's Annual Statement is my report to Parliament on the financial results for the State Budget sector for the financial year 1997-98, audited as necessary by the Auditor-General. As such, it brings together details of transactions in the Consolidated Fund and Trust and Special Funds, including outlays provided for in the Appropriation Acts for the year. An appendix to the statement sets out the unforeseen expenditure requirements for which supplementary Supply is sought in the Appropriation Bills 1998.

The Consolidated Fund outcome is in line with the 1997-98 Budget forecast. The final surplus in cash terms of \$16.34m compares with the Budget estimate of \$13.63m. Underlying this result was an increase in actual receipts compared with Budget estimates of 7.3%, allowing a corresponding increase in spending on services and infrastructure for the Queensland community. Both receipts and expenditure in 1997-98 totalled \$15.3 billion. Compared with the previous year's receipts and expenditure, the 1997-98 results represent an increase of 10.1% in each case.

The more significant components of the increase in Consolidated Fund receipts were increased Commonwealth payments, gaming machine tax, stamp duties, royalties, interest, borrowings and a return of equity payments as a consequence of the electricity industry restructure. Offsetting these gains to a partial extent were decreased collections from tax equivalent payments, payments from Queensland Rail relating to coal haulage, and repayments of capital advances and unrequited transfers from Trust and Special Funds.

In summary, the 1997-98 year closed with a slightly better than expected cash result, a surplus of \$16m. More importantly, revenue growth continued and, as well as supporting an improved surplus, allowed for better provision of services and infrastructure with increased actual outlays of over 10%. I table the Treasurer's Annual Statement 1997-98 and the attached Statement of Unforeseen Expenditure to be Appropriated 1997-98. I commend these statements to the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Board Appointments

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: I wish to advise the House of several appointments that I have recently made to boards within my portfolio

area. On 1 October, Robert Mason was appointed as a commissioner of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission board following the elevation of respected businessman Sir Bruce Watson to chairperson and the appointment of Stan Macionis as deputy chair in July. Mr Mason brings many years of management experience at BHP Coal and MIM Holdings and is well regarded in the field of organisational development.

I have also appointed businessman Mr Stephen Lonie as the new chairperson of Queensland Corrections. Mr Lonie was previously the deputy chairperson of the Q Corr board and was elevated following the resignation of Des Knight. Mr Lonie is managing partner for KPMG Queensland, an expert management consultant and adviser, and has served on a number of boards including KPMG Australia and the Pacific Film and Television Commission board. Another addition to the Q Corr board as director is barrister-at-law, Ms Dianne Linnane.

The chair of the Queensland Community Corrections board also needed to be filled following the departure of Des Sturgess. QCCB's deputy president, barrister-at-law and former police officer Frank Lippett, has been appointed to fill this vacancy. I have no doubt that Mr Lippett's extensive experience as a Queensland and Federal police officer, a Crown prosecutor and his position as president of the Brisbane Community Corrections board mean he is ideally suited to the position. Indeed, the very fact that my predecessor, the Honourable Russell Cooper, appointed Mr Lippett to his role as deputy president of the board acknowledges his ability to do the job. I will be making announcements in the future about the replacements for the deputy president position vacated by Mr Lippett and the deputy chairman position on the Q Corr board, which are currently vacant.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Literacy and Numeracy

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: On 26 August 1998 I tabled the 1995-96 report on literacy and numeracy in Queensland by the Queensland School Curriculum Council. Honourable members will recall that that report identified a dramatic differential between the performance of boys and girls in respect of literacy. I said that the underperformance of boys should have set alarm bells ringing for the previous Government, which not only failed to table the documents but did not even make

them available to the board of management of the Education Department.

I now table the council's latest report, entitled Statewide performance of students in aspects of literacy and numeracy in Queensland 1995, 1996 and 1997. The report indicates improvements in performances in all aspects of literacy for all 1997 Year 6 students as compared to the performances of the 1996 and 1995 students. There is an improvement in performance in the measurement and space aspects of the numeracy test. There is also an overall improvement in the performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in some aspects of the tests as compared to the 1996 results.

However, the report confirms the findings in the 1995-96 report on literacy and numeracy presented to the previous Minister—a report, I might add, to which he did not seem to pay any particular attention. It confirms the differences in performance between boys and girls, and it confirms the extreme differences in performance between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It identifies significant disparities between the performance of urban and rural children. Interestingly, the schools west of the Great Dividing Range did worst under the previous Government's Leading Schools policy. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to perform substantially below all other students in all aspects of literacy and numeracy tested. The Government will implement strategies designed to improve the outcomes for these students and enhance their ability to operate successfully in the 21st century.

Throughout the State, boys performed below girls in all aspects of the literacy test. In reading and viewing, the performance of the boys was markedly below that of girls, and when one looks at the results for writing, the gap is even wider. The results for numeracy tell a different story. The results for both groups are similar except for the questions on space where boys performed better than girls.

Despite this, the boys' performance in literacy lags behind that of girls. This underperformance of boys in literacy is dramatic, and requires a dramatic response. The approximately \$5m annual increase in literacy funding that is a feature of this Labor Budget will help. However, even more than that needs to be done. There needs to be public debate about this issue. The minds of the entire education community need to be engaged so that we can work together towards collective solutions. The education system

needs to be refocused, and the Education budget needs to be reconfigured to target this critical problem. I will advise the House of my department's response to this report in the near future.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Historic Bricks, West End Public Housing Project

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: Last Friday, the Courier-Mail carried a story quoting a Criminal Justice Commission spokesman saying that there appeared to be no basis for suspecting any misconduct in the disposal of historic bricks originally meant to be used in a Housing Department project at West End. I am pleased to inform the House that yesterday, almost a week after the Courier-Mail story, I received official advice from the CJC to that effect. This advice should put an end to the Opposition's efforts to imply that I as Minister for Public Works and Housing was somehow to blame or had overseen or approved a transaction that was less than honest. The Opposition took this approach despite the fact that the bricks were advertised for sale and sold in early 1997 over a period spanning the time in office of two Liberal Ministers.

Honourable members would be aware that the issue of the missing bricks first arose publicly when the member for Mooloolah scored an own-goal by asking questions at the Estimates hearings that only embarrassed his own party and two former Liberal Ministers. Not even tougher gun laws could prevent the member for Mooloolah from shooting himself in both feet and wounding two of his colleagues in the process.

Last week's Courier-Mail article carried comments attributed to the Liberal Leader, who was the Minister for Public Works and Housing at the time the bricks were sold. His advice to me was that I should instruct my department to find a way to get them back. That is the sort of hands-off, do-nothing attitude that caused this problem in the first place. But it is typical of the approach of the former Minister. It is no wonder, coincidentally, that when he held this portfolio, in his department he was nick-named "Brick". And they still refer to him that way.

I became aware of the sale of the bricks only a few weeks before the Estimates hearings and had been trying to secure their return. Let me say that I did not take the Liberal Leader's advice. I did not leave it to my

department. Yesterday, after receiving the CJC letter, I rang the person who bought the bricks. Today, I am pleased to announce that we agreed that my department would buy enough of the bricks to enable them to be incorporated into the West End public housing project, as promised to the Brisbane City Council and local residents.

I have never publicly mentioned the name of the person concerned, believing that he and his family were being dragged unfairly into the spotlight by Opposition point scoring. I do not intend to deviate from that practice. But I do call on the member for Mooloolah and the Liberal Leader to make a full and public apology for the distress that their cheap and misguided stunt has caused to the person concerned and his family.

Mr LAMING: I rise to a point of order. That comment is untrue and offensive and I ask it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked for those words to be withdrawn.

Mr SCHWARTEN: If he wants me to withdraw my call for him to make an apology, I withdraw it. The reason members are sitting on the Opposition side is that they never admit it when they are wrong. They have distressed this family beyond belief with their cheap and childish stunt that backfired and embarrassed them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will return to his statement.

Mr SCHWARTEN: In its response, the CJC suggested that—

Mr LAMING: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I ask for that comment to be withdrawn. That is not the reason that I brought up the matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no need to debate the issue. The Minister will withdraw.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I will withdraw. The member should put away his gun.

In its response, the CJC has suggested that the Department of Public Works examine its storage and record keeping practices—systems that were in place under the previous Government that allowed this mistake to occur. I have ordered my department to do just that to ensure this incident will not be repeated.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Jolly Frog Car & Bike Rentals Pty Ltd

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: I would like to draw honourable members' attention to the activities of a Cairns-based business which I believe is doing considerable damage to the interstate and overseas reputation of Cairns, and Queensland, as a tourist destination.

The Cairns Office of Fair Trading has regularly received complaints about Jolly Frog, a car rental business. The company has had a poor complaint history over the past five years and at times the office has received up to 10 telephone calls per month about this trader. Over the past year complaints have increased. Many of the complaints have been resolved in the aggrieved client's favour, but only after extensive work by Office of Fair Trading staff.

Jolly Frog Car & Bike Rentals Pty Ltd—ACN 055 235 320—has its registered office and principal place of business at 147 Sheridan Street, Cairns. I understand the Jolly Frog operates from a number of sites in Cairns. An affiliated business, North Queensland Car and Bus Rentals, operates from the same address and also attracts considerable complaints. Both businesses are managed by Michael David Kennedy. Mr Kennedy is understood to also have businesses on the Gold Coast, including another Jolly Frog car rental outlet.

Significantly, the 1989-90 annual report of the then Consumer Affairs Bureau reported the following under the heading "Traders to Avoid in Cairns"—

"Like all cities, Cairns has received its share of unethical traders and two such businesses were named during the year. Michael Kennedy and Kathy Jones, who carried on business as Cairns Car Buying and (later) as Cairns Motor Market of Spence Street, Cairns were involved in the sale of unroadworthy motor vehicles and the supplying of false information to finance companies."

Earlier in 1987 Mr Kennedy had surrendered his motor vehicle dealers licence after inquiries were made into his conduct. Mr Kennedy is no stranger to suspect business practices. I also understand the Cairns police have received in excess of 100 complaints about Jolly Frog's operations. Jolly Frog, North Queensland Car and Bus Rentals and Mr Kennedy are also well known to the Department of Transport, which has successfully prosecuted them for having unregistered vehicles and for numberplate offences. The department has also pursued them over dishonoured cheques.

Jolly Frog was the subject of an article in "The Fixer" column of the Sunday Mail. The reported case was of a British tourist overcharged \$750 on his credit card when he used the Gold Coast Jolly Frog and who had to wait eight months for a refund which came only after much pressure was brought to bear by the young man's relatives and through newspaper exposure.

Complaints to the Office of Fair Trading about the Jolly Frog's activities include allegations of—

failing to return deposits;

overcharging hirers' credit cards without consumers' knowledge in relation to vehicle damage allegedly sustained to the hired vehicles;

supplying vehicles of a mechanical standard that the hirers considered unsatisfactory or unroadworthy; and

vehicles breaking down and substitutes having to be provided.

I understand there is also evidence that in one case the trader hired out a motorcycle which was unregistered at the time.

These complaints go way beyond the complaints received against any other car rental companies. One foreign consumer claims that he was charged \$50 to clean the car because it had become dirty when it was rained on. Consumers are strung out for months waiting for the resolution of invalid debits to their credit cards. I understand that allegations have also been made by consumers of being abused by the trader's staff.

The company adroitly walks the fine line between legality and illegality. It has a common practice of debiting credit cards for amounts of \$300 to \$500 without justification. If challenged by the consumer, there is then a long drawn-out process which costs the consumer considerable time, inconvenience and expensive telephone calls and faxes. Files are "misplaced" or the relevant company representative is hard to find.

If the Office of Fair Trading becomes involved, the time of the office's staff is taken up by the petty, lame delaying tactics by Jolly Frog's management to avoid paying the refund. In some cases belatedly the refund is made after the Jolly Frog's bank account has benefited from the extra money at the consumer's expense. The company usually takes two credit card imprints and has the consumer sign them before the hire vehicle is delivered. The first imprint is a deposit to cover any form of damage to the vehicle while it is in

the possession of the hirer. The second imprint is to cover hire fees. Upon the return of the vehicle in an undamaged condition, one imprint should then be destroyed. But this is not always done, although consumers are assured it has been or will be. Then a debit is made under some pretence which advantages the cash position of Jolly Frog even if only temporarily.

It is not unreasonable to suspect that this company relies on slippage in that some consumers may not notice the extra charges or, if they do, will not do anything about them because of the cost, inconvenience, perhaps even embarrassment at being ripped off and general difficulties of dealing with problems from a distance, particularly if they live in another country. As with many consumer matters formal complaints to fair trading agencies are usually only the tip of the iceberg as many people do not lodge written complaints. With the Jolly Frog the "tip" is substantial and a very large iceberg of consumer disadvantage is likely to be below the surface.

Honourable members will share my concern that visitors to this State, particularly overseas visitors, are those most vulnerable when dealing with the Jolly Frog. Complaints have come to Fair Trading from the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States and South America, as well as from other Australian States and Territories. Many overseas tourists apparently do not become aware their credit card accounts have been debited until weeks later after they have returned home. This often leaves them with little means of effective redress and a very sour view of their Queensland visit. No doubt they spread the word to their friends and family.

It is reasonable to suspect that foreign tourists are seen as easy prey because language difficulties, travel commitments and the cost of seeking redress work against them enforcing their consumer rights. Many local residents in Cairns already know of the Jolly Frog's appalling reputation. Visitors are not so lucky and unsuspectingly hire vehicles from the company.

As honourable members would appreciate, in areas such as Cairns and the Gold Coast where tourism is a large industry, the practices of traders such as the Jolly Frog can have a serious adverse effect on that industry and the image of the State overall. If we are to maintain and enhance our reputation as a safe and enjoyable place for tourists, it is essential that unscrupulous

traders are weeded out and unsatisfactory business practices rectified. Their cavalier behaviour threatens the reputation of an industry employing 125,000 Queenslanders. Moreover, the bad reputation of the Jolly Frog may discourage tourists from using other small rental companies which are well run and are striving to build their businesses by offering competitive services to consumers.

The Office of Fair Trading will continue to investigate complaints against the Jolly Frog and will consider prosecution where there is evidence of breaches of consumer protection laws. Meanwhile, I am warning all consumers to be very wary of any dealings with the Jolly Frog in Cairns or the Gold Coast or with any business run by Mr Michael Kennedy. The business practices of this operator are completely unacceptable. In particular, consumers should ensure that all credit card slips are either completed by them or, if not used, destroyed to prevent unauthorised debits being made. They should never leave a blank credit card slip with the business. They should also ensure that the vehicle is thoroughly inspected with the company's representative before and after renting so that the hirer cannot be stuck later with a bogus claim for damage.

We berate the cane toad as a pest in our environment, but the Jolly Frog is an obnoxious creature which plagues our tourism industry.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Primary Producers; Supply Chains

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP)
(Minister for Primary Industries) (10 a.m.), by leave: Primary producers are facing a revolution in the way they will be required to do business in future. The core of the revolution is a phenomenon known as supply chains. Supply chains are an emerging global trend, and Queensland primary producers need to be aware of how it will impact on them. Around the world fundamental changes are occurring in the way primary industry based products are marketed. This affects how business will be done in the future.

The key to the matter is the supply chain, driven by international retailers that seek to control primary products from the paddock to the supermarket shelf and then to the plate. The implications for Queensland producers, processors, transport, export and retail are huge as many of these major global retailers have annual turnovers of between \$50 billion and \$100 billion. This is 10 to 20 times larger

than Queensland's agricultural production of \$5.67 billion.

To ensure safety and maintain customer confidence, these companies are bringing producers and processors along the length of the supply chain into production relationships. These relationships are set out in protocols determined by retailers. The protocols are designed to allay consumers' fears about pesticide residues, adverse environmental impacts from food production and ethical issues. For farmers, the protocols determine to a large extent what is grown and when, and what pesticides and herbicides are used. These retailers' protocols are setting minimum worldwide operating standards for suppliers.

In addition, large international supermarket chains are looking to guarantee their supply year round and are establishing their sources of supply from growing areas around the globe. Any one of these giant retailers will have supply chains established in many countries to source safe, quality foods all year round. Supply chains in Queensland will compete with supply chains in South America, Africa, Eastern Europe, North America and any other potential source of supply. Supply chains for different retailers will also compete with each other.

I would like to again emphasise that these changes in the international marketplace have been driven by the strict standards adopted by the retailers. They are intended to provide a guarantee for consumers that the foods they are buying are safe and deliver on the other issues that are important to them. Unless Queensland primary producers identify and access the potential of these supply chains, they will find it increasingly difficult to improve their long-term position.

Small producers may find it difficult to access these markets on their own. To address this problem, the Department of Primary Industries is going to help small producers to get into the supply chains, and thus create a more secure future. The aim is to help producers take advantage of supply chains, rather than end up as victims. DPI will do this by focusing on building the capacity of rural Queensland to develop the knowledge, capabilities, innovation and leadership to make the transition to this new way of doing business. Our programs to achieve this objective include Building Rural Leaders, FutureProfit, rural market development and the Queensland Centre for Climate Application.

DPI is also providing a range of information, intelligence and analysis services to support farmers in making informed

strategic decisions in their business. This includes risk management, export and market development. Of special relevance to the department's support for farmers is a series of publications on value chain analysis, an important new management tool for producers and processors. I will just inform the House that the department has produced four publications. The first one is on beef, the second one is on sugar, the third one is on wheat and the fourth one is on horticulture. These are available to all honourable members.

Value chains describe the chain or sequence of costs and activities from paddock to plate. This has been developed by DPI's specialist Business Strategy Unit and has the potential to help primary producers and marketeers unlock higher product prices and higher profits. The value chain analysis series currently includes reports on sugar, wheat, beef and horticulture, as I have pointed out to the House already. These very detailed reports document, for the first time—and this is very important—the series of steps and processes from the farm gate to the end consumer in Japan and China. Most importantly of all for planning, these booklets provide the costs and margins associated with each link in that chain.

Beef provides an ideal example. The DPI analysis shows that Queensland cattle producers receive only 8% of the final retail price in Japan for grass fed and grain fed beef. The processors receive 4% and the retailer in Japan receives a massive 69% for grass fed beef and 46% for grain fed beef. Obviously, these figures send a powerful message to producers: they need to secure a greater part of the income in the supply chain.

The report provides producers with options. The most obvious way for the Australian beef industry to gain a greater share of the final market value is to shorten the value chain—in layman's language, cut out the middle men. This could be achieved by producing consumer-ready portions of meat in supermarket-ready packages for export to Japan or by establishing distribution systems in Japan through joint ventures or alliances. The same applies to sugar, wheat, fruit and vegetables.

Producers interested in more information about supply chains—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Some of those backbenchers opposite would love to be in the

position that I am in now, making this announcement for our producers.

Producers interested in more information about supply chains can contact the DPI call centre on 13 25 23. Forging and strengthening supply chain linkages is a key priority for the Department of Primary Industries. It is just another way that we are using DPI's expertise to allow our producers to build a more prosperous and secure future, based on competing in a global marketplace.

MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Citizen's Right of Reply

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) (10.08 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

- (1) That this House notes Report No. 23 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and the recommendation of the committee that a citizen's right of reply be incorporated into Hansard; and
- (2) That the House adopt the committee's recommendation."

Motion agreed to.

Response by Mr Mark Le Grand to Remarks made by the Member for Sandgate on 4 August 1998¹

In a statement made to the Legislative Assembly on 4 August 1998, the Member for Sandgate, Mr Gordon Nuttall MLA, referred to me by name and made comments which, given their context, have adversely affected my reputation.

Mr Nuttall implied that the CJC and I were attempting to "stop an inquiry" by the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Commissioner.

Mr Nuttall's claim relates to a letter dated 24 July 1998 from the solicitors representing the CJC and me to the Parliamentary Commissioner. This letter was written in response to the Parliamentary Commissioner's request for submissions in writing to her "concerning the manner in which such an investigation should be conducted". She promised to give careful consideration to such submissions.

I deny that I am participating in any attempt to derail the Parliamentary Commissioner's efforts to resolve the allegations made by Mr Allan Grice MLA. Quite the contrary, the submission responded to a request for assistance and was

received by the Parliamentary Commissioner in that spirit.

The difficulty is that if experienced Senior Counsel advice is correct, the Parliamentary Commissioner is about to embark on a hearing process which lacks statutory authority and is invalid. I have nothing to fear from any further inquiry; indeed I welcome the opportunity to clear my name. However, an invalid inquiry would further nobody's interests.

¹ Statement agreed to by Mr Le Grand and the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee in accordance with the Resolution of the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 18 October 1995, reintroduced on 11 October 1996.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Minister for Police and Corrective Services

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (Leader of the One Nation Party) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday the Minister for Police and Corrective Services implied that I had in some way interfered or attempted to interfere with a police operation on 9 October. I seek to remind the Minister of the facts.

The police operation in relation to this matter commenced somewhere between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. on 9 October, as a direct result of my phone call to the Longreach police after I received relevant information. In the early afternoon of 9 October, when the Minister's office received my fax, no such police operation existed. I caused the operation after my phone call to the Longreach police. The Minister further misled this House yesterday when he said—

"I provided a standard acknowledgment that was prepared, signed by me and sent to the member."

I table a copy of the reply that was forwarded to me, which I received on 14 October. Unless the Minister has changed his name to Ross Musgrove, he certainly did not prepare it or sign it, because that is whose name and signature appears thereon.

I again thank God for his intervention and for the sincerity and integrity of the member for Gregory, who made the safety of the boys paramount and put it above politics. He returned my call, subsequent to a similar fax I sent to him, and in the strictest of confidence set about the retrieval of two youths I was concerned about and in the process discovered the third. I trust that the Minister will cover himself with ashes and sackcloth and prostrate himself before this House in abject apology for such an indiscretion.

PRIVILEGE

Ms M. O'Donnell

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (10.11 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. After the debate yesterday in this place on the report of Estimates Committee D, members will now be aware of the issue surrounding the appointment of Ms Margaret O'Donnell to the position of Director-General of the Department of Equity and Fair Trading. In the House on 4 August 1998, in response to a question without notice directed to the Premier by the Leader of the Opposition regarding appointments to senior executive positions within the Public Service, the Premier stated—

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

That being the clear position, I was surprised at the appointment of Ms O'Donnell to the position of director-general, which was gazetted in Queensland Government Gazette No. 118 on 14 August 1998—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Noosa—

Mr DAVIDSON: I now table it for the information of honourable members.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not sure that this is a matter of privilege.

Mr DAVIDSON: It is a misleading of the House by the Premier, Mr Speaker.

It should be noted that Ms O'Donnell has never been appointed to a director-general's position previously. This appointment was made, despite the fact that the position was never advertised and a formal selection process was not conducted. Given the previous employment history of Ms O'Donnell, it would have been necessary to adhere to this process to be in compliance with the Premier's appointment process outlined in this House, as I mentioned previously.

Based on this apparent breach of the publicly stated appointment process, I inquired of the Minister for Fair Trading during the time allocated to non-Government members at the Estimates Committee D hearing whether the appointment of Ms O'Donnell and the process used for her selection had the support of the Premier. The Minister informed the committee: "Absolutely". Given that the Minister advised the committee that the Premier supported the appointment of Ms O'Donnell despite non-compliance with the process that he himself outlined, it is clear that the Premier has misled this House. I therefore ask that this matter be brought to the attention of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Reports

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.13 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House Public Works Committee reports Nos 49 and 50 on its inquiries into the upgrading of the Townsville Correctional Centre and the construction of a hot fire training facility by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority.

The committee considers the additions to the Townsville Correctional Centre as necessary and suitable for the purpose for which they will be constructed. The committee does make a recommendation to the Queensland Corrective Services Commission regarding the processes it uses to determine its future needs for additional prison beds.

The committee considers that the hot fire training facility will be a positive investment in the future safety of Queenslanders. It recommends that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority formalise and finalise its negotiations on key aspects of the project before proceeding with any other components of the project.

I place on record my thanks to all those who assisted the committee with these inquiries, particularly those who made submissions, appeared before the committee and assisted with inspections. I also thank my fellow committee members and thank the committee staff for their research and assistance. I commend the reports to the House.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Privatisation of TAB

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.15 a.m.): I give notice that I will move—

"That this House supports the privatisation of the Queensland TAB."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Disney Theme Park

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.15 a.m.): Following negotiations initiated by my Government in 1997, Queensland was able to secure from Victoria a bid for a project known as Starland, which represented the opportunity for Queensland to secure the first Disney theme park of the new millennium. Those negotiations were continuing, having been commenced by the previous Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Sport, Mr Veivers. In January of this year, I held discussions in confidence with Mr Dick Nunis, the CEO of Disney. I am concerned that the opportunity for Queensland to secure this major investment project has been bungled, and bungled badly, by an appalling lack of confidentiality by the current Premier.

The facts are these: Disney was in discussions, through its associates in Starland, with the Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett. Under my Government we were able to transfer the site of those negotiations to the State of Queensland. In what was an appalling breach of security, what was a closely-guarded secret under the coalition became the talk of the town under Labor. It could not keep it secret. It breached confidentiality and showed enormous disrespect for the sensitivities of the Disney organisation.

The Courier-Mail carried a report on 5 October, as follows—

"A month later, Mr Beattie wrote to the Disney organisation seeking a clear indication by the end of September as to whether the Starland project had sufficient support"——

Mr ELDER: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. If the former Premier and now Leader of the Opposition wanted it kept confidential, he should never have leaked it to the Courier-Mail.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition's time has expired.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise under Standing Orders 119 and 120. The Deputy Premier would be aware that I alerted the Premier that the Courier-Mail was making inquiries. The Premier also knew of my absolute confidentiality and the fact that I had refused to comment to the Courier-Mail. It is

the Premier who leaked to the Courier-Mail and jeopardised a project that could have generated over \$1 billion in investment in this State.

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

School Uniforms

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (10.17 a.m.): I bring to the attention of the House the Ombudsman's decision that principals are acting unlawfully by making students wear uniforms. This decision—

Mr Gibbs: Tell them the rorts you got into over it. You're a sleaze-bag.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Tourism!

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The comments made by the Minister are unparliamentary, offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Do you withdraw those words, Minister?

Mr GIBBS: I do not know what he found offensive: the fact that I referred to him as a sleaze-bag or that the whole thing was a rort. Which one?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The remarks are unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw, Minister.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. What about the new parliamentary standards promised by the member for Brisbane Central?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mr GIBBS: The Leader of the Opposition deliberately misled the Parliament in what he was saying, but I withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have not deliberately misled the Parliament. I find those remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn. Where are the parliamentary standards that were promised by the member for Brisbane Central?

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

Mr GIBBS: I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I again call the member for Cairns.

Ms BOYLE: I am drawing to the attention of the House—despite interference—a very important matter, that is, the wearing of school uniforms by children at the direction of their principals and their P & C associations.

The Ombudsman's decision has caused some considerable concern in Cairns, particularly to the principal of the Cairns State High School, Mr Bernie MacKenzie. Even the editorial of the Cairns Post has pointed out this morning the important and good reasons why schoolchildren should be strongly encouraged to wear uniforms. The main one, of course, is their recognition and their protection and, therefore, their safety and security within school grounds.

When the school policies do recognise diverse needs in different areas of this State and when those policies also are negotiated between the principal and the P & C, then I would like publicly to state for Mr MacKenzie and other principals at high schools in Cairns and in primary schools that I will strongly support their endeavours and those of the P & C to ensure that their school students are appropriately dressed.

Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.21 a.m.): On Tuesday, the Minister for Primary Industries informed members that he was appointing an administrator to the QLMA—another example of the Beattie administration's penchant for purging competent and respected boards and replacing them with Labor lackeys. The Minister pointed to the coalition for leaving the QLMA in debt to the tune of \$1.8m. On Wednesday, he was forced to retract that and put forward alternative figures of a negative equity of \$212,000 and an operating loss for 1997-98 of \$1.845m. The Minister should now clarify his position to the Parliament, and he has an obligation to do so.

The Minister has talked of Government's responsibility to contribute to meat safety and hygiene. That is a refreshing backflip from Labor's past policies, when Ed Casey and his Cabinet colleagues saddled butchers with full fee for service and plundered the \$500,000 annual Government contribution to the QLMA, and that is where the QLMA's financial problems stem from.

The meat industry already fears that they will again face fee hikes to cover the cost of operating the QLMA, just like they did when Labor last held office. Their industry has a reputation for safety and hygiene standards.

That achievement has come at a considerable cost, as butchers have had to refit their shops while staving off competition from the big three supermarkets. The coalition has been criticised for failing to approve a new fee schedule which would have increased butchers' fees by up to \$200. If that is a crime against small business, then we stand guilty.

The worst ramification of this extreme decision is the impact it will have on the confidence of the meat industry and its reputation for exceptional standards; and that is the issue. If the Minister is serious about food safety, as he claims, he should reverse the decision to sack the QLMA board and maintain the coalition's commitment for Government to fund its rightful obligations to the QLMA.

Miss E. Cheers

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (10.22 a.m.): Townsville has a proud record of cultural and community development. This is exemplified across the city's range of endeavours in the performing and visual arts. I would like to inform the House today that Townsville ballerina Emma Cheers has come home as the youngest member of the Queensland Ballet. The 17-year-old will make her stage debut at the Townsville Civic Theatre on Saturday amongst a cast of 22 in the romantic 1841 Paris Opera ballet *Giselle*, which is touring north Queensland.

Emma Cheers, who has spent two years in Melbourne at the highly acclaimed Christine Walsh Dance Centre, will be watched on stage by her parents, Judy and Brian, who have recently moved to Adelaide. The couple has travelled from Adelaide for the show and will be joined by Emma Cheers' former mentor and Royal Ballet of London dancer Robyn Croft in the crowd. Robyn Croft, who grew up in Townsville, is internationally acclaimed in her own right. Ms Croft said yesterday, "I am proud of her", as her brightest student posed for the camera. Ms Croft said, "She has been dedicated throughout. She would get up at 6 a.m. for lessons and that's why she is where she is today." The little dancer, who stands at 162 centimetres but weighs in at just 46 kilograms, is one of the 11 village girls in the ballet.

Emma Cheers gained a berth in the exclusive Queensland Ballet line-up after auditions in Brisbane more than a month ago. And now, under the watchful eye of ballet guru Francois Klaus, Emma is making her professional stage debut in her home city. Yesterday, she returned to the dressing rooms

where she once prepared for her award-winning eisteddfod performances.

Emma Cheers joins a host of home-grown talent on the national and international dance stage, including renowned choreographer Natalie Weir and former Australian Ballet member Janette Mulligan and, of course, Robyn Croft. Saturday night at the Townsville Civic Theatre will be a proud occasion for Emma Cheers and her parents, Judy and Brian, and her mentor Robyn Croft. It will also be a very proud occasion for all the people of Townsville.

Cystic Fibrosis Association

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (10.24 a.m.): I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the work of the Cystic Fibrosis Association in Queensland. It provides vital support and information to sufferers of cystic fibrosis as well as their carers. Cystic Fibrosis Week is from 16 to 24 October. Although Red Rose Day was last Friday, I have continued to wear this ribbon, because one day slips past too quickly.

The association had a family picnic on Saturday at Wynnum, and it is proposing to have a ball this Saturday at the Convention Centre. Over 500 families in Queensland are affected by cystic fibrosis, with family support workers Jenny Corrie and Orma Ringberg giving essential assistance, support and emotional support to those sufferers. I have sufferers in my electorate, and I know that the parents really value some relief. They have to do physiotherapy every day, particularly postural drainage. I know that parents in my electorate have sought relief, say, one day every now and again as a respite from physio to be able to just have a rest.

I commend this week to the House. I congratulate the Cystic Fibrosis Association on the work that it does and place on record our thoughts and our concerns for all those families affected by cystic fibrosis.

Tournament of Minds Competition

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): In two hours, seven courageous and talented young students from Patricks Road State School will board a plane to Canberra to do battle on Saturday against the best young brains in Australia in the national Tournament of Minds competition. This tremendous team of primary school students Saraya Veltmeyer, Ashton Guy, Toby Thompson, Ross Chandler, Luke Muller, Tom Muller and Anthony Bull from one of the great

primary schools in my electorate has recently won the State Tournament of Minds competition at the University of Queensland in the maths/engineering section.

The competition is hailed by schools—Government and non-Government—as the top contest for Queensland's brightest students. A record 651 schools in Queensland entered the competition this year, culminating in primary and secondary State finals in the categories of social sciences, language, literature and maths/engineering. The competition, widely known as the "Battle of the Brains" provides an avenue for gifted and talented students. The Patricks Road team is one of six representing Queensland this coming Saturday.

At the State finals, teams were locked in a room for three hours while they had to solve a challenging task using their thinking skills and some props. The Patricks Road team first won their regional contest and then took the State title after beating the winning schools from the other 12 regions. In the maths/engineering section, the long problem involved relocating inhabitants of an imaginary planet, Squash, to a suitable parallel universe by travelling through a worm hole.

Congratulations to all the parents in the school community who, in three short weeks, have raised approximately \$4,000 to cover the travel and related costs of the students, one parent and one teacher going to Canberra. This is a mighty effort from the school of 500 students. Congratulations also go to the school principal, Mr Bill Haworth, and community liaison officer Anne Cameron. I am sure that all members here join with me in wishing all our young Queensland representatives the best for the "Battle of the Brains" this Saturday.

Bus Shelter, Ipswich State High School

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—ONP) (10.27 a.m.): My sincere sympathy goes out to all those parents and students who were caught in the massive storm of 13 October at the Ipswich State High School while waiting for the school buses. Fortunately, there was no serious injury sustained during the course of the storm.

I assure the students and parents of the Ipswich State High School that, with the assistance of the Minister for Education and the Minister for Public Works, I will do everything possible to provide shelter to them in the future.

Youth Allowance

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): I want to talk about a young man, 18 years of age, named Brett from my electorate. Brett left school less than a year ago and has worked most of the time since he left school. Unfortunately, Brett was retrenched about eight weeks ago. At the time he was living with, and paying board to, his father. His mother has left Queensland and he is unsure of her whereabouts. Things had become very tense at home. His father, who is also supporting a number of younger children, could not afford to support Brett. Brett had to leave home. It was becoming too hostile at home and, secondly, his father could not continue to support him.

Brett's girlfriend is expecting a baby. Brett's predicament is that he is 18, trying to do the right thing and support his girlfriend, but he has been put in an impossible situation. They are paying \$200 per fortnight for a rented caravan but are receiving only \$240 per fortnight from his girlfriend's youth allowance.

Brett's car has run out of registration, but he cannot afford to renew it, because owing to unjust criteria of the coalition Federal Government's Youth Allowance he is not eligible to receive it. He cannot go home. His father is not prepared to support him. He is trying to do the right thing, support his girlfriend and find a job. Recently, he rode a pushbike from Eight Mile Plains to Browns Plains only to be told when he got there that the employer did not want him because the company could not afford him. He and his girlfriend are expected to live on \$40 a fortnight. The strange thing is that once the baby is born, he is eligible for assistance; but while she needs a lot of support during her pregnancy, they can have only \$20 per week for food. The way that genuine young people are being treated by this callous Federal Government is shameful. The unfortunate part about Brett's story is that he is not alone. It is about time that those opposite convinced their Federal colleagues to have a bit of heart.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

MIGATE

Mr SANTORO (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to a brief dated 13 August 1998 to his director-general from a director of TAFE Queensland. In that brief the director recommends that the proposal that the Mount

Isa Institute of TAFE divest itself of engineering training should not be supported because that would disadvantage clients in Mount Isa, reduce the level of choice available to individuals, communities and industries in the north-west and western regions, not support the initiatives expressed by the Government's 10-point plan for TAFE Queensland and result in adverse criticism of TAFE Queensland, DETIR and the Government. I ask: does the Minister support that recommendation from one of his most senior departmental and TAFE officers and the reasons behind it? If he does, when will he tell his ministerial colleague the member for Mount Isa and chairman of MIGATE to lay off Mount Isa TAFE?

Mr BRADY: Mount Isa residents are very fortunate. They have several opportunities in relation to vocational education and training, particularly in the engineering field, at both TAFE and MIGATE. Several proposals have come from MIGATE and TAFE as to how this particular training should be undertaken. They do not always agree with each other. Since I received that brief, there have been very fruitful discussions between the people who operate MIGATE and officers of my department in relation to TAFE. A very good working relationship is being worked out. I am going to Mount Isa on Saturday prior to the regional Cabinet in Mount Isa on Monday. I will be attending a function with MIGATE. I will also be talking with departmental officers. I believe that the relationship is working very well. I believe we have now arrived at a good solution that will guarantee better opportunities for trainees and apprentices in that field and will guarantee TAFE's prominent position in the conduct of that training. The training people in my department are very happy with the outcome and the negotiations.

Mr Santoro: What about the TAFE people, are they happy?

Mr BRADY: The TAFE people in Mount Isa are also very happy in relation to the outcome that has been achieved.

Employment; Queensland Rail

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to the ridiculous allegations from the Opposition that his Government is not doing enough to create jobs, that it has ignored rural and regional Queensland and that it has a poor record in relation to Queensland Rail. I ask: what is the Government doing to create jobs in QR?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Chermside for that very intelligent

question. As the member knows, my Government will more than double the number of Queensland Rail apprentices taken on in 1999 from 70 to 150. This huge increase is part of the Government's determination to create jobs, to give people skills that will earn them a living for life and to look after regional Queensland. Our determination to put jobs back into regional Queensland is demonstrated by the fact that more than half of the initial intake for 1999 will be outside the Brisbane/Ipswich area. That is our commitment to regional Queensland. As a Government, we are doing everything we can to create jobs throughout Queensland. I congratulate the Transport Minister, Steve Bredhauer, on that initiative.

In addition to those apprenticeships, the Government will be creating about 24,500 apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements over four years to give hope to young and unemployed people throughout the State. Paul Braddy and I addressed a number of key business people yesterday outlining our latest strategy, the advertising campaign, to work in partnership with business to drive those apprenticeships across the State. The advertisements for those first 99 positions in QR have been appearing in Queensland newspapers this month. We are already doing it. Regional Queensland will have 52 of those apprenticeships. Let me release some of the details of where they will be. All honourable members will be interested. Toowoomba will be having four of them. Roma will have two; Maryborough, seven; Rockhampton, 15; Townsville, nine; Gladstone, four; Mackay, two; and Cloncurry, two. We could not get a bigger regional mix than that. That is only the beginning. Other areas will be included as time goes by.

The apprenticeships will include trades such as electronics, plumbing, carpentry, vehicle building and engineering. It is a broad range of apprenticeships. It overcomes some of the problems that we saw last year when a north Queensland company had to import boilermakers from South Korea to do some work. We never want to see that happen again. That is what those apprenticeships are all about. The increased intake of an extra 80 apprenticeships will provide job opportunities for young Queenslanders who might have thought that they had no chance of gaining a skill or a job. The important thing is that the successful applicants will have a skill for life and the ability to gain employment in the private sector or start their own business. We do not particularly care if, at the end of the day, they leave QR and set up on their own.

They can stay with QR if they want, but if they go out on their own, they already have a skill for life.

Successful applicants will start their apprenticeships in February. It is expected that the remaining 51 positions will be filled in mid 1999. That is a clear indication of our commitment to giving young people in this State apprenticeships, a hope for employment, skills for life and skills to give them meaningful employment.

MIGATE

Mr BORBIDGE: I ask the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations: why is his Government preparing to give MIGATE, a private training organisation headed by his colleague Minister McGrady, a monopoly on apprenticeship training within his electorate of Mount Isa?

Mr BRADY: I have already answered the question. I repeat: a proposal in relation to the allocation of training positions that was put by MIGATE has not been accepted by me or by my department. Since that proposal was put forward, it has been balanced by information received by me in relation to the position that TAFE should occupy in that area. There has been a very suitable and relevant apportionment in relation to this matter. As members opposite should recall from their days in Government, the fact that proposals are merely put up does not mean they are accepted. That proposal certainly has not been accepted. It has been amicably worked out. TAFE Mount Isa will continue to operate in that area and continue to play a prominent role in relation to training

MIGATE

Mr BORBIDGE: I again refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to MIGATE, the company of which the Minister for Mines and Energy is chairman and of which his son is an employee. I ask: why is an estimated \$600,000 of taxpayers' money going to be spent to upgrade the apprentice workshops at Mount Isa Mines when state of the art workshops already exist at the Mount Isa Institute of TAFE and are capable of providing that training?

Mr BRADY: On the information I have at present, I do not accept that that amount of money is being spent as the Leader of the Opposition says. I will check the information in relation to the matter. As I said, proposals that were put forward originally in relation to that matter were not accepted by me or by my

department. The mere fact that the Opposition appears to have some earlier information does not mean that that was the determination. I will check the information in relation to any expenditure and will give that information to the Leader of the Opposition.

Call Centre Strategy

Mr PURCELL: I ask the Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can he advise of any practical results of the implementation of the Government's call centre strategy?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for his question. The Government has identified call centres as an area of strategic advantage for this State over other States. That is because we have a ready and available work force that is multiskilled and multilingual—which, I must say, is the result of an initiative of the former Goss Government. The former Goss Government's comprehensive foreign language studies program is now starting to bear fruit by bringing forward young people with language skills so that they can get good jobs, and good wage-paying jobs.

I can inform the House that a call centre employing 300 people is currently being set up at Robina Quays on the Gold Coast and will be fully operational by the end of this year.

Mr Horan: The Premier said 400 last night—who's right?

Mr ELDER: It was the State Government, in conjunction with Telstra, that attracted Stellar to Queensland. Call centres grow. Does the member understand the concept of how call centres build their businesses and grow? The member's problem is that he does not understand the detail.

Over the past few months Stellar, in conjunction with Telstra, has been working with my officers to find a suitable location. That location is now Robina Quays, where it will establish the Asia-Pacific region call centre for its operations. That is the type of business that we are looking for. At the moment we are talking to US companies, European-based companies and other Asian companies about establishing their call centres in Queensland. The main reason is that, above Sydney and Melbourne, we have a good, steady work force and one that is not in transit, as occurs in other States. These call centres need only a telephone line. So we can look at offering sites within regional Queensland that the companies find attractive.

Mr Connor: No, they don't. You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr ELDER: I say to the member for Nerang that we should encourage these types of jobs to Queensland. The revolution in telecommunications and technology means that such jobs can come on line in this State for our young people.

I say also to the House that significant interest has been expressed by a raft of companies. I am currently negotiating with some major companies regarding the establishment of call centres in Queensland. In the next few weeks a large, international banking institution will be looking at establishing a call centre in Queensland. I believe that we will have a positive announcement in relation to that major international group in the very near future.

The joint venture between Telstra and Excel, that is Stellar, will have those jobs up and running. Interviews are being conducted now, which means jobs for Gold Coasters—300 jobs coming on stream—by Christmas.

MIGATE

Dr WATSON: I refer the Premier to MIGATE, the company of which his Minister for Mines and Energy is the chairman, and its moves to undermine Mount Isa TAFE which, in turn, threatens the jobs of Mount Isa TAFE trade teachers, and I ask: has the Premier's Minister McGrady disclosed to him the depth of his apparent conflict of interest in this matter? Does the Premier sanction the moves that he has made which have put these TAFE jobs at risk?

Mr BEATTIE: I am always happy to answer questions from the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is usually such a charming soul. I am surprised—

Mr Schwarten: The "Brick".

Mr BEATTIE: I do not necessarily share that view. I am a little bit more compassionate and understanding. However, I can understand where that view came from.

Mr Gibbs: Glen Lazarus would be very insulted.

Mr BEATTIE: He would be. The usual goodwill and charm that we are used to from the Leader of the Liberal Party has not been reflected in his question. I thought that the Minister had indicated clearly that there were no jobs at risk. Under those circumstances, the point made in relation to the member for Mount Isa simply has no foundation.

This Government has restored the importance of TAFE in the training field. What

happened under the previous Government was nothing short of a disgrace. It was a vicious attack on the skilling of the work force in this State. The former Government pulled funds out of TAFE and the Federal coalition Government did exactly the same thing. What has this Government done? It has moved to restore the importance of TAFE in training young people—and people of all ages—not only to give them the skills to find employment but also to give them some hope and a future.

I make it very clear to the House that the priority with which we regard TAFE will continue. It does not matter whether we are talking about Mount Isa, Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville or anywhere else; our commitment to TAFE will remain.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BEATTIE: There they go, seeking to trivialise the importance of TAFE. That is typical. When the coalition was in Government, the Opposition sought to destroy—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The question related to when the Premier knew about the conflict of interest by the Minister for Mines and Energy.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: I have indicated already that I do not regard the basis of the question as having any credibility. There is the clear answer.

The Government has restored the importance of TAFE. We have done it in a way that will give young people some hope. The Opposition had a disgraceful record in TAFE. When it was in office, it gutted TAFE. It took away a lot of people's hopes of getting training. That is what it did.

Mr Borbidge: What about Dalby?

Mr BEATTIE: What about Dalby? Dalby is an important centre in this State. Let me tell members opposite that we are more committed to the bush than they were. We know where Dalby is.

A Government member: Doubled the courses in Dalby.

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member. We doubled the courses in Dalby. How about that! I am absolutely delighted that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned Dalby.

Mr Littleproud: That was done before you got there.

Mr BEATTIE: I like to hear the member—

Time expired.

Disney Theme Park

Mr MULHERIN: I refer the Premier to the claims by the Leader of the Opposition in the House this morning that the Queensland Government had not fully pursued a Disney project for Queensland, and I ask: is there any truth in these claims?

Mr BEATTIE: I thought that the Leader of the Opposition's performance this morning to try to score some cheap political points in regard to the Disney project was nothing short of disgraceful. These projects are important projects. When the previous Government was in office, it supported the Disney project. When we came to office, so did we. In fact, I asked Wayne Goss and the then acting head of Treasury to represent this State in the United States in sensitive negotiations to try to make the Disney project a reality.

Why has it not gone ahead? I will tell members why. I have a letter from Walt Disney Attractions dated 17 September 1998 that explains exactly why it has not gone ahead. This matter should not be the basis of cheap stunts in this place. The letter states—

"The support of Queensland's Premier, Peter Beattie, and Prime Minister Jeff Howard has been very much appreciated."

It goes on to state—

"After absorbing the information that you presented and revisiting our attendance and investment assumptions, we still strongly believe that the economics of doing a Disney theme park project in Queensland are difficult. For a Disney project to be feasible"——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The Leader of the Opposition should just be patient. The letter continues—

"... it would require direct government support"—

and members should listen to this—

"including land, infrastructure, tax incentives and capital dollars for construction costs of the theme park of at least US \$300 million to \$500 million, most likely toward the upper end of this range."

Do members know what that means in Australian dollars? An amount of \$850m!

Mr Gibbs: Unsecured.

Mr BEATTIE: The Minister is quite right. Not only was it unsecured; the previous Premier was prepared to give an open-ended

commitment. The next crucial sentence explains the situation even better. It states—

"Therefore, unless your government is willing to commit to this type of funding"—

that is, the \$850m—

"we don't believe that probabilities warrant further time and energy being spent by either of us."

This Government handled this matter appropriately. We took it down the road to its full extent to see whether this project was possible. At the end of the day, we had Starland wanting to continue to dip into public funds to survive. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to come into this place and be an advocate for Starland, he should come in and tell the truth. What he was advocating was throwing more taxpayers' money down the drain. My Government does not work that way.

Power Purchase Agreements

Mr HORAN: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: will he give a 100% guarantee to private operators proposing to build new power stations in Queensland that his Government will not enter into any power purchase agreements with any operators?

Mr McGRADY: A similar question was asked of me yesterday and the point I tried to make then is that we will talk to anybody at all in this State, or indeed in this nation, who is interested in doing deals for this State that will be in the interests of the people whom we represent. My door is open all of the time, as are the doors of the other Ministers. Day after day I receive numerous people who want to discuss some of the proposals that they have. I will continue to talk and listen to those people.

Any decisions of the Queensland Government will be made in the interests of the people of this State. As I said the other day, it is about time that the Opposition tried to assist the Queensland economy, rather than carrying on with this absolute nonsense.

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Minister for Mines and Energy, Alleged Conflict of Interest

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.51 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. In an answer to a question this morning, the Minister for Employment has

disputed but acknowledged that large sums of money may be directed to a private company of which a Minister in this Government is the chair.

Mr Fouras: Where's the privilege?

Mr BORBIDGE: I am coming to that. He disputes the amount of \$600,000, but he says that at a later time he will inform me of the extent of that funding. Clearly this is a very significant conflict of interest in regard to the Minister for Mines and Energy.

Mr Speaker, I ask you to consider whether this matter should be referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, bearing in mind that the Leader of the Labor Party prevented members of my Government from voting on land matters when they held leasehold titles.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is now debating the issue. I will confer with the Clerk on the matter and give an answer to this in the Parliament.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise on a point of order. There are two matters in relation to this issue. One is that the Minister concerned has declared it in his pecuniary interest. Secondly, he receives no personal benefit. Under those circumstances, the matter of privilege has no credibility.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The debate across the Chamber will cease.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Second Chance Foundation

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I refer the Premier to an organisation called the Second Chance Foundation, which plays a major role in the rehabilitation of offenders who have served their time in prison and are looking for work so that they can start new lives, and I ask: does the Government have a role to play in this area of jobs and crime prevention?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Bundaberg for her interest in this matter. For the record, I note her commitment to group training schemes in Bundaberg, which will play a significant role in training young people, particularly under the schemes that have been announced by the Minister for Employment over the last few days.

The Second Chance Foundation plays a vital role in the overall crime prevention program by trying to find jobs for people with criminal records. It tries to give them a second chance in life. People who are released from

prisons are less likely to reoffend if they lead stable lives. That is pretty logical and sensible, and Government needs to play a role to encourage it. We all know that a vital element of leading a stable life is having a job. However, naturally many employers are dubious about employing people with criminal records. I understand that of every 100 clients of the Second Chance Foundation, only three reoffend. This compares with the statistic that nearly half of all people who leave prison reoffend. Therefore, one can see the value of this scheme.

The previous State Government promised funding that never materialised and then the support that had been provided by the Commonwealth Government was withdrawn. Both the previous State Government and the Federal Government withdrew funding from a very worthy cause. The foundation was then faced with having to close its doors and turn away people who wanted to improve themselves. The program was defunded by the coalition at State and Federal levels.

The foundation wrote to my office saying that it would have to close unless the Labor Government could help. My Government is committed to doing everything it can to prevent crime and to provide jobs for as many Queenslanders as possible. Therefore, the State Government has given the Second Chance Foundation a second chance with a grant of \$150,000 for this financial year so that it can keep operating.

In so many of these areas, amounts of money like that can make a real difference. My Government is determined to make a real difference when it comes to jobs and fighting the causes of crime. This is the sort of sensible, constructive and pragmatic approach that my Government will have to tackling crime and creating jobs.

Prison Privatisation and Corporatisation

Mr PAFF: I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: does the Government support the privatisation and corporatisation of prisons in Queensland where the profit motive is obviously responsible for undermanning, thereby threatening the safety of officers, the public at large and the prisoners themselves?

Mr BARTON: In the run-up to the recent election, the Labor Party clearly stated that we did not support the privatisation of prisons. Proposals were put forward by the previous Government, the current Opposition, outlining its intention to sell two prisons, Borallon—which I believe is in the electorate of the member for

Ipswich West—which was to be sold to its operators, and the Arthur Gorrie facility, which was to be sold to its private operators. The objective was to use the funding that was obtained from those sales for the massive prison expansion that is currently under way. The former Government had its own proposals for that expansion and we have continued them. Clearly, those two prisons will be under contract to the Queensland Corrective Services Commission for some time yet and I have no intention of interfering with that arrangement. Private-sector operators of the two prisons are involved and that is a contractual arrangement.

The previous Government also intended to fund a replacement Rockhampton correctional facility using private sector funds, so that prison would also have been owned by the private sector. In the run-up to the election, this Government decided that we would not agree with that. We have our own alternative funding mechanisms for the expansion. We will provide alternative Government funded mechanisms for the construction of the Rockhampton correctional facility.

In the long term, I think that people are aware that the 10-year review is currently taking place, as required under legislation that, as a result of the Kennedy inquiry and the Kennedy reforms, was introduced 10 years ago by the honourable member for Crows Nest when he was the Minister responsible for prisons. That 10-year review is currently under way. I expect to have a report from Mr Frank Peach, who is conducting the review, early in the new year. We will then determine our future attitudes to the structures of the prison system in this State. No doubt we will also consider how the structures fit with the corporatisation issue. Currently, the State-owned prisons are run by a GOC, Queensland Corrections. Whether that continues will be determined as a result of decisions taken once I receive the report from the Peach review.

Premier's Overseas Visit

Mr MICKEL: I refer the Honourable Premier to his recent trip to China and congratulate him on his support for the consortia bidding for the Chongqing project, and I ask: could the Premier outline the job opportunities for Queensland that may stem from this visit?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for Logan for this question. I acknowledge publicly his support for trade opportunities, because like this Government he knows that trade means jobs. While in

China, I witnessed the signing of the fifth memorandum of understanding with Shanghai, our sister State. In fact, I signed that agreement with Mayor Xu. That agreement provides for the continuation and furthering of cultural, economic and educational ties between the two States. I attended also the signing of a number of agreements between a number of Queensland universities and local Chinese universities for the furthering of student exchanges and educational opportunities.

By its very nature, the agreement provides enormous employment opportunities for Queenslanders. Coincidentally, next year will be the 10th anniversary of that agreement. Shanghai offers Queensland significant trade opportunities and is one of our largest mineral export markets. Queensland exporters have also taken the huge step in moving into fresh food exports—a move that I am sure would be supported by both sides of the House. Furthering these and other new export opportunities can mean only one thing, and that is jobs, jobs and jobs. That is what my Government is about. That is what I promised Queensland when we came to power and that is what we are delivering.

China is the largest emerging consumer society in the world. They are buyers and traders. We must take full advantage of the opportunities that China offers to create long-term jobs for Queenslanders. During my trip, I was also able to explore investment and business opportunities in other provinces, in particular the Province of Chongqing, a city of over 30.4 million people, which I understand is the largest city in the world. Several Queensland companies are currently involved in a bidding process for the right to design the new city heart. We have an excellent chance of securing that contract. It means that billions of dollars in construction and investment opportunities will flow from this project alone. It is an opportunity for skills utilisation in urban planning, architecture, engineering and so on.

My visit highlighted the vast untapped potential for Queenslanders to move into specialist skilled areas. China, and Asia as a whole, represent the biggest opportunity for future investment markets for Queensland. That is one of the reasons why I gave it priority. The Government to Government relations, particularly in the meeting in Chongqing, enabled those Queensland businesses to be introduced directly to the relevant Chinese authorities who will be making appropriate considerations in relation to those contracts. While it is a fair and transparent process, in my view that assisted

those Queensland companies to better understand what was required and to be in a better position to win those contracts. That is the sort of approach that my Government will have. We will take every opportunity we can to pick up trade opportunities because, I say again, trade means jobs.

Victims of Crime Association

Mr RAPPOLT: I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services: can he explain why the Labor Government has deemed it necessary to allocate \$65,000 to prisoner support groups in the far north while it is unable to find any more than a miserly \$1.40 per case for the victims of crime? Does the Minister have any plans to address the fact that the Victims of Crime Association is hopelessly underfunded and able to provide only the most basic and inadequate level of service in Cairns and Townsville?

Mr BARTON: I should indicate at the beginning that the funding that is given to community groups, prisoner support groups and other groups working in conjunction with Corrective Services is in fact not determined by the Minister. The structures in Queensland are such that we have an independent statutory body, the Queensland Corrective Services Commission, that is responsible for policy and the major decisions and audit of Queensland's prisons, with it contracting out the operation of prisons to the two private operators and to the GOC Q Corr.

Those decisions are made by the board of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission. The decisions that were made on the grants issued this year, a few of which sadly have proved controversial, were taken while the previous Government—the current Opposition—was in office. They were announced subsequently because they got held up by the election. But the entire review and the changes in policy with regard to that were taken by the previous QCSC board under its previous leadership and while the coalition was in office.

In relation to the individual examples that the member mentioned—for example, prisoner support groups—I have no argument with who gets that level of funding. I should also point out that support for victims of crime is not within my portfolio, it is under that of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. He has added in this budget an additional \$1m over and above what was there for victims of crime previously under the coalition. I should make the point that the Queensland Corrective Services board makes decisions about where it

believes available funding should be applied, and the whole issue of funding for victims of crime is in the hands of my colleague the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, who has put in place a most significant increase in the funding available for victims of crime in this year's Budget.

One Nation Party, Effect on Asian Relations

Ms BOYLE: I refer the Treasurer to his recent ministerial visit to Asia with the Queensland Treasury Corporation, and I ask: is there still concern in the region over the influence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party on Australian economic and foreign policy, and is this damaging Queensland's relations in the region?

Mr HAMILL: On the first morning I was in Singapore I had a media interview with CNBC, a major television network in Asia with some 40 million viewers. One of the first questions I was asked concerned the influence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. Similar issues were raised with me in Hong Kong. This was shortly after the Federal election. I was able to report that the One Nation Party had done very poorly at the Australian Federal election and its impact on public policy would be absolutely minuscule, if any. We might ask: why is that so?

At the State election we saw the Liberal and National Parties catapult a large number of One Nation members into this Parliament on their preferences. We saw at the Federal election, though, the Liberal and National Parties wake up to their folly and officially direct preferences away from One Nation, except, of course, for a few renegade Nationals in Queensland. And we know who they are.

I thought perhaps the coalition had learned from its folly and that it had suddenly found some political principle. However, back in Australia, I picked up the Sydney Morning Herald this morning to find out that it is all on again with the New South Wales election coming up. We see that in relation to the New South Wales election the One Nation Party is in the process of doing a preference deal with the National Party. The article states—

"In response to the preferences swap suggestion, the Nationals' NSW chairman, Mrs Helen Dickie, said her party's preferences would be decided seat-by-seat and that the Liberal Party would 'understand'."

I bet the Liberal Party understands. We certainly understand. I reckon every member in this House understands what is on. It is

straight from the Rob Borbidge school of wink, wink, nudge, nudge politics. That is what it is. I noticed also in today's newspaper that the New South Wales Senate candidate from One Nation was trying to gatecrash official functions at the IndyCar race on the weekend. This is the party that said no to Indy. Mr Oldfield turned up at the official box and, when he was rejected there, he went to the Carlton United box next door. Obviously, corporate Australia has good sense. Corporate Australia showed him the door. It is just a shame that the Liberal and National Parties do not show One Nation the door. Why are they not showing One Nation the door? Is it just a case of grubby politics and that they do not care what the implications are for Australia's and Queensland's trade in the region?

Mr Gibbs: Carlton wouldn't even give him a can of Fosters.

Mr HAMILL: He would not get a can of Fosters, not even an empty one.

Sexual Assault, Townsville Prison

Mr GRICE: The Minister for Police and Corrective Services would be aware that a female prisoner was sexually assaulted by a convicted rapist in Townsville prison. She was unsupervised and working in the garden of the male section of the prison. When the Minister was in Opposition, he demanded that the then prisons Minister, Russell Cooper, accept personal responsibility for all breaches in Queensland prisons. He has now been Minister for three and a half months and there have already been at least six serious incidents. I ask: will he now institute the usual ALP task force, advertising campaign, departmental inquiry—

An Opposition member: Or 1800 number.

Mr GRICE:—or 1800 number with some sporting stars involved to find out why he is such an irresponsible Minister?

Mr BARTON: Talk about the pot calling the kettle black when it comes to sporting stars wanting to use 1800 numbers! We have not seen anything like the sorts of incidents that occurred under the previous coalition Government when there were major escapes of the most dangerous criminals and naked women found under beds in open custody prisons.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr BARTON: It was a regular Peyton Place. I think we should get back to the reality of what this most serious incident is about.

This morning we have seen a most disgraceful question from the shadow Minister on the basis of trivialising what has been a most serious incident in a Queensland prison in the past 24 hours. That certainly is the allegation, that a woman prisoner has been very seriously sexually assaulted, and it is an alleged incident because it is still under investigation. It is being investigated by the police, as it should be. But if it is found this incident as alleged did occur, it is a most serious incident and I am shocked that this shadow Minister would trivialise such a serious incident.

It is a distressing incident and I can assure him it is one that it is being investigated by the police. It is an incident that is also being investigated internally because it is most appropriate that Queensland Corrections does its own internal investigation on how its procedures went wrong. It is also being investigated by the Queensland Corrective Services Commission, which has the proper role of auditing the work of the individual prison operators who are contracted to it. I expect to have those reports back in my hands within two weeks and, of course, the police will be doing their investigation in their time, because I do not interfere in the operations of the Police Service, and it is investigating it.

It is a most serious incident. We have an incident in which a female prisoner is alleged to have been sexually assaulted. Immediate steps have been taken to ensure that the procedures are such that women prisoners are not allowed into the secure custody men's area unless they are escorted very closely by prison officers. It is an incident about which I am very concerned and, again, I am shocked—absolutely shocked—at the manner in which the shadow Minister has trivialised a most serious incident.

MIGATE Skills Centre Funding

Ms NELSON-CARR: I ask the Minister for Employment and Training: will he inform the House of the funding position of the MIGATE skills centre in Mount Isa?

Mr BRADY: I have now received information in relation to the proposed funding of the MIGATE skills centre. The situation is this: MIGATE submitted a proposal for skills centre funding and the proposal was originally endorsed by the department, and ANTA approved that MIGATE receive \$367,000. However, that proposal was put up in July 1997 under the previous Government. It was endorsed by the department when Mr Santoro was the Minister and the Leader of the

Opposition was the Premier, and it was also endorsed by ANTA.

Mr Santoro: What about the \$600,000 application?

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

Mr BRADY: I will answer if the member opposite gives me a chance. If he is quiet, I will answer.

However, that proposal did not proceed and has not proceeded under this Government. We have had a good look at it. The matter has not been finalised. Since the original endorsement, new issues—

Mr Santoro: Ah, not finalised.

Mr BRADY: Just be quiet—have come to light and the earlier endorsement of the proposal is under very, very serious reconsideration. Although the previous Minister endorsed it, we have not. He and ANTA endorsed it; we have not. I can inform the House that, since we have been in Government, no funding has been received from either the Commonwealth Government or the State Government.

Mr Santoro interjected.

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

Mr BRADY: As the information I gave the member before indicated, the proposals that come up are not automatically endorsed by this Government. It was not endorsed. No funding has been received. There is no \$600,000 proposal that has received endorsement. As I said before, officers of the department have been out there talking to both MIGATE and TAFE. They are working through a process to make sure that the training needs of the area are properly endorsed.

No \$600,000 has been endorsed by us. The previous Minister endorsed \$367,000. We have not proceeded with it and Don Swete-Kelly, the Minister's former general manager of TAFE, set out to work through the problems of MIGATE and TAFE. They are working through them very well. A consultant also went out there on 15 October to commence the process of development of a training plan and potential in relation to MIGATE and how it fits in with TAFE. The only proposal for paying substantial funds that was ever endorsed was under the previous Minister. It has not proceeded under us and there is a very serious doubt that it ever will.

Mr BORBIDGE: I move that the Minister table the two documents that he has just referred to.

Mr SANTORO: I rise to a point of order. The remarks made by the Minister in relation to my endorsement of the applications in terms of apprenticeship training by MIGATE to take over TAFE are not true. I find the statements offensive, because the statements made by the Minister about me approving applications in favour of MIGATE at the expense of TAFE are not true, and I ask him to withdraw them.

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

Mr SANTORO: I find the statements about approvals that I allegedly gave to MIGATE in relation to Mount Isa TAFE untrue, and I ask him to withdraw them.

Mr BRADY: May I argue the point? There is no point of order. I did not say he approved them at the expense of TAFE. I said—and it is absolute fact—that, under the previous Government and the former Minister, \$367,000 was approved by his department and ANTA to go to MIGATE. I did not say "at the expense of TAFE", as he alluded to. So there is nothing wrong in what I said; it is a matter of fact.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker, I would, therefore, ask if you could allow me the same indulgence that you just allowed the Minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to allow a debate on this.

Mr SANTORO: The comments—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not allow debate on this. We are in question time and we are going to resume question time.

Mr SANTORO: I found the comments made by the Minister offensive, and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. The comments did not refer to the member; they referred to a department. They have been explained.

Mr SANTORO: He was talking about my approval.

Mr SPEAKER: No, he was not.

Mr SANTORO: Yes, he was.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. The member finds the—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not listening to two points of order at the same time. Is the member for Indooroopilly taking a point of order or is the member for Clayfield?

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. The member found the words offensive and I ask them to be withdrawn.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am controlling the Chamber. The Minister explained fully, I believe, that the comments were directed at a department approving those claims. The Minister said that they were directed at the department approving those claims. I am quite happy to peruse the Hansard of this event this morning and I will get back to the honourable member for Clayfield. We will now resume question time.

Sporting Complexes; Lang Park Redevelopment

Mr HEALY: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing: is it true that his department is currently in discussions with the Brisbane City Council relating to the transfer of responsibility for major venues, such as the Chandler and Boondall complexes, to the State Government in exchange for support for the redevelopment of Lang Park; are he and his departmental officers frustrated in their attempts to negotiate with Lord Mayor Soorley's office in an attempt to have the Broncos released from their long-term contract at ANZ Stadium; and is it true that the member for Mount Coot-tha has not been involved in these discussions because she is regarded as a stumbling block in his efforts to redevelop Suncorp Stadium?

Mr GIBBS: I have to treat the question with the contempt it deserves. There is simply no truth to anything the member has said. He is way off beam.

Coorparoo Secondary College

Mr FENLON: I draw the attention of the Minister for Education to reports in a local newspaper of a promise made by the member for Surfers Paradise when, as the former Premier, he told a gathering at the Coorparoo Secondary College that they would have new sporting facilities. Would the Minister please inform the House whether the department has a record of the promise being funded? What is the Minister's position on providing assistance to the college?

Mr WELLS: This is a famous event. I have heard on a number of occasions how the former Premier attended the speech night of the Coorparoo Secondary College. Apparently it was a very emotional experience for him and he had a tremendous up-welling of

compassion—perhaps for the school community or perhaps for the then marginal Liberal member of Parliament—and he decided on that occasion that he would be moved to fund the foundations for the school's multipurpose ball courts. This is a noble thing which the former Premier announced but, unfortunately, what he was able to supply in the announcement he was unable to supply in the execution. Absolutely nothing whatsoever was done about it after that.

I know that the then Minister for Education said that this was wrong, because I read in the South-East Advertiser, "Our commitment was rock solid." It was so rock solid that it did not appear in the capital works program of the Department of Education. The trick is, one has to actually do something apart from merely announce it. I am not going to go ahead and fund every little bit of pork-barrelling that the former Premier decided to do in the run-up to the last election—

Mr Hamill: Even with your \$3 billion budget you wouldn't be able to afford it.

Mr WELLS: I take the Treasurer's interjection.

Mr Borbidge: The only thing sillier than the interjection was the fact that you took it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Education will continue his answer.

Mr WELLS: He is drawing attention to the enormous accountability requirements of this Government. While I am not going to fund every piece of pork-barrelling that this former Government engaged in, there are particular circumstances in this case. This school community, on faith, went ahead with the program. It would be most unfair and inequitable if it were slugged with this now. In those circumstances, I think the only fair thing, taking into account the interests of the school and the interests of the Premier of the time, who should not be embarrassed in this way, would be to go ahead and keep his promise. He did not keep his promise, but we will keep it.

The honourable members for Surfers Paradise and Merrimac may now safely go back to Greenslopes in the sure knowledge that their names will not be mud. Although they did not deliver on their promise, we delivered on their promise.

Time expired.

Waiting Lists

Miss SIMPSON: I refer to claims by the Minister for Health about a hidden waiting list,

and I ask: will she table this hidden waiting list? Specifically, will the Minister give details about the specialty areas she claims are in this waiting list? Is it true that this alleged hidden waiting list of 36,000 people is comprised of not only those waiting for elective surgery but also medical and mental cases?

Mrs EDMOND: I have to say that I am surprised the member opposite asks this question, because it leads to enormous embarrassment for the previous Minister, who kept standing up in this place and telling us that he had the waiting lists under control and that nobody was waiting more than a couple of months when that was not the case, as is quite clear from the letters I received on a daily basis in Opposition and from the letters I am still receiving from members opposite about people who have been waiting for a couple of years. Those opposite know that this is the fact. I see some of the smirks and the concern. They are saying to me that they could not get Mike Horan to admit it and that hopefully I will sort out the problem.

The former Health Minister, in trying to make himself look good in front of the cameras, was prepared to keep patients out of the hospitals. People were waiting not just for surgery; they were waiting to see specialists. Was there any attempt to get any indication of how many people were waiting? I kept hearing the rumours. If I kept hearing the rumours that there were 1,000 at the Gold Coast, 1,200 at Nambour and 500 at Rockhampton, why did the Minister not hear some of these rumours? I have actually asked the department to start looking at how many people were waiting.

Miss Simpson: Table the document.

Mrs EDMOND: If the member is so concerned about the documents, why does she not go through the extensive files of the previous Minister and all the transition documents we have handed her. She has everything. She should look and see how much work the former Minister did to find out how many people were waiting. Nothing! Zilch!

I have actually started the process and the early indication, as I said, is that there are almost as many people waiting to see specialists at the hospitals as there are waiting for surgery. Some 20,000 of those people are waiting in key surgery areas such as orthopaedics, ENT and so on. My understanding is that some of those people are also waiting for medical specialists, and that is a concern. In Mackay, I was told, diabetics are waiting four months for an appointment with a physician to have their diabetes stabilised. Those opposite may think

that is acceptable; I simply do not. We are working very hard to address the shortage of physicians in Mackay so that that is no longer the case. As we get more information about where these problems are, we will be addressing them.

Miss Simpson: Table the report.

Mrs EDMOND: I do not have a report here. As I said in the media, we have early indications. I have asked the department to start collecting this information and these are the early indications given to me.

Time expired.

Cooler Schools Program

Mr PEARCE: I draw the attention of the Minister for Education to the Government's commitment to the Cooler Schools program. Can the Minister inform the House as to the difference between Labor's promise and the promise made by the member for Surfers Paradise, when as Premier he promised to provide funding for the cost of airconditioners fitted to Moranbah schools?

Mr WELLS: The situation there is extremely interesting. I have here a letter from the former Premier, addressed to the secretary of the Moranbah school's airconditioning committee. The letter states in part—

"While Moranbah lies outside the area for which Cabinet has approved the use of evaporative cooling equipment in schools at government expense, I believe that special circumstances exist in this instance."

Mr Foley: Which Premier was that?

Mr WELLS: That was former Premier of Queensland Mr Rob Borbidge. The special circumstances that existed at that time were the forthcoming local government elections. The letter was actually dated 26 March 1997. There was a big push in that local government area for a little bit of credibility for the Government.

The Government then went ahead. The then Government was proposing to fund this out of a special Co-ordinator General's capital works allocation from the Premier's Department—a rather unusual and peculiar way of funding Education Department programs. Of course, that is not possible under the more accountable arrangements we have, but the Education Department will ensure once again that the member for Surfers Paradise is not embarrassed. We do not want the former Government to be embarrassed in this way and, in particular, we want to ensure that the

children of Moranbah get adequate airconditioning. We are prepared to deliver on the former Premier's promise.

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

PRIVILEGE

Apprenticeship Training, Mount Isa

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (11.30 a.m.): I rise on a point of privilege. Approximately 10 years ago, I visited an operation in Townsville known as Torgas, which was the local group apprenticeship scheme. At that time I was Mayor of the City of Mount Isa. I was convinced that if Townsville could operate such a scheme, we could do so in the north-west. I got around me a group of union leaders, businesspeople and others, and we eventually secured assistance from the ACTU and the Lend Lease Corporation to do a report into the feasibility of such a group apprenticeship scheme in Mount Isa and the north-west. We eventually succeeded in getting financial assistance from the State and Federal Governments.

In the first year, we put through 130 young kids who otherwise would have been on the unemployment scrap heap. Over the 10 years that I have been chairman of MIGATE, we have put through some 1,200 young people. During those 10 years, I have never received a single solitary cent from MIGATE. I have never attended a conference at its expense or, indeed, been on any trip.

In the early days, the directors of TAFE played a prominent part in my organisation, either as a director of the board or, indeed, helping in many other ways. In recent times Mount Isa Mines—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition! The Minister will be allowed to make his point of privilege.

Mr McGRADY: In recent times, Mount Isa Mines Limited, which used to take on well in excess of 100 apprentices a year, took a decision that it was no longer interested in that type of training. It made an offer to MIGATE to see if we would be interested in taking up where they left off. Negotiations and discussions were entered into by the general manager of MIGATE and officers of Mount Isa Mines. At no time was I ever involved in those negotiations. I have never at any time had discussions with the Minister or, indeed, the

Premier on any financial assistance or otherwise for MIGATE.

It is true to say that, recently, the Premier attended a meeting of the Mount Isa City Council, and amongst other issues which were raised was the problem of training young people in outback Queensland. The Premier requested one of the councillors, who was also at that time the general manager of MIGATE, to put his thoughts in writing, which he did. The general manager of MIGATE asked me would I pass on the suggestions to the Premier, which I did—I understand via Her Majesty's mail. I have received no further information from the Premier on this matter.

Let me assure this House that if Opposition members feel that by this scurrilous attack this morning they are going to prevent me from helping the kids not just in Mount Isa but right throughout the gulf country, then they are sadly mistaken. I would suggest to members opposite that they involve themselves in some of the community organisations which are bringing benefits to young kids.

The relationship between MIGATE and the Mount Isa Institute of TAFE has always been excellent until very recent times. Let me also inform the House that, at the annual general meeting of MIGATE, which occurred a couple of weeks ago, I moved—and it was unanimously carried—that we invite either the director or one of his nominees to be a director of my board. I also suggested that maybe one of my board members could sit on the college council. I understand that this offer has been accepted. I further inform the House that tomorrow night a barbecue has been arranged between TAFE and MIGATE at which my wife and I, and possibly my son, will be in attendance.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate a couple of points. First of all, I am totally committed, as this Government is, to the success of TAFE. I have assured anybody who has ever asked me about my position in regard to TAFE of that commitment. I am the chairman of a group apprenticeship scheme which is trying to put kids into jobs. I see that role as a very important role in the life of a member of Parliament. My position on MIGATE is in the register of pecuniary interests of members.

The Minister has pointed out that the assistance came not from the Labor Government but, indeed, the coalition Government. And as I have said many times this week, for heaven's sake get out of the gutter and try to assist those people who are trying to do the right thing by the young kids of

Queensland. I make no apologies to anybody, either in this House or in this State, for trying to help the kids whom I represent. There are 1,200 kids from Normanton, Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Karumba and right around the gulf who——

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is just concluding.

Mr BORBIDGE: Can I rise on a matter of privilege and have equal time to reply? Mr Speaker, will you give me the indulgence of having equal time to respond on a matter of privilege?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McGRADY: In conclusion, I believe that, in the past 10 years, we have got 1,200 kids jobs, trades and apprenticeships thanks to MIGATE and the work of that organisation.

PRIVILEGE

Apprenticeship Training, Mount Isa

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.37 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege, and I ask for the same courtesies to be extended to me. The simple fact is that today——

Mr Elder interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier!

Mr BORBIDGE: What about a very distinct conflict of interest?

Government members interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: As Premier in this place, I listened to the honourable members opposite who are interjecting telling my Ministers that they could not vote on a land Bill because they held leasehold land. Those were the standards imposed by honourable members opposite.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I will hear the member's point of privilege in silence. I want to know what the point of privilege is. If there are any further interruptions to the proceedings this morning, I will start warning members under Standing Order 123A.

Mr BORBIDGE: My point of privilege is exactly the same point of privilege as that raised by the Minister for Mines and Energy, the member for Mount Isa. Mr Speaker, I appreciate your giving me the indulgence despite the fact that, clearly, a number of

members of the Government do not want that privilege extended to me.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I need to hear the member's point of privilege.

Mr BORBIDGE: The simple fact is that there has been widespread concern in Mount Isa about the future of TAFE operations in that city and the fact that TAFE operations in that city may have been compromised by the conflict of interest of the Minister for Mines and Energy in his capacity as chairman of that particular organisation and the fact that his son is employed by that organisation. When this Government came to office, we were told——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I need to hear the member's point of privilege.

Mr BORBIDGE: It is the very matter of privilege that the member for Mount Isa——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No, that is not a point of privilege.

Mr BORBIDGE: I move——

"That the Leader of the Opposition be further heard."

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have not asked the Leader of the Opposition to resume his seat.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, are you happy for me to continue?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have not asked the Leader of the Opposition to resume his seat; I have asked him to state his matter of privilege.

Mr BORBIDGE: Mr Speaker, I am moving that I be further heard. I take it that you have no objection to that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will confer with the Clerk.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Callide! I warned the House before about interjections. There will be no further interjections. I will hear the Leader of the Opposition. I ask that the Leader of the Opposition keep his point short.

Mr BORBIDGE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate your courtesy. The fact that a member of Parliament lists a pecuniary interest on a register does not mean that that member of Parliament cannot be asked questions in respect of a potential conflict of interest. I headed a Government for two and a half years that was subject to blatant muckraking by the member for Brisbane Central in respect of allegations of conflict of interest.

Today we have a senior Minister who is a chairman of a company that is in competition

with TAFE for the provision of services in his electorate and we have widespread concern in Mount Isa that TAFE services are being withdrawn. That is the fundamental area of concern in respect of this particular matter. When questions were asked of him this morning, as usual the Minister for Employment refused to answer them. My matter of privilege is this—

Mr BRADDY: I rise to a point of order. I find that remark untrue and offensive. I answered all the questions. I even sent for extra information and supplied the dollar figures in relation to this matter. Therefore, the remark is untrue and offensive.

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

Mr BORBIDGE: If the Minister finds those remarks offensive, I withdraw.

Clearly the Minister has been caught out in attempts to wind down TAFE operations in Mount Isa to the benefit of his colleague the Minister for Mines and Energy. If the member for Brisbane Central imposed the same ethical standards on his Ministry as he sought to impose on mine, there would be two Ministers in his Government who would be giving a very solid explanation in respect of their likely breach of the ministerial code of ethics that I introduced, which this Premier refuses to enforce.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Will the Clerk read the order of the day?

Mr Elder interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Deputy Premier has made certain offensive remarks leaving the Chamber. I ask that he return to the Chamber and withdraw those remarks.

Mr Elder: If he wants me to withdraw the fact that he is a fraud, I withdraw.

Mr BORBIDGE: The Deputy Premier did not return to his seat.

Mr ELDER: If he wants me to withdraw the fact that he is a fraud, I withdraw the remark.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
APPROPRIATION BILL
Committee (Cognate Debate)
Estimates Committee D
Report

Resumed from 21 October (see p. 2665).

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.43 a.m.): I rise to support the report of Estimates Committee D. I wish to commend

the work done by that committee, especially the behind-the-scenes work. Recognition of these dedicated, committed and, dare I say, tireless workers is very necessary. The Minister for Women's Policy has demonstrated a genuine commitment to supporting Queensland women wherever they live. The addressing of the high level of domestic violence that exists in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is demonstrated in the Minister's commitment to social justice issues and her awareness of the need for programs to be culturally relevant.

The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care provides and supports a diverse range of services for children, young people, people with a disability, older people and families. The department works with other organisations and communities to ensure the ongoing development of community networks and the delivery of services that are responsive to people's needs. I acknowledge that the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is responsible for the development of services for people who have a disability. Some of those services include the provision of a range of direct and funded accommodation and lifestyle support. I congratulate the department on its budgeted support that will be provided to people with an intellectual disability or complex support needs. Funding is provided to further address the high levels of unmet need in the disability sector. Those funds will be used to provide accommodation and support services to individuals and families, ensure equitable access to disability services for disadvantaged groups and commence the piloting of local area coordination.

Those improvements that support and assist people with disabilities are very welcome in my electorate. Today I would like to pay respect and homage to an incredible human being in my electorate, Mr Vincent Morelli. He is 28 years old. Three years ago he was involved in a diving accident that left him with quadriplegia. Prior to his accident, Mr Morelli was an active and productive member of society; now he is mostly bedridden, wheelchair bound and is unable to perform simple tasks such as feed himself, dress himself, get out of bed or answer the telephone without assistance. Vince is now totally reliant on carers for everyday support. His quadriplegia has left him with biceps but no triceps, so he can raise his arms to a certain height but he is unable to put his arms down again. He cannot grasp anything. He has no sensation in his upper body and requires postural support to be able to sit. It is almost

impossible to imagine what it must be like to go from being an active member of the community to becoming reliant on everybody for everything. These limits and restrictions must take their toll.

I had the opportunity to meet with Vince and get to know him a little. What I discovered was human nature at its best. Vince is an accepting, caring and loving person whose attitude to life leaves one feeling humble and indeed in awe. Despite the physical hardship and emotional upheaval that the accident would have caused, Vince has a wicked sense of humour and wonderful outlook on life. To meet him is truly an experience. He lives within the community in a private rental property that has been modified for wheelchairs. In the community, he is supported by two carers on carer payments from Centrelink. One carer supplies support at night. During the weekend he is supported with two hours on Saturday and two hours on Sunday by HAAC. The difficulty is that carers require respite and time off each week. Without the flexibility of having his own finance to arrange carer hours, Vincent is continually struggling to juggle carer hours and his personal care needs. He has been left in the position of being in bed for three hours urgently requiring assistance but was unable to contact anyone. Vince requires recurrent funding for 35 hours per week.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank not only Vince for allowing me to visit but also the Queensland Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of Queensland for inviting me to meet with them. They are a wonderful and hardworking association and deserve lots of praise for the work that they do. I will be actively campaigning towards improving Vince's lot and giving him the opportunity to live a better life and become a productive member of our community. It is with pride that I work in the Beattie Government. I once again congratulate the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care on her very fair, supportive and positive budget.

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (11.48 a.m.): I would like to recognise the Chair of Estimates Committee D, Mr Sullivan. I thought that he did a fairly good job. He was a bit tough in some areas and had to pull me up once or twice, but that is Terry. I congratulate him on getting through the process without too many dramas. His chairmanship of that committee and his cooperative working relationship with the staff was something that I appreciated. I thank him for that. I recognise the efforts of the staff, David Thannhauser and Penny Sullivan, and express my thanks to them. They were excellent and always available. I thank

the Minister, Ms Spence, and her ministerial staff and departmental officers. I think they were as cooperative as they could be given the task at hand of having a new Minister in a new portfolio and going through the process of establishing her ministerial offices, departmental offices, director-general's office and so on. I thank her for her cooperation and endeavours to answer questions in a manner that was both acceptable to me and appreciated by me as a shadow Minister.

During the Estimates committee hearing I raised one or two issues that were of concern to me. This morning, in rising on a matter of privilege, I again raised the issue concerning the Premier and the appointment of Marg O'Donnell as the Director-General of the Minister's department. In this House, the Premier stated that any director-general who had no previous experience in Government would have to go through a formal application interview process. During the Estimates committee process, I was surprised to learn that the Minister had not adhered to that. In fact, Marg O'Donnell was appointed to that position by the Minister and that appointment was approved by the Premier without that position being advertised. As I said, that is now a matter for the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

I also find the Sagacity saga difficult to comprehend, given that the Minister was aware of Mr Ken Maddock's employment as a consultant by the Director-General, Marg O'Donnell. A \$10,000 consultancy fee was paid to Mr Maddock and two days after the completion of that consultancy he was appointed to a senior position in the department—an SES level position on some \$100,000 a year—without an interview process and without that position having been advertised in the Government Gazette before his appointment. I know that the position was advertised four or five days after his appointment, but it had not been advertised in the Gazette before his appointment. I was advised by one of the Minister's officers that Mr Maddock and Miss Marg O'Donnell had in their previous lives worked together in the former Departments of Attorney-General and Consumer Affairs. Obviously, they had some friendship and relationship in days gone by. I would not go as far as to say that it might have been an old mate's act in Mr Maddock receiving that consultancy or being appointed to a senior position within the Minister's department on \$100,000 a year without that position being advertised in the Gazette.

During the Estimates committee hearings, I raised another matter that has concerned me

and that was that the Minister was not able to give an iron-clad commitment that the Retail Shop Leases Act would be administered by her department or by the Minister for State Development. She was quite uncertain and toing-and-froing, "It may be my department; it may be the State Development Department." She did not go so far as to say that it could be administered by some other department. The Minister and the Government need to appreciate that small business and business generally across this State place a heavy reliance upon the work that is done for them by the officers who administer the Retail Shop Leases Act. I really believe that, as a matter of urgency, certainty should be given to the business community in this State as to who will be the Minister responsible for that Act and that it should be given a home as quickly as possible.

In closing, I thank the chairman, the staff, the Minister, her ministerial staff and the departmental staff. I think the process is worth while. I have often questioned whether the Estimates committees are essential to the administration of this Parliament, given the enormous cost and the time that it takes departmental officers to prepare and the enormous resources that are used in preparation for these hearings.

Time expired.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (11.53 a.m.): I would like to thank the Estimates committee, especially its chairman, the member for Chermside, for their participation in the committee hearings. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Primary Industries staff who also participated. Estimates committees are a very important part of our democratic process, and it was refreshing to see this particular committee run so smoothly. Again, I would like to congratulate the honourable member for Chermside on the manner in which he carried out his duties as the chairman of the committee.

It was also a pleasure for me to commend the Department of Primary Industries budget for 1998-99 to the Estimates committee. The focus for the increased DPI budget for 1998-99 is investing in the future. The DPI has a very important role of fostering and developing the economic potential of Queensland's primary industries. This Government has recognised how crucial this role is and it is investing in the Department of Primary Industries to enhance it.

Because of the manner in which the Estimates committees are formed, the honourable member for Crows Nest was the sole voice for the Opposition. I trust that he thought that the hearing was worth while. Gauging by his comments yesterday, I believe that he thought that to be the case. At the hearing, the member for Crows Nest expressed a lot of interest in an address in September by the United States President, Bill Clinton, to the National Farmers Union. In common with the honourable member, I looked up Mr Clinton's address on the Internet and noted it. I recognise that any comments on agriculture made by a US President hold significance for Queensland's primary producers. It is also interesting to note that Mr Clinton's address to the National Farmers Union was made on 15 September, the same date as this Government delivered its first Budget.

As I informed the House on Budget day, I was in a position to announce an increased budget for the DPI. I would specifically like to mention this Government's \$2.38m initiative over four years for a campaign against the heliothis threat to Queensland's field crop and horticultural industries. This research program will unify the research, development and extension effort against heliothis across industries, regions and providers of research, development and extension. The Opposition had made some noises about what it was going to do about the heliothis threat, which could cost our field crop industries about \$150m per annum. Unfortunately, the honourable member for Crows Nest has been the one making the noise, but I fear that he was not properly briefed on what his colleagues did and did not do. That is a shame. A press release promise is one thing and a Budget commitment is another thing. Unfortunately for our grain, cotton and horticultural industries, the former coalition Government refused to include any funding for heliothis control in its May Budget.

I will take this opportunity to comment on a couple of the issues that were raised by various members of the committee. First of all, I acknowledge the contribution made by the honourable member for Nicklin. On a couple of occasions I was surprised and stunned by the questions that he asked and I was very pleased that I was able to respond to him in a satisfactory manner. To the members on the Government side who asked questions and took part in the Estimates process, I must commend them on the quality of their questions, the research that they undertook, and their commitment as members of the

Estimates committee to primary industries in Queensland. In conclusion, I pay personal thanks to the honourable member for Crows Nest for the manner in which he took part in the Estimates committee. As he said, he did quite extensive research. I am quite sure that the exchange of ideas will really help the DPI.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (11.58 a.m.): It gives me great pleasure to take part in this debate, particularly as it is important to horticulture and agriculture. I note that the committee inquired into the Rural Market Development Unit and the work that it can do for potential exporters. I was also pleased to note that the Queensland Horticulture Research Development Committee is very interested in export markets and for some time has been going down that track.

The horticulture industry is involved in global competition and needs to be industry driven to satisfy customer and market needs, thus resulting in the improved profitability, sustainability and lifestyle of our growers. Research and its extension plays an integral part in maintaining and improving the industry's leading position in Australian horticulture and is vital to the industry's vision.

The Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Funding Committee has contributed \$1m for research into horticulture, which has been matched dollar for dollar by Government. Through the committee structure, industry has a direct input into the direction of horticultural research in Queensland. The importance of this research can never be underestimated. With consumer demand for high-quality fruit and vegetables, the growers themselves are under constant pressure to deliver a high-quality product, often in the face of changing market demands and environmental conditions. Continuing research will assist growers to meet those challenges. I wish them all the best and congratulate them on a job well done.

The Forest Production Program is being developed, but it has a long way to go. The committee was informed that the 1998-99 target of 450 hectares for the expansion of farm forestry plantations reflected the increased expressions of interest and equity sharing by private landowners, and is up from 335 hectares of plantations that were allocated in 1997-98. The committee was advised that during the latter part of 1998 and the early part of 1999, the department will proceed to call for expressions of interest in the purchase of a major volume of uncommitted exotic pine from the Gympie/Maryborough plantations. This will be undertaken once DPI Forestry has

completed its strategic review of management options to increase the exotic pine plantations. Of course, we hope that that will proceed.

The National Competition Policy is affecting the dairy farmers in my area and throughout Queensland. Those farmers can do without this policy, which hinders what they have been doing for a long time. There is no doubt in my mind that the dairy industry is going from strength to strength.

Time expired.

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (12.04 p.m.): I start by thanking all members of Estimates Committee D for their work in bringing together this year's Estimates. I particularly congratulate the Chair, the member for Chermside, for his expert guidance of the deliberations of the committee. I also recognise the hard work of the staff of the committee, my own ministerial staff and the staff of the department who, as always, have put in an outstanding effort.

The first Budget of the Beattie Labor Government in this portfolio is the largest allocation in the history of the agency. By the time that this Government is introducing its fourth Budget in the year 2001, we will have injected nearly \$280m into the base funding of the agency. People with disabilities, their families and support services have received the biggest ever single injection of funds. An allocation in excess of \$126m over four years will be used to address the unmet needs in disability services right across the State and will substantially address and repair the neglect of this sector by the previous Government.

In this Budget we kept our promise on disability funding. In one Budget we have achieved what the coalition Government comprehensively failed to do in three Budgets. We have provided \$30m worth of funding into disability services—twice what the member for Indooroopilly squandered on the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. The Budget also provides a \$25m increase over four years to community sector organisations to meet their industrial obligations. Those organisations will now be able to provide services and adequately reward their committed and often overworked staff. This commitment stands in stark contrast to the attitude of the previous Government. The Minister for Health at the time, the member for Toowoomba South, stated—

"There are few better examples of the greed and callousness of the Union movement than the Social and

Community Services (SACS) Award. The actions of Labor's mates, the ASU, in pursuing this award against the wishes of many working in the voluntary and non Government sector, were calculated to strike at the aged, the sick and the poor ..."

This Government does not regard the industrial rights of workers in that way.

The Budget commits \$17m to new child-care initiatives. The package of funds will improve the quality of child care through facility upgrades and equipment purchases, the construction of three new centres and expanded outside school hours care programs. Ours is the only State Government in Australia that is taking any action to redress the effects of the savage attacks on child care by the Howard Government.

Older Queenslanders have not been forgotten. Not only have we reintroduced the motor vehicle registration concession, benefiting more than 28,000 Seniors Card holders but also the ambulance subscription concession to be administered by my department will see free ambulance cover for seniors. In addition, this budget includes funds to establish three pilot juvenile justice centres, provides for the relocation of Basil Stafford residents, and funds the implementation of youth suicide prevention strategies and juvenile crime prevention programs. This is a good-news Budget for all who care about the health and wellbeing of our children, our families and our communities.

What does the member for Indooroopilly have to say about this budget in his dissenting report, which I believe can only be described as churlish, mealy mouthed and mean spirited? Firstly, he expresses concern about whether any of the \$209,000 for machinery of Government changes was expended on signage. I answered this question both on notice and in the hearings. He has presented nothing to refute my answer, which stands. He goes on to express concern about a question on notice regarding task forces. I clarified the member's concern in detail at the hearings, yet he continues to fail to provide contradictory information. Yesterday afternoon in the Chamber, he was unable to name one task force, one review or any such thing that I had instituted and not brought to the attention of the committee. The Government's commitment to increasing the staffing resources in child protection is also questioned. Again, the documents provided and my answers to the committee do not substantiate his concerns. His concerns are

not serious. If they were and he seriously believed that I had misled the committee, he would be taking further action.

The comments of the member for Indooroopilly regarding the Forde inquiry are simply disgraceful. To use the dissenting report to make those comments is little more than another grubby attempt by him to undermine the inquiry and besmirch the character of one of the commissioners. In the dissenting report the member repeats the false accusation that Mr Hans Heilpern was sacked from his position as director-general when he knows this to be false. He has been unable to present any evidence to the contrary to the Parliament. It was not the subject of any discussion at Estimates Committee D and, in my view, is inappropriately placed in the dissenting report. The attacks by the member make a mockery of the Opposition's so-called claims to support the Forde inquiry. The member for Indooroopilly and the Opposition continue to attempt to undermine a very serious inquiry by trying to score cheap political points. The comments of the member for Indooroopilly regarding the Children's Commissioner are similarly appalling. I commend the budget for this portfolio to the Committee.

Time expired.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (12.10 p.m.): A number of frivolous claims have been made by the Minister for Primary Industries. In taking part in this debate on the report of Estimates Committee D, I wish to make absolutely clear to the Parliament my involvement with the QLMA. I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to a letter dated 14 May 1998 from me, as the then Minister for Primary Industries, to the Chairman of the Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority, Mr Richard Goldup, which stated—

"... I am pleased to advise that additional funding will be made available in 1998/99 to address the potential insolvency of the QLMA. The exact amount is yet to be determined, but sufficient funding will be provided so as to prevent the insolvency of the QLMA."

The letter went on to state that "based upon a further independent assessment as outlined in my previous letter which will be undertaken over the next four weeks" there will be no cost incurred to the authority. A lot of what the Minister has been saying about the QLMA is absolutely incorrect. We were prepared to support it in redressing the situation that it found itself in as a result of the Casey era.

I wish also to speak about certain other aspects of the DPI. I note that money has

been provided for the Northwatch program. That is absolutely essential. During the papaya fruit fly outbreak in Queensland, \$30,000—a very meagre amount—was provided by the then Government, with Mr Casey as Primary Industries Minister, which did not allow for a complete trapping program to be carried out around the Cairns area. I believe it was largely because of that that up to five generations of the papaya fruit fly were allowed to breed before being detected in the Cairns region.

Earlier in the year, there was almost an epidemic on the islands close to PNG. DPI staff monitored the situation and assisted with a program of eradication similar to that on the mainland in the Cairns quarantine area. That outbreak was very costly for the growers. The program of disinfestation meant that growers had to spray their fruit with chemicals. A lot of good work was done by the DPI, and the public also assisted greatly. Roadblocks were set up and the public had to stop to have any fruit they were carrying inspected. Additionally, consignments from growers were also inspected. It was a considerable disadvantage for the growers and it also caused disruption to the general public. It would have cost more but for the very good work by both growers and the DPI which resulted in total eradication. This program will be completed in about May/June 1999. Monitoring will continue and, hopefully, we will maintain total eradication, with the support from the other States. There is no doubt that it is a great achievement.

I wish to move on briefly to discuss the sugarcane smut problem, which could prove detrimental to the Queensland sugar industry. It has been found in Western Australia and some work is being carried out to ensure that we do not see smut on the east coast, which would disrupt the \$2 billion industry in Queensland. I hope the Minister is conferring very closely with the Western Australian Government, because the transportation of all sorts of products from Western Australia could prove detrimental to Queensland.

Time expired.

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) (12.14 p.m.): I wish to begin by thanking the committee for its deliberations, especially the Chair of the committee, Mr Terry Sullivan, who I believe conducted the whole day's proceedings in a very professional manner, and the staff of the committee. In doing so, I recognise also the very hard work of the staff of my two departments, who were professional

and thorough in preparing briefs for me for the committee hearing.

I believe the majority report of the committee correctly identifies the important initiatives of the two new departments—the Department of Equity and Fair Trading and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development—and also those with respect to my other ministerial responsibilities, those of the Building Services Authority and the Residential Tenancies Authority.

I have to say, though, that I found the minority report of the committee very disappointing. It reflects the very sad lengths to which the shadow Minister will go to score cheap political points. I wish to dwell on a few of the issues raised in the minority report that I believe should be refuted in this Chamber. In saying that I was disappointed in the minority report, I will also add that I am surprised that the member for Crows Nest has signed off on this report, as he was not there at all during the Estimates committee hearing when I was in attendance. Similarly, another member in this House, Mrs Dorothy Pratt, recently claimed in the South Burnett Times that she has been very busy in Brisbane lately attending Estimates committees in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and Fair Trading, and that the following week she would be attending another Estimates committee. If members are going to make these claims and sign off on minority reports, the least they can do is attend the committee hearings. It is not too much to ask to scrutinise the Queensland Budget.

A Government member interjected.

Ms SPENCE: It is disgraceful.

The first issue that I wish to draw to the attention of the House in the minority report is that of the ministerial office upgrade. The minority report states—

"The non-government members note with concern the costs associated with the upgrading of conventional office space in Mineral House to accommodate a ministerial office ..."

I explained very clearly at the Estimates committee hearing that there was no ministerial office for me. We had created two new Government departments, and there was no office for my director-general or the senior staff of my office. I resided temporarily in an office in the Environment Department building, but that obviously was not going to be satisfactory for me or the senior staff of the department in the long run.

I draw to the attention of the House the fact that I was very honest with respect to my ministerial office upgrade and informed the Estimates committee that it cost some \$360,000. That compares very favourably with ministerial office upgrades under previous National Party and Liberal Party Governments. I wish to draw attention to one previous ministerial office upgrade that occurred in the last Government, namely, that for the Minister for Lands at the time, Mr Howard Hobbs, who years ago decided that the ministerial office he inherited in the Lands Department was not good enough for him and that he would create a ministerial office for himself in Mineral House. At the time, that cost over \$400,000. By comparison my recent upgrade is quite modest.

The fact that the Opposition should choose to attack me on this issue is disappointing but predictable. The coalition, which was very happy to see the Office of Women's Policy and the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy shunted away in town out of sight now cannot handle the fact that the new Labor Government has given these areas priority. In fact, so little is the coalition concerned about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Queensland that it does not even have a shadow Minister responsible for that portfolio. One can imagine how embarrassed I am when I go to meetings, as I did in Cairns last week, and address the formal council of the Aboriginal Coordinating Council and have those people ask me, "Minister, who is the shadow Minister in the coalition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs?", and I have to say to them, "They do not have one." They care so little for these people in Queensland that they have not even assigned a shadow Minister for this portfolio. It is shameful, outrageous and an embarrassment to all of us. In the very limited time I have available, I wish to refute the predictable but disappointing criticisms that we have heard today and also read in the minority report.

Time expired.

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.19 p.m.): On 18 September I raised my concern that the ALP might be going to drop the electricity concessions for life support systems for people who might be on oxygen concentrators or kidney dialysis machines. I have received an answer from the Minister for Mines saying that the concessions were in place, yet the Minister for Families who now administers that particular concession was not agreeing to it. I am delighted to see that, during the Estimates, the Minister for Families

has agreed that there will be electricity concessions, although they will be means tested. Maybe we have to move away from means testing in the future, but at least those people who, through means testing, will qualify for electricity concessions will get concessions for using their oxygen concentrators and kidney dialysis machines. I certainly thank the Government for agreeing to that particular point.

I was disappointed during the Estimates to see once again the Minister concentrating an attack on the former director-general, Mr Allan Male. This has really become an indecent obsession for the Minister, but still I suppose it results from the fact that Jackie Byrne was sacked originally. However, it still is an indecent obsession and I am disappointed to see that the member for Chermside participated in that particular attack, especially when he recently gave quite a speech in this Chamber about what he thought about the Christian Brothers and what we should do about them. I think the member for Chermside would admit that Allan Male is one person who has really worked hard in the Shaftesbury Centre.

Nine thousand to 10,000 FOI forms were accessed through the Department of Families. A criticism was found in those 9,000 to 10,000 forms that were accessed about the Shaftesbury Centre back in the 1970s about a particular audit brought on because of sickness at that particular time. The Minister then took that particular comment and criticised the Shaftesbury Centre and then eventually Shaftesbury Campus. Mr Male does not want me to continue talking about it. I know the details. I do not want this attack to continue because Mr Male has no recourse to Parliament. But it still is an indecent obsession that the Minister has continued with over the past two years.

I am also disappointed to find that \$2.6m was allocated for neighbourhood centres, which are called multipurpose centres. However, at a recent opening of one of those neighbourhood centres, one of the departmental people spoke about the 10 neighbourhood centres or multipurpose centres that this Government was going to build. Back in 1996 there were to be 10 multipurpose or neighbourhood centres. We allocated \$2.6m for five of those centres. Those five were to be Edmonton, Nambour, Whitsunday—which is Cannonvale—Miles and Acacia Ridge.

I went ahead with the construction of those five neighbourhood centres. When I saw

another \$2.6m in this budget, I asked, "Where are the next five centres to go?" But now I find that that money is for the original five centres. So in honesty, there are not 10 neighbourhood centres or multipurpose centres; there are only five, which are the original 1996 multipurpose centres. We chose five from the original 10, but now those extra five will not be built. So those communities will miss out on their centres.

I also ask the Minister to make a definite decision about the Beaudesert respite centre, which is to be located at Jimboomba. People wrote on 21 July asking about definite progress on this particular centre. To this date—three months later—the Minister has not advised the Beaudesert people whether this respite centre, which was decided upon in 1997, would go ahead. I know it has been a political game. I know that, unfortunately, the then deputy director-general, Dr Peter Botsman, passed away when he was negotiating all of this and the Challinor Centre. But let me say to the Minister: in negotiating for people to come out of the Challinor Centre and go into the community, there is a need for respite in the Beaudesert area.

Certainly there were discussions with the Beaudesert Shire Council about whether one of those particular centres, which are now being built at Loganlea, could be built at Beaudesert. In the discussions about whether people with disabilities could come into the Beaudesert area, it was discussed that there was a need for respite. So it was agreed to build a respite centre. In fact, in letters from the Minister—me at that time—it was actually agreed that \$400,000 was allocated for that centre. It has now been through Project Services. Tenders have been called. Money has been allocated and money has been used in Project Services. But still the Minister will not say whether she agrees to go ahead with the respite centre. People with disabilities have been transferred to Beaudesert to use that respite centre. The post-school options program has also been placed there.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee E

Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Mickel): Order! The question is—

"That the report of Estimates Committee E be adopted."

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (12.24 p.m.): In speaking to the report of Estimates Committee E, I would like to thank the Deputy Chair and member for Burnett, Doug Slack, the committee, Ministers and their departmental officers for their cooperation and contributions during the Estimates process. I would also like to commend the staff of the committee secretariat—Mr Chris Garvey, the research director; Mr Andrew Timperley, research officer; and Ms Mandy Elcome, executive assistant—Mr Alan Watson, the staff of Hansard and the parliamentary attendants for their valuable support and assistance during the Estimates process.

The committee examined the budget of Queensland Health and the Department of Mines and Energy. The Department of Mines and Energy Consolidated Fund budget for 1998-1999 is \$160.6m, an increase of \$5m over the 1997-1998 budget. During 1998-1999 the department will continue to promote gas, mineral and petroleum exploration using modern geological techniques, improved data extraction and enhancement, and imaging of exploration reports. During this financial year, the department will rehabilitate abandoned mine sites at Horn Island, Gympie and Charters Towers, and improve the environmental performances of the mining industry.

In the area of mine safety, the department will employ an additional eight inspectors to undertake inspections and safety audits within the industry. The employment of these additional eight inspectors will be welcomed by the industry, especially in the area of coalmining as it has the highest accident frequency rate of any industry in Australia. Available statistics show that the coalmining industry in Queensland accounted for more accidents and fatalities than the remainder of the mining industry within recent times. In 1996-1997 there were 335 accidents and three fatalities in underground coalmines and 237 accidents and fatalities on surface coalmines in Queensland. This level of injuries and fatalities is unacceptable. It causes economic loss and grief to the families of workers who are employed in the industry.

The electricity industry will expend \$820.7m on capital works, including the expansion of the Callide and Mica Creek Power Stations as well as enhancing the transmission system from central Queensland to southern Queensland, which will reinforce electricity supply to Brisbane. The Minister for Mines and Energy inherited from the coalition an industry in a mess which has led to load shedding due to plant failure and the

cancellation of the Eastlink transmission line, which would have provided additional electricity supply to Queensland. The Minister outlined his strategies in the short, medium and long term to reform the industry so that the State has a competitive but reliable supply of electricity for industrial, business and domestic consumers. I commend the Minister for his determination to make the Queensland electricity industry the leader in this country.

I now turn to the Queensland Health budget for 1998-99 of \$3.722 billion, which is an increase of \$288.4m on the 1997-98 budget. The key priorities for Health include continuing to reduce elective surgery waiting times, improving health service infrastructure, enhancing mental health services and maintaining the level and quality of services in the face of reductions in Commonwealth funding. The abolition of the former Health Minister's capital charge—or the Horan tax—on capital works has been welcomed throughout Queensland. This insidious tax would have seen a reduction in health services across Queensland. In Mackay, this tax would have meant that \$1m a year would have been ripped from the budget of the District Health Service, affecting service delivery to the people of the Mackay region. Capital works spending this financial year will provide some 9,000 full-time equivalent jobs within the building and construction industry.

The Minister demonstrated throughout the Estimates process that she was on top of her portfolio and, unlike the former Minister, she has brought down a budget in which the commitments are fully funded and do not burden our public hospitals and public health system. The Minister has a huge task ahead of her: to clean up the mess left by her predecessor, the member for Toowoomba South.

The statement of reservation by the coalition members of the committee was a bitter personal attack on the Minister for Mines and Energy and the Minister for Health, who have demonstrated their knowledge of their portfolios and a vision for the future. The coalition offered no positive alternatives to the Government's agenda. I commend the report to the Chamber.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (12.29 p.m.): I rise to address the report of Estimates Committee E, particularly the section of Estimates devoted to the 1998-99 budget for the Department of Mines and Energy. All members of this Chamber should agree that the former Borbidge Government did indeed produce an excellent and widely

acclaimed Budget for the 1998-99 fiscal year. It was so good that in most instances the current minority Labor Government has reproduced it.

One has to wonder why it took the Beattie administration three entire months to plagiarise the coalition's Budget—a three-month Budget freeze of huge proportions. The Budget was not plagiarised in its entirety. In actual fact, during those three months the minority Labor Government made some significant and highly questionable changes to the coalition Budget. Mines and Energy is one portfolio in which the Minister and his Cabinet colleagues fiddled with the books, and the Estimates process enable this fiddling to be highlighted.

Undoubtedly the most questionable change uncovered by the coalition was the Beattie administration's interference in the electricity market. A ministerial direction issued jointly by the Minister and the Treasurer was aimed at slowing down the Callide C project in favour of other projects. In fact, the committee's discussion on Callide C, the presentation of the budget forecasts for this project and the responses to the questions taken on notice during the Estimates led the coalition members to the conclusion that the Minister sought to mislead the committee as to the Government's actions and intentions towards this project. There has been such inconsistency between the Budget papers, Mr Jardine's response and the replies to the questions on notice that non-Government members can have no faith in the veracity of this budget.

Further, the Minister could not recall issuing the directive to CS Energy and could not give a definitive answer as to whether he had issued a directive at all. In fact he still cannot, and nor can the Treasurer. Given the requirements of the Government Owned Corporations Act 1993 and the significance normally associated with a ministerial directive, this reply was and is extraordinary.

The folly of the ALP Government's claim that it would reamalgamate the electricity industry has also been revealed. The Minister claimed to support both the establishment of a competitive electricity market and the reamalgamation of the industry. He cannot have it both ways, and the ACCC has recently advised that the ALP's claims have now been exposed as the cheap political stunt they always have been. The Minister misled the committee by implying that the coalition supported the closure of district departmental offices, and the budget documents contained no detailed costings of the relocation of the

regional departmental office from Townsville to Mount Isa.

During the Estimates hearing it was also made plainly obvious that the minority Labor Government is taking little if any action to progress the Century Zinc project, despite significant delays in relation to the provision of power and restricted access to the mine site because of delays over the construction of the Gregory River bridge. The minority Labor Government's Budget has denied the people of the Boulia and Barcoo Shires access to the remote area electricity supply trial. \$5m was provided in the Borbidge Government's Budget. An inadequate \$1m has now been provided for the trial. There has been no planning as to exactly what the trial will involve and where it will be used.

It has also become apparent that there has been no meaningful contact with the Federal Government at any level by the Department of Mines and Energy or the fly-in, fly-out task force. Given the importance of taxation policy to the fly-in, fly-out practice, the lack of contact indicates that the task force will operate in isolation, limiting the Government's ability to address the problems associated with the fly-in, fly-out policy.

I thank my committee colleagues and the chairman, the member for Mackay. I thank the Minister and all the public servants. There was a good roll-up of public servants in the areas of Mines and Energy and Health. I thank the staff of the parliamentary committee office, who ably assisted the committee and put the report together, and all those who contributed to the Estimates hearing.

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (12.34 p.m.): I am pleased to be able to participate in the debate this afternoon. I will mention a couple of issues raised during the Estimates process.

Some criticism was levelled at me for being slow in setting up the fly-in, fly-out task force and for the fact that we had not involved the Federal Government. In Opposition I was forever and constantly calling upon the former Minister and the former Government to do something about the mining industry and to see what we could do to get the key players in this industry together to work out some strategy to defend the industry against the downturn in the Asian economy. That Minister and that Government refused on every single occasion. Within weeks of the Beattie Labor Government coming to office, a task force was convened in Moranbah.

I note some of the claims made by the shadow Minister. I inform the shadow Minister that, when in Government, his Minister and his Premier had a stance on the fly-in, fly-out practice. That was that the decisions of the mining companies were commercial decisions and as such the Government had no role, nor did it propose to take any role in trying to change the views of the mining community. In fact, the former Minister made a comment that the days of the Mount Isas and the Dysarts of this world are over—they have gone; they are finished.

I inform the House today that a task force will be established. I will be making some announcements regarding this issue in Mount Isa on Sunday or Monday. I am sure the shadow Minister will come out in a blaze of glory and support the initiatives of this Government.

I refer again to the comments of the shadow Minister about the Boulia scheme. I have had the opportunity on two occasions this week to rebut comments made by the shadow Minister. I put the facts on the table. The shadow Minister and some of his colleagues have been requesting that the \$5m the former Government had in its proposed Budget should have remained and that I should have continued the scheme.

There are 1,700 properties in Queensland which should qualify for some assistance with regard to grid power. I have been getting constant requests from Boulia and Barcoo. I had a meeting yesterday with the Mayor and the chief executive officer of Boulia Shire. They understood the situation. The taxpayer contribution towards such a scheme would be \$94m. The previous Minister placed \$5m in the coalition's Budget. There was nothing in recurrent funding.

When I asked the department, "What is this \$5m?", the response was, "Tom made some sort of a promise." I said, "What's happening next year? What do I do with \$5m when the scheme is going to cost \$94m?" We have left \$1m there. We have set up an Office of Sustainable Energy. If people in this Parliament think that I am going to start playing games or lead the 1,700 potential customers up the garden path by making these promises, they are wrong. I do not work that way.

This is one of the things the new Office of Sustainable Energy will look at. The people out there in voter land are sick and tired of the slick politicians who promise the earth five weeks before election day and then say that, when the figures are studied, there are no dollars in

the bin. There was to have been \$5m this year, nothing next year and nothing the year after.

Time expired.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (12.40 p.m.): In relation to the Mines and Energy portfolio, I wish to refer to some points that were made by the Minister during this debate on the Estimates committee's report. One aspect that I found very disturbing was the Minister's admission of a lack of policy in relation to incentives for the provision of power in this State. The Minister referred to that again this morning when he answered a question about major project development in this State. If the Government is to maintain that line without any policy in this direction, obviously that is going to throw uncertainty on major projects for power generation within this State.

I ask the Government to address this problem as a matter of urgency, because we cannot have a situation in which the success of a proposal—whether or not the Government is going to support it—will depend on who comes through the door and what proposition is put forward. In a commercial market where would that leave the individual private companies which will be providing the power for this State in the future? There is no doubt in my mind that the Minister has left in the minds of power generating companies a position of uncertainty for the future which needs to be addressed.

Obviously, jobs and reliable power supplies in this State are interdependent; jobs are dependent upon industry developing, and that is dependent upon reliable power and the provision of power at a reasonable cost. Unfortunately, under the Goss Government we started to lag behind the other States in relation to the cost of power to industry. That needs to be urgently addressed by this Government.

Another point that the Minister raised at the Estimates committee hearing related to the possible sale of the power generating providers within this State. The Minister made allegations that the previous Government was thinking of selling AUSTA and the power generating providers. I make the point that we had not discussed that in Cabinet. We did not select a chairman of a committee with that in mind. We looked for the independent provision of advice to our Cabinet and to ourselves on the future of the industry in this State.

The Budget brought down by this Government contains an increase in the provision for capital expenditure and an increase in some areas of recurrent

expenditure. This Labor Party Government is locking itself into a position whereby, at some time in the future, it will probably have to think seriously about selling additional assets. In addition to what the former Government was going to privatise in the marketplace, this Government is proposing to sell off more of Suncorp-Metway than we had proposed to sell. That will inject more funds into the system. The Government is also proposing to sell the Government's shareholding in the Bank of Queensland in the not-too-distant future.

There is an inconsistency in all this. I have read in the newspapers that the Government is selling down all the shares of Suncorp-Metway. It defends that on the basis that it is not going to make any difference to Suncorp-Metway's headquarters—wherever they may be. Yet I understand that the Government is going to retain 10% to 15% of the Bank of Queensland because it wants its headquarters to stay here. So there is definitely a degree of hypocrisy in the arguments that are being advanced.

At the end of the day, when the Government's private investments are being sold to private industry, at some time in the future this Government will be looking for the money to maintain the level of expenditure that is going to result from the sale of those Government assets. I would like to hear from the Minister where that money is going to come from in the future because, to me, that is inconsistent with the Government's commitment not to privatise. At the end of the day, it cannot have the extra services or the extra capital expenditure, and it cannot maintain them, without increasing taxes or further privatisation.

Time expired.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (12.44 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity to take part in this debate on the report of Estimates Committee E, which scrutinised the Ministerial Portfolio Statements of the Department of Mines and Energy and the Department of Health. In the few minutes allocated to me I will concentrate on matters relevant to the Department of Mines and Energy and, in particular, the coal industry.

The department has put considerable resources into the preparation of new legislation that will repeal the current Coal Mining Act. The Minister has been working virtually nonstop with coal employers and employee representatives in an effort to reach an agreement satisfactory to all parties on the new coalmining health and safety legislation. Given my experience in the coal industry and

my ongoing close association with mineworkers and their families, I am committed—in fact, you might say that I am passionate about it—to ensuring that this Parliament does everything in its power, as the legislator in this State, to provide the legislative framework that delivers a safer and healthier work environment for mineworkers. The Minister has been patient. He has been understanding and, where necessary, he has remained focused and strongly committed to achieving the best outcome for both the industry's employers and its employees. I am looking forward to the introduction of the new health and safety legislation into this place.

Personally, I have concerns about self-regulation, as it places the responsibilities of health and safety in the hands of those who, too often, put production and profits ahead of a committed health and safety regime. I acknowledge that, in today's world, the current Coal Mining Act is too prescriptive, and that there is a real need for a more simplistic approach to the writing of law for the operation and functioning of our most important export industry. However, the health and safety of our mineworkers must remain at the forefront of any of the changes to the legislative structure. We, as a Parliament, should never forget that the current Coal Mining Act is written in the blood of dead and injured mineworkers. And we, as elected members and representatives of the people, must take every precaution to ensure that we do not set the scene for future disasters in our mines.

I note that the Department of Mines and Energy no longer has a role in the administration and management of Queensland's Mines Rescue Brigades. The Queensland Mines Rescue Service is now a private company funded under the principles of user pays by the Queensland coal producers. I was most concerned when the former Government—now in Opposition—introduced and passed the legislation which allowed for the restructuring of the service. Failure by the then Government to include union representatives on the board of management was the first step towards a decline in the quality of service, and it has put at risk the ability of the Mines Rescue Brigade to continue to provide an effective rescue service.

I have no confidence in the board of management. They are employer friendly, dismissive of the needs of rescue brigade members and are lacking in a genuine commitment to maintaining an effective and efficient Mines Rescue Service. The quality and commitment of rescue brigade members

is of the highest standard, but the team can only perform to its expectation if it has the support of those who manage it. I respectfully urge the Minister to closely monitor the performance of the board of management and give consideration to how we might be able to get employee representatives on that board.

We should not forget for one minute—and I pray that it never happens—that if we do have an incident of a serious nature and the rescue brigade is incapable of doing its job because of failures by management, it will be the Government that will stand condemned. I know how I felt after the Moura No. 2 underground mine disaster of 7 August 1994, and I have to tell members that I do not want to go through that again.

I turn now to health, which has been an issue in central Queensland, particularly mental health. This is one of the issues that have been driving a mental health lobby group in that particular area. We welcome the extra \$29m in the Labor State Budget that will be injected into mental health services. It should be noted that this represents the biggest funding increase in the history of mental health. It means that we will be spending more than \$270m on mental health services in Queensland in 1998-99. That represents a 16% increase on the recurrent budget that was brought down by the coalition in May.

One in five Queenslanders will experience a mental illness or serious mental health problem at least once in their lives. People with mental health problems, their friends and families are a significant and long-neglected group of people who are getting a better deal at last. The money allocated by Labor will mean 200 extra mental health experts, including four staff for a new stand-alone facility at Emerald, which will service central Queensland, including the Fitzroy electorate.

Time expired.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.50 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this Budget Estimates committee report. The Estimates committee hearing illustrated beyond any doubt to me the laughable incompetence of the Minister for Mines and Energy, the only Minister who has apologised in advance for his own failings. His handling of the Callide C project has destroyed forever any credibility he may have had. It is interesting that, in his comments on the Estimates committee hearings a few moments ago, he made no mention of Callide C. Is that any wonder? The saga that has developed around Callide C has exposed the total incompetence of this Minister. Despite the obvious

importance of this project to the future power supplies of this State, there can be no doubt from the Estimates committee hearings that this Government and this Minister in particular tried twice—not once, but twice—to stop that project.

At the same time as he was apologising in advance for power blackouts that he knew were coming, he was desperately trying to stop a project that he knew would provide cheap, reliable supplies of electricity for this State. Two ministerial inquiries—one of which Mr McGrady told the Estimates hearing he could not recall—were ordered to try to find a way to break the contracts that had been entered into by the coalition Government. Two ministerial attempts were made to kill a project that represented 1,000 construction jobs for my electorate and 900 megawatts of electricity for Queensland.

Failing in what was a desperate attempt to give the Chevron gas project an unfair and unjust advantage, it became obvious from the Budget figures that the strategy became one of delaying the project by denying funds this financial year. The figure allocated to Callide C was \$27.9m. That figure, despite the Minister's denials, is written on page 50 of the Capital Outlays Budget Paper No. 3. That is some \$100m less than the amount identified in the coalition Budget brought down in May. Almost unbelievably, the "Minister for Apologising in Advance" stupidly tried to deny that Budget cut. When faced with the evidence of his own figures, he adopted the absurd position that the project would proceed this year anyway, but the payment schedules had been renegotiated until next year. No doubt, that made many of the contractors involved in the project somewhat nervous. They were being told that they were going to do the work this year and not get paid until next year. The stupidity of that position quickly became apparent even to the "Minister for Apologising in Advance". A new story was concocted. The Estimates committee was told that the \$27.9m was just an indication. \$27.9m sounds pretty precise to me and to most of us, but we were told that it was just an indication and did not represent the total to be spent on Callide C from this Budget. The figure of \$27.9m was published in the capital expenditure documents, but did not represent the amount to be spent! That was an equally absurd position and just as quickly became unsustainable and was abandoned by the "Minister for Apologising in Advance".

Then the figure changed again. Mr Jardine from Powerlink told the Estimates committee that \$70m was the figure required

for the project. So the figure went from \$128m to \$27.9m to about \$70m. What incredibly inept financial management for what was the biggest capital works project within the Minister's field of responsibility! With such inconsistency, the "Minister for Apologising in Advance" demonstrated beyond doubt his own incompetence. He did not have a clue what was going on and he still does not. Callide C is a very important project to the Queensland power supply, but it is even more important to the community of Biloela and central Queensland. It represents 1,000 construction jobs in a relatively small rural community and ongoing employment for operators and coalminers. Naturally, as the local member I took a close interest in the budgeted expenditure for this project, and other members in this Chamber would have done the same had that project been in their electorate.

With his constantly changing positions on this matter, with his conflicting statements and his totally unsustainable logic, the "Minister for Apologising in Advance" demonstrated for all to see his total inability to handle this most important project and his total lack of control of his portfolio. It is a portfolio that is too important to this State to be left in the hands of such demonstrated incompetence. An apology in advance is no substitute for a reliable, affordable power supply. An apology in advance is no substitute for performance. Mr McGrady should be replaced.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (12.55 p.m.): It is certainly a great pleasure to speak this afternoon in this debate on the report of Estimates Committee E. I will concentrate my remarks on the Mines and Energy section of Estimates Committee E. I take this opportunity to congratulate the committee Chair, Mr Mulherin, on the work that he undertook during and after Estimates Committee E to ensure that the reports and matters related to Estimates Committee E were prepared in order.

This afternoon, while dealing with the Mines and Energy portfolio, I will concentrate particularly on mining exploration. Exploration is what drives the mining industry. Exploration activity has associated with it high costs and, of course, high risks. In many ways, the level of exploration activity is the measure of investor confidence, the measure of what the market thinks and what investors think about mining in their State or area. I congratulate the Minister on the moneys that have been set aside for the Geological Survey subprogram, which has been allocated \$5.5m, and the Resource Development subprogram, which

has an allocation of \$11.344m. The aim of those two items is to increase exploration activities in Queensland, to ensure that explorers know that the Government of Queensland is concerned and able to help them in their exploration activities.

Published expenditure data shows that exploration expenditure has been falling in this State over the past couple of years. There have been delays in the processing of exploration permits. It has been suggested that a political agenda was involved in those delays. The previous Government blamed the Wik decision and native title issues for those delays.

One of the major factors over which none of us has any real control is the simple fact that mineral commodity prices have been low over the past couple of years. We read about that every day. There may be some evidence that Australian exploration trends are changing because capital is becoming much more mobile. It is prepared to travel overseas. As Governments establish themselves as stable, it is prepared to move into those areas. A lot of factors are involved in that, including the increased political and economic stability that may exist in other places and policies that are introduced by Governments that reduce the investment risk that is involved in exploration.

I congratulate the Minister and the department for putting in place the funds for the Geological Survey subprogram and the Resource Development subprogram. That will give confidence to the industry. It is an industry that functions on confidence. In many ways, it is an industry that functions on perceptions. If it is perceived that the Government wants to help and is putting in place funds to ensure that programs are undertaken to assist in the exploration for minerals, then exploration money will follow to do that.

What is required is an innovative strategy. That is what Minister McGrady and the Department of Mines and Energy are putting in place. In the Geological Survey subprogram, when data is prepared, it is then made available to prospective explorers. That gives explorers the opportunity to target scarce money for exploration activities and, in particular, the minerals they want to explore. All members should be aware that, if we do not have any mineral exploration, we will not have growth in minerals and energy development. It is a very competitive field both within Australia and outside Australia. Capital is much more mobile. We need to have a Government that encourages activity.

Time expired.

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

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (2.30 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to join in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee E. In relation to the Health Estimates, I endorse the comments that the member for Fitzroy made about the mental health facility at the Emerald Hospital. I pay tribute to the former Health Minister, Mike Horan, for the great work that he did in putting together that hospital. After six Labor Budgets, in the two and a quarter years of the coalition Government, we saw that hospital in Emerald put in place. I congratulate Mike Horan on that effort. I also make mention of the support that Jimmy Pearce, the member for Fitzroy, gave me in lobbying for that mental health facility at the Emerald Hospital.

However, I want to speak to the Estimates of the Minerals and Energy portfolio. Just this week in this Chamber I asked the Minister about power in western Queensland. I refer to the Barcoo and Boulia Shires. The Minister made mention of \$5m being in the Borbidge/Sheldon Budget that was not signed off. There is \$1m in this Budget for that same program. Last Tuesday, in answer to my question in this place, the Minister said that he has put in place an Office of Sustainable Energy, which will look at putting power into rural and remote Queensland. That is an absolute waste of money: \$10m to again create more Public Service jobs when we could be giving power to people in rural and remote Queensland who only ever dream of it.

There are people in the cities throughout the length and breadth of this State who take power for granted. This morning, a young mother and I met with the Premier's Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Nuttall. I am very thankful to him for giving us his time. That young mother has three little boys aged between five and one. She referred to one occasion when her husband was away, all three kids were sick at the one time and in the middle of the night, with no generator going, she was trying to clean up vomit and what have you with a torch. These are the circumstances under which these people live.

I say to members opposite that they should show some compassion and show some understanding of the cause. The Minister talks about \$93m. The former Goss Labor Government should never have corporatised the power industry in this State and instead got on with the job of putting power in some of these places. We should forget about the dollar cost; we should think of

the human cost. We should show some compassion and give these people in rural areas the quality of life that they deserve.

In relation to my own electorate, I congratulate Pacific Coal on its purchase of Arco's share of the Gordonstone mine. Yesterday, Pacific Coal purchased its 80% share. I salute Pacific Coal/Rio Tinto. It is fantastic news to know that that mine is going to be fully operational again by mid next year. The work force, which is currently 450, will be taken up to some 800 when they get into full swing with all of their other operations, such as Hail Creek, coming on stream, too. I certainly wish Pacific Coal, in joint venture with Mitsui and MLC, the best of luck with Gordonstone. It is going to be fantastic to again get that great mine working and making Emerald, which is located in my electorate and which is a dormitory town for those coalmines, again functional for the miners and their families.

I hope and trust that the unions show some understanding and sense in their negotiations with the new owners. At the end of the day, the issue is productivity and maintaining a livelihood for the miners and their families. If the operation is kept going, the shareholders will be happy—everybody is going to be happy. There will be jobs, and that is what it is all about.

I also want to refer to the corporatisation of the power industry. I touched on this matter a while ago. The other thing that the Labor Government signed off on—and in recent months members opposite have been very vocal in slamming it—is the National Competition Policy. I say to those members opposite to be very, very careful about how they manage this regime from here on in, because this side of the Chamber will not support it in any way, shape or form. We have seen exactly how the National Competition Policy has destroyed rural and remote Queensland, not only in the area of main roads, for which I was Minister, but also in the power industry. I believe that we have to see in this State the decorporatisation of these public utilities so that the Government can take control and give the people the benefits that they deserve to receive, whether it is power or whatever else.

Time expired.

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (2.35 p.m.): I thank the chairman of the committee and all the members for their participation in Estimates Committee E. I acknowledge the statement of reservations by the non-Government members of the committee. Last year, I filled a similar

role as a non-Government member on an Estimates committee with my now Cabinet colleagues the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and the Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs.

I encourage all members of this Chamber and the media to compare the two statements of reservations. The one that is now before this Chamber is little more than a petty, thinly disguised attempt to whitewash the dismal performance of the member for Toowoomba South—"Headlines" Horan—as a policy maker and administrator. If the Opposition's greatest concern is that this Government has funded many of "Headlines" Horan's unfunded commitments, then that is a sad indictment on the Opposition working within the Westminster system. So much for Opposition scrutiny!

I will point out the key elements of Health that those members opposite have never wanted to hear and never wanted to be made public. This Minister's commitments are fully funded and this Minister will not be burdening our health system with a Horan hospital tax. Our massive boost to mental health is fully funded. The ads for the extra 200 staff started appearing in black and white in today's Courier-Mail. Our massive capital works program is fully funded without a Horan hospital tax. Almost 10,000 jobs in construction and health service delivery are fully funded. More than \$18m has been allocated for extra elective surgery and other measures to cut public hospital waiting lists. An amount of \$14m in recurrent funding has been allocated for extra surgery, increasing to almost \$18m next year—not just "Headline" Horan's one-off, pre-election bucket of money. There has been a 3.2% increase to hospital recurrent budgets instead of a 0.1% increase across all of Queensland—a measly \$2m. We gave more than that to the Gold Coast Hospital and the Nambour Hospital to meet their needs. The former Government wanted to allocate \$2m across all of Queensland. It said that was all the increases that the hospitals should get and kept loading extra work onto them. Unlike "Headline" Horan's commitments, all of this Government's commitments are fully funded.

With regard to point 2.1 of the statement of reservations by non-Government members, clearly the member for Maroochydore is confused about the Standing Orders. The answers were provided well within the time limit specified. If she had simply picked up the phone and called the secretary of the committee, she would have been able to find out. I have checked that and it has been

proved. The member was either confused or too lazy to lift up the phone to call.

In relation to point 2.2, I stand by my comments about unfunded commitments, although I will concede—and I am quite happy to concede—that there was a mistake made on the issue of the unfunded commitment to provide a bus for the Charleville 60 and Better Program. In fact, this occurred at Charters Towers. I was aware of the one at Charters Towers; I had already made reference to it. However, when I saw another reference to Charleville in my briefing notes from the department, I thought that this was just another one. The former Minister had promised so many around the State, it was another one. I readily admit that that was a mistake. I am surprised that the previous Minister has failed to pass on his list of commitments and briefing material to his colleague and that she has had to rely so heavily on the information that I gathered in Opposition and as Minister.

I am glad that Opposition members again raised the matter of the Robina and Noosa hospitals, because this is one of the great all-time health scandals that "Headlines" Horan pulled off. Queensland now has a \$909m debt to buy public health services from private hospitals—not from public hospitals, but from private hospitals, one of which is a profit-making hospital—on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast for the next 20 years. That will lock in all the growth funds for the next 20 years. As to the appointment of Allen Allen and Hemsley, a check of the Hansard yet again shows the untruth of the Opposition member's statement. Judging by their overreaction, someone must be feeling a little sensitive on this issue. I wonder who it could be.

I beg to differ with paragraph 2.4, which states that the previous Minister always provided health service budgets in answer to my questions. There is no way that that happened. He provided some to the Dorothy Dixers, but the answers that he gave me were for the Budget of the year before. Those answers were one year out of date. He never gave me budgets for anything that was current. When we got the information, it was so out of date that it did not matter, because I already had it.

Paragraph 2.5 refers to capital works and, as I have done several times already, I will try to explain this very slowly and carefully to the member for Maroochydore. The changes and the allocations to projects in the 1998-99 year were for a range of reasons, including the fact

that they were running so late that the planning had not been done, as it had not been done in Nambour.

Time expired.

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (2.40 p.m.): I am very disappointed with the rubbery answers and lack of detail provided by the Health Minister in regard to the Budget. Today in Parliament, Health Minister Wendy Edmond has been caught out. She has been forced to admit that her claims of a 36,000 hidden elective surgery list are false and misleading. The Minister has artificially inflated elective surgery waiting lists by including patients with mental illnesses, skin rashes and diabetes. The fact is that many of those people do not require surgery and will never be placed on an elective surgery waiting list. I have also received advice from medical staff that many of those patients will wait less than 30 days to see a specialist.

Since releasing elective surgery figures in July this year, Ms Edmond has claimed that elective surgery waiting lists will increase under Labor. It is an absolute disgrace that Health Minister Edmond has used patients with diabetes and mental illnesses to increase elective surgery lists. Next the Health Minister will remove all of the mental health and medical patients from the waiting lists and will claim that they have had their operations! Ms Edmond must come clean and release the details of where the 36,000 patients are located, what specialities they include and how long they have been waiting.

After making claims about a hidden elective surgery waiting list, the Minister is now trying to claim that she does not have a departmental report to back up her own figures. How rubbery can she get? She has been asked to table it and she has refused. She cannot back up the statements that she makes in the media through her press releases.

To take another example—the district health reports—we do not know how much has been spent in all of the districts because the Minister has not had the accountability or the credibility to table that information in this Parliament. At no time did she respond to the committee's request for that information. She has treated it with contempt. No details have been released about the actual amounts that are being spent in all of the districts in Queensland. The Minister has refused to do that.

At the end of day, the people want to see this Minister getting on with the job of managing the health system, rather than

making excuses as to why waiting lists will get worse under her reign. During the Estimates hearing, the Health Minister said that she was pleased to see that waiting lists were going to grow. That is staggering. What sort of a Health Minister will say that he or she is pleased to see waiting lists about to grow? It is about time that the Minister set some targets and started planning, rather than looking for excuses as to why she is not putting any effort into improving the situation with waiting lists.

Under the coalition Government, Queensland went from having the worst waiting times in Australia to the best waiting times for Category 1 and Category 2 surgery, that is, urgent and semi-urgent surgery. The real number of people receiving surgery increased, with something like an extra 13,000 people receiving their operations. However, that does not mean that the task is over. Under the coalition, the Surgery on Time Program was to be expanded to further hospitals and we had targets for reducing waiting times for Category 3 surgery—non-urgent surgery. However, this Minister has not announced any targets. She has only made excuses and, further, she has rubbed salt into the wounds of the people who are waiting legitimately to get into hospitals, particularly for Category 3 surgery, by telling them that she is pleased to see that waiting lists are going to grow. That is just not acceptable to the Opposition.

The Beattie Government claimed that it was going to hurry up capital works, but we have seen a slowing down of capital works in the hospital redevelopment program. Approximately \$40m less is being spent in the Brisbane area alone. Vindictiveness came to the fore when the Government slashed about \$10m from this year's capital works programs on the Sunshine Coast. In Cairns—and this is interesting—the Minister claimed that there was a \$17.9m increase in funding for the Cairns Base Hospital redevelopment, but strangely enough she forgot to include that in the Budget papers under the total estimated cost of the redevelopment, which was increased by only \$4.6m. That was the only hospital redevelopment program in the capital works list where the Minister did not outline the full cost of the project. In fact, according to the document, the funding was only increased by about \$4.5m. That is another example that shows that the Minister is not up to the task. She cannot get it right on capital works. She is slowing down redevelopment programs in Brisbane and telling the people that she is pleased that they will have to wait longer for surgery.

Turning to the situation with the Robina and Noosa hospitals, one would think that an organisation such as the Mater Hospital, which is working under contract to Queensland Health, must have been doing something right because it is exactly the same situation: they have been delivering quality health care with public hospital beds to the public, but through a non-Government provider. That is what we had intended with the Noosa and Robina hospitals.

Time expired.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (2.47 p.m.): I will say one thing about the member for Maroochydore: she is the only one capable of making the member for Toowoomba South look good. I will pick up on a couple of things that the honourable member said. She said that the Minister had been caught out. My attention has been drawn to the Gold Coast Sun of Wednesday, 14 October, and the headline "Caught Out". What has been caught out? The fact that no funds were committed to the Robina hospital! The member for Maroochydore also said that there was going to be a slowdown on the Sunshine Coast. Where has she been for the last five years? Under the coalition, the Nambour Hospital was underfunded consistently and it had some of the worst waiting lists, yet the Noosa hospital is coming on stream with no recurrent funding. In actual fact, the shortfall for that hospital runs to several hundreds of millions of dollars over 20 years. Almost \$900m worth of commitments were not funded. In fact, according to one report, those two hospitals alone will account for all of the growth funding. The next time that coalition members go to an election and want to promise something, they should remember that \$900m worth of their promises are sitting out there. They have to get their heads around that if they want to get around waiting lists.

The member for Toowoomba South did not mention that his electorate had some of the worst waiting lists in the State, and that was when he was the Health Minister! If he could not fix it when he was the Health Minister, how will he get on now that there is a bit of equity in the system? Even when he was the Health Minister, the member could not get it right for his own hospitals.

Something that is near and dear to my heart on the subject of underfunding is the Logan Hospital. According to the Budget figures provided under the coalition, Stage 4 of the Logan Hospital is way behind schedule. That is a disgrace.

Mr Robertson interjected.

Mr MICKEL: I know that the member for Sunnybank thinks it is a disgrace, too, because many of his constituents use that hospital. It was not just the Logan Hospital that was left behind; the whole Logan/Beaudesert area has been left behind. I speak up for the member for Beaudesert, because I am very confident that he is feeling ashamed of the fact that the Beaudesert hospital was left way behind in the coalition's Capital Works Program. I hope that the Minister is listening, because the people of Logan want to see some action on the Logan Hospital. We want to see exactly the same standard of hospital as the one that I very proudly opened in Toowoomba.

Mrs Edmond interjected.

Mr MICKEL: I want not only one car park, but transport access similar to what they have in Toowoomba. It was a very great pleasure to open that hospital with the member for Toowoomba South. I think he did a good job on that hospital, even if he did not do a good job on the waiting lists.

I express my disappointment at the fact that there is \$200m worth of unfunded commitments from the election. No funds have been provided for the Jimboomba community health centre. Time and again the coalition promised that, but no funds were provided.

I remember also that before the 1995 election the member for Toowoomba South and the member for Albert were depicted in a photo with the new Coomera hospital. The Coomera hospital consisted of nothing more than a shovel and a bit of dirt! In common with the shovel, the hospital has never been seen since.

Mrs Edmond: It sounds like the Jimboomba health centre.

Mr MICKEL: It may sound like the Jimboomba health centre.

In Logan we want decent, funded health services. So many promises have been made by the coalition. As I said, it gave \$200m worth of unfunded commitments. My good friend the member for Toowoomba South, who very kindly put on the Carnival of Flowers for me when I was up there, had a horrible trait: he was "Dr Yes" when it came to anybody who wanted a commitment, but he provided no funds. He cannot explain that away.

A few of the facilities that were promised but which were completely unfunded were: the community health centre for Bribie Island; the community health centre for Coomera—no funds; the medical school in Townsville, in respect of which \$10m was missing; the bone

marrow transplantation unit for Townsville, in respect of which \$680,000 was missing; the private hospital public patient contract for Crows Nest was to cost a quarter of a million dollars, but no funds were available. The same thing applies with respect to the quarter of a million dollars promised for Killarney. \$3.2m is missing for the Cairns Base Hospital redevelopment. In respect of education facilities in Cairns, almost \$1.8m worth of commitments were unfunded.

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.53 p.m.): The most amazing feature of this Estimates process has been the admission by the Health Minister that she is pleased that waiting lists will go up. In two and a quarter years under the previous coalition Government we did the amazing: we took the waiting lists in Queensland from being the worst in Australia to being the best.

There was absolutely no data, information or planning. We put in place a plan and funded it and we performed some 13,000 extra operations in two years. We took Category 1 from having 49% long waits, the worst in Australia, to less than 5%, which was the target that we set. Before we left Government, we took Category 2 from having some 44% long waits, the worst in Australia, down to 9% or 10%, and we were on track to meet our 5% target in the following month.

What have we seen from this embattled Health Minister? All we have seen her do is stand up and say, "I am pleased that waiting lists are going to go up." Already we have seen the fraud in relation to the so-called 36,000 people on the outpatients list. Many of those people are simply people with mental health problems or medical problems such as skin rashes and so forth who want to see a doctor as an outpatient. That has nothing to do with Surgery on Time.

One of the great achievements of this coalition Government in its two and a quarter years was the fact that it found \$1.2 billion to fund the unfunded capital works programs of Queensland Health. When we left Government, some 125 projects across the length and breadth of this State, from school community health centres to major hospitals, such as the RBH and the PA, were under way. Half of those projects would never have started. The member for Logan whinged and complained about the Logan Hospital. Its fourth stage was completed only because the former coalition Government found the money

to make that happen. That is the only reason it is there.

One of the most disgraceful things we have witnessed since the change of Government has been the attempt by the minority Beattie Labor Government to try to stop the Robina and Noosa Hospitals. For some reason they think that the people in the two fastest growing areas of Queensland—the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast—do not deserve an extra hospital. They have some sort of philosophical problem with putting in place a system that is exactly the same as that at the Mater at South Brisbane, where we have the Mater Children's, the Mater Mothers and the Mater Public all operating on a system whereby the Government provides money to the Sisters of Mercy to provide free public hospital systems. The Government is opposed to this system. We will be telling everyone on the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast that the Labor Government did its best to stop that. Fortunately, it could not do so.

It is a change to see a Health Minister who is the laughing stock of Queensland Health and the people of Queensland. In the Budget Speech, \$17.9m was promised for the Cairns Base Hospital. What was in the Budget papers? Some \$4.65m! We have already seen a backflip by the Health Minister, who promised in a major speech before the election that no co-location would go ahead at RBH, PA and Prince Charles.

Mrs EDMOND: I rise to a point of order. That is totally untrue. I never, ever said that. The member knows that. He has heard speeches in which I have said that our policy supports co-location.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Dr Clark): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr HORAN: Even the \$200m list that she was forced to put forward—the so-called unfunded projects—was all rubbish. All that is mentioned is growth funds. New initiatives are not mentioned. None of those things are mentioned. Conveniently, the only thing referred to is the growth funds. The Minister is a total fraud. When we added up the list, it came to \$22m, and all of that is a load of rubbish.

What we have seen in health in Queensland since the embattled Health Minister has taken over has been an absolute disaster. What a tragedy for a system that was fixed up and professionalised so that it met its budgets, activity levels, turned the waiting lists around and gave people confidence in the system! Firstly, we saw the fiasco at Maryborough, where the Health Minister was

led by the nose by the bureaucrats—a weak embattled Health Minister who cannot do anything by herself—and turned her back on all of the promises made to the people at Maryborough. We need a Health Minister in this State with a bit of strength. We need a Health Minister who can see that budgets are met and that waiting lists are fixed, not a Health Minister who will turn poor old Maryborough into a fiasco and who promised money at Cairns but did not even have the money in the budget. The real expose today was that there was no report on the 36,000 people in outpatients.

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee F

Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Dr Clark): Order! The question is—

"That the report of Estimates Committee F be adopted."

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (2.56 p.m.): As Chairman of Estimates Committee F, I take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members for their contributions during the Estimates committee process. In particular, I thank the committee secretariat staff for their professional advice and assistance, particularly during the preparation of the report. Their work certainly paved the way for a smooth operation of the committee and also, as I have noted, the preparation of the report. I make particular mention of research director Ms Megan Collins and also Veronica Rogers and Mandy Elcome. I thank also Hansard and other parliamentary staff for their professional assistance on the day of the hearing.

With respect to the two portfolios within Estimates Committee F, which were Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and Education, I simply note at the outset that it was pleasing to see significant increases in budgets for both portfolios. With respect to Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, that increase was in the order of 18%. With respect to Education, the increase was in the order of 5% on the 1997-98 Estimates.

There was one significant area of disappointment in relation to this Estimates committee, and that was the content of the statement of reservations provided by the member for Clayfield, which in my view has unduly politicised the committee's report. After asserting in his statement of reservations that

the Minister had politicised the process, the member then went on to make probably the most political statement of all the statements of reservations attached to committee reports in this year's Estimates process.

I wish to make a few comments on some of the more significant issues arising from the Industrial Relations portfolio in particular. In relation to employment initiatives, it is very clear that the Budget has the issue of job creation as its central platform. The Premier and the Minister for Employment have stated on a number of occasions that they are both obsessed about the issue of job creation, and it is pleasing to see such a heavy emphasis on job creation initiatives in this Budget. For example, \$283m will go towards facilitating the creation of 24,500 additional apprenticeships, traineeships and job placements. Also of significance is the requirement that 10% of the employment on Government capital works projects be allocated to apprentices.

I just want to comment briefly on some of the consultation currently taking place within the community on job creation. I participated in an employment forum recently at the Kedron-Wavell Services Club, which was attended by over 50 local businesspeople and representatives from training organisations and also community organisations. I was most encouraged by the active participation of the community representatives in that forum. The discussion focused heavily on identifying barriers to employment creation and also identifying employment opportunities within our region. The Minister and his department are to be congratulated on initiating that consultative forum, and hopefully it will be a feature which will continue into the future.

The other issue I might touch on arising from the Budget papers on the subject of industrial relations is in relation to the reform of the industrial relations system, an area which is dear to my heart given my previous life as an industrial advocate for the Electrical Trades Union. It is important, in my view, that we move from an industrial relations system that is currently based on individual contracts, on individual conflict pitting worker against worker and worker against employer in an unequal bargaining situation. We must move to a situation in which there is more fairness and equity. During recent debates in this Parliament, I was disappointed that we were not successful in abolishing QWAs. I hope that one day this Parliament takes that significant step to restore some proper balance to the power relationships that exist between employers and employees.

The other area that I want to comment on in relation to industrial relations reform is the current provisions relating to section 293, or the old section 45 of the Act, which allow for predatory behaviour both by trade unions and employers in demarking coverage of union members to a particular union. I have strong views on this particular provision in the legislation as I have had direct experience with its consequences. In my view, it should be an area of significant debate and hopefully significant amendment in any future industrial relations legislation.

The other issue that I will make brief mention of is—

Time expired.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (3.01 p.m.): At the outset, I also place on record my appreciation to the member for Nudgee for his chairmanship of this particular committee and also the secretariat for the work that it did in putting together the final report. The Opposition has put in a dissenting report. I think the issues that were canvassed in the report are of general concern to interested groups within education itself. Basically, as I have said on many occasions before, this is the coalition's Education budget with some additional moneys in some key areas—and we have acknowledged that—where they are needed most.

As I said before, we do have some concerns in terms of the amounts of money that have been taken out of the local area networks, whether or not the additional funds for the airconditioning—the extended zone—will be sufficient over the longer term, what will happen to the discretionary grants now that the Leading Schools program has been abolished, and whether or not there is enough there for the longer term as well, and also the issue of funding for primary schools and preschools. I also note that other interest groups have raised the latter issue with the Minister and his department on a number of occasions and they have attempted to give those groups replies. Many of the answers have been contradictory, circulatory and not altogether believable, I might say, in terms of trying to satisfy their particular concerns.

I understand that some three weeks ago the QCPCA put to Education Queensland or the Minister's office a range of questions that it would like answered on primary school funding. It has yet to receive a reply, despite even prompting the department for an answer about a week ago. I would be very interested to see that request for further information answered as soon as possible.

Mr Wells: You could also put in an FOI application.

Mr QUINN: The QCPCA could also put in an FOI application, along with the 30 or 40 other people who put in applications to Education Queensland every month.

I would also like to canvass the issue of the report today by the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and the graphs it contains about the levels of literacy and numeracy within our schools. I notice a great deal of play has been made about the gap between the cohorts and the various groups within the education scene, such as children from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids, boys versus girls and the need to put in place programs to narrow the gap. I agree with that. I think that that is a worthwhile cause and one that we should be looking at.

However, I do point out that Education Queensland has been looking at these issues over a number of years, along with every other State Government and Education Department in Australia, and has yet to find answers to these particular problems. I suspect that this is a problem that not only Australian systems but also other systems around the world are trying to grapple with. There are some problems in trying to come to grips with these particular issues. I do take heart from the fact that, overall, standards are rising within the systems both State and non-State, and that is clearly evident in the report. The challenge from now on will be to make sure that, in fact, these standards keep rising and that we do not plateau off or fall away.

One of the key issues there will be the ongoing commitment to provide additional funds for education over the next couple of years. I note with a great deal of delight that, when the coalition was in Government, for the first time ever, funding for education in Queensland passed the national average. I think that was a particularly important milestone in terms of education funding in Queensland. We need to be ever vigilant that it never slips below that average from now. We must make sure that additional funds keep flowing into the system and that they are well targeted and well used. It is not much use having the additional funds if the policy settings are not right and the money is frittered away and wasted. We always have to make sure that we focus on achieving better outcomes for kids, we improve our educational system and we do leave a lasting legacy to our children. This is one of the very few areas in which Governments can make an important

difference in the longer term in terms of educational outcomes, expectations for further life, social cohesion and a whole range of areas in which education is so important.

As I said before, the coalition supports the budget, with some reservations, and I have instanced those. No doubt they will be areas of some debate in future, particularly amongst members in this Chamber, if not amongst the various interest groups.

Time expired.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (3.06 p.m.): I firstly wish to express my support of the Budget Estimates process. This is an essential accountability tool and one that the Parliament must have in order to restore and retain public confidence in the Parliament. In my former life as the Assistant Director of the Queensland Council of Social Service, I can recall sitting in on a number of Budget Estimates hearings. Many expenditure items were revealed that the public would not normally hear about. I certainly think it is important that, in the words of one of my infamous Labor colleagues or new Labor recruits, "We have to keep us bastards honest", and I think the Estimates process performs a vital role there. I also thank the committee support staff for its great work.

As I sat on Budget Estimates Committee F, I can recall feeling both greatly encouraged and greatly disturbed—greatly encouraged to hear more about the responsible Budget initiatives that our Government has introduced in the key portfolio areas and greatly disturbed to hear about some of the extravagant spending of the former coalition Government. On the encouraging side, I am pleased to be part of a Government that is tackling unemployment head on, rather than relying solely on an unpredictable, self-serving market to deliver jobs.

I was encouraged to hear the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations report on much-needed employment initiatives. These include the establishment of a Workplace Strategies Unit to provide labour market research to support policy on employment growth, job security and related areas. \$104m has been allocated to job placements and has been budgeted for over a four-year period to achieve 9,000 job placements through the Community Jobs Plan and Community Employment Assistance Plan.

We have heard a lot about our initiatives in regard to apprenticeships and traineeships. \$15m over three years has been allocated to provide \$2,000 cash bonus incentives to

private sector employers or group training schemes to employ apprentices in industries suffering skill shortages. In addition, \$144m will be provided for public sector apprenticeships and traineeships. I will certainly be working hard to make sure that people in my area benefit from these initiatives. Despite ongoing criticism from members on the other side of the House, we are already getting on with the job.

I am also delighted that \$4m has been allocated to my home turf for the Construction Training Centre at Salisbury to complete road work and administration facilities. This will have the centre fully operational very shortly. I grew up in Salisbury, near the centre, and I know first-hand the difficulties that people had when it was the site of the Evans Deakin engineering works. Many of my friends' fathers lost their jobs during the 1970s and early 1980s, and it is both ironic and very positive that this site is now being used as a construction skill centre.

Estimates Committee F heard that, in the Education portfolio, \$40m will be spent on addressing numeracy and literacy in schools, that an additional \$2.5m has been allocated to behaviour management and that 685 additional teachers would be employed this year. These are all positive initiatives to secure the futures of our children.

I referred earlier to some of the disturbing things that I heard during the hearing for Estimates Committee F, firstly in regard to the training initiatives of the former coalition Government. The Minister, Mr Braddy, revealed that, far from 1997 being the Year of Training, 1997 was more like the year of training those already in training or those already in jobs. The Minister noted that far too much money was spent on paper qualifications for existing workers and not on unemployed people or new workers. As at 30 June 1998, 2,317 of the 2,717 trainees employed in the State Government were existing workers who were converted to trainees.

The previous Government abolished many employment programs, totalling in excess of \$16m. Those programs included many that were providing great support to young people, such as the YES program, a network of youth employment coordinators around the State, the Self-Employment Venture Scheme, the local employment and enterprise facilitation project and others. This \$16m cut, combined with the Howard Government's savage cut of \$1.8 billion from labour market programs, has meant that young unemployed people particularly have

had little hope of getting work. In addition, we heard that the previous Government extensively downsized the department, with in excess of 500 voluntary early redundancies, totalling more than \$21.5m. There was a range of excesses there. I do not think the former Minister has much to be proud of.

In relation to Education, things were a little better. There was some excessive spending in the Leading Schools program, lots of conference money and other things and, overall, not a great deal to be proud of. Our Government will not be extravagant. We are committed to our jobs target and we are on track to achieve it.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (3.11 p.m.): It is a pleasure to participate in this debate, because it gives me the opportunity to highlight some of the deficiencies contained within the Estimates that we are debating and to rebut some of the more scurrilous comments made by members opposite.

I admit that my report of reservations is somewhat political, as was the performance of the Minister at the Estimates committee hearing. I think the Estimates committee process has been the subject of gross abuse by this Government. It has been politicised right across the departments. Rather than seeking to inform the Parliament and the public of the detail of its expenditure estimates, the Government has politicised the process—for example, delving into consultancies—as it undoubtedly will at next year's Estimates committee hearings. We will then see how this Government's record compares with that of others.

The Government politicised the process. It expects us to just sit here and cop it, but I will respond accordingly. I said that the Minister lacked knowledge. That is true. He sat there and could not tell us what his Government's employment targets were. He could not assure us about the 5% unemployment target. I am simply stating the facts. I do not want to be personal or nasty. I am just disappointed that the Minister could not tell us what the Government's employment targets were.

One of the major aspects of my probing into the Government's Estimates related to how they protect the jobs of TAFE staff. I asked questions in relation to job security and the reform and restructure of TAFE. The Minister assured us that everything was okay. He was not prepared to accept my suggestion to him that TAFE was in trouble. I will quote from page 13 of the most recent edition of the State Public Services Federation Queensland newsletter, which sets out its assessment of

the Minister's budget. Let us see if it differs greatly from my own. It states—

"The budget has also confirmed the Government's decision to 'maintain the level of non-user choice competitive funding at January 1998 levels for a three-year period'.

The Union wrote to the Department seeking clarification of a number of parts of the TAFE budget. The responses from the Department showed that despite the increased funding, more jobs would be lost this financial year and total student enrolments in TAFE had not increased on the earlier estimates."

There we have it. The SPSFQ backs up what I said at the Estimates committee hearing and outside of this place. Jobs are at risk; enrolments are down but more money is being given to TAFE. Is that an efficient use of moneys? I would suggest not. If those opposite call that politicisation, then I stand by it and I will continue to do it. Those opposite talk about speaking the truth; I have been backed up by the SPSFQ, which for once has done the decent thing and gone on the record and told the truth.

If I talk about the Government depriving Dalby and Noosa, which are in two coalition electorates, of the colleges that were funded in the coalition's Estimates, am I being political? I am simply stating a fact. How convenient that two facilities which are very much needed within those electorates have been taken out of the Minister's budget.

Am I being political if I defend myself against the scurrilous, unsubstantiated charge that I destroyed the Long report, when the Minister knows that prior to the Estimates his director-general physically saw it and handled it and other people on the 12th floor physically saw it and handled it and when there was a copy of the report in his department, in one of his regional offices? I sent it to one individual, who gave it to that particular office prior to the election. We have a Minister who seeks to make things up. I defend myself. On that basis, I am said to have been politicising these issues.

Mr BRADY: Madam Temporary Chairman, I rise to a point of order. I find it offensive and untrue that I am a Minister who "seeks to make things up". I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SANTORO: Those comments are withdrawn. Is it being political to state that the agricultural colleges were deprived of \$6m, despite the fact that those new dormitories are

needed? I totally stand by the statements that I made. Not only do I stand by them; I will widely circulate them and let the real judge, the public, decide whether it is the Minister's performance or my performance that is credible.

We are proud of our training achievements. We had a record number of trainees and apprentices when I was Minister and when the coalition was in Government. This Minister, through TAFE, will be training fewer students. Unfortunately for them, they will be much worse off as a result of this Minister's lack of effort, lack of attention to detail and lack of intelligence.

Time expired.

Madam TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Dr Clark): Order! Before I call the member for Ferny Grove, I remind all members that, whilst they may be provoked, parliamentary language should be used and care should be taken when making comments.

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (3.17 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in this debate on the report of Estimates Committee F. This is a beautiful Beattie Budget. We will see more of that over the remaining months of this financial year and it will be repeated in years two and three of this term and in subsequent terms of the Beattie Government. This has been the first occasion on which I have had the opportunity to experience the Estimates committee process, and it was quite an eye opener.

I express my appreciation to the two Ministers who so excellently reported to the committee on the expenditure allocated to their portfolio areas. I commend the departmental officers on the work they did and the support they provided for the benefit of the committee, or those of the committee members who were willing to listen rather than talk at the committee table—those who actually wanted to learn more about what the Government proposes to do for Queensland in the areas of education, training and jobs, as opposed to those who are preoccupied with defending their sensitivities in regard to their failure of the people of Queensland when they were in charge of certain portfolio areas in the recent past.

I wish to commend the Government on a couple of key areas within the portfolios of Industrial Relations and Education. I will then return to a key area of concern to me. I commend the Government on the work that it sets out to do in relation to workplace health and safety. Only people such as I and others on this side of the Chamber, who know what it

is like to work in industry, know how important it is to defend and promote workplace health and safety. We are delighted to be providing the funds for another 15 workplace health and safety officers throughout Queensland.

I am also delighted that we are going to restore the TAFE system to the central training provider status that it had in the past but which was not observed by the coalition. We are now going to restore TAFE to that central role, and we are going to build the sort of alliances that are needed between it and industry to deliver real on-the-job training for the workers who need jobs here in Queensland. That brings me to the apprenticeship and traineeship system, for which we are also going to lift the funding, and the 10% rule for trainees on Government projects.

As to education, I commend the Government for its focus on behaviour management control within the schooling system; the funding for students with disabilities and learning difficulties; the 685 increase in teacher numbers; and the abolition of the Leading Schools program, which was the greatest threat to the key principle of any Labor Government, that is, equity within the education system. Praise be to the Labor Government for abolishing that iniquitous system!

I turn now to the Salisbury skills centre, which has been the subject of some adverse comment by members opposite. That excellent training skills centre in the suburb of Salisbury is a joint venture between TAFE and industry. Its board was appointed in 1994-95 with a manager, and it involves a bipartite relationship between a number of key representatives from industry and TAFE. In that centre, which is receiving \$4m from this budget, a number of brilliant training initiatives are being undertaken, and they deserve the bipartisan support of all members in this place. I commend the Government's initiative in assisting the funding of that centre. Plant operator trainees and scaffolders are being trained there.

Mr Purcell: Builders labourers.

Mr WILSON: And builders labourers. Those people are being trained in many trades and related skills. That centre has been commended by industry, and companies such as Thiess, Hollands, Barclay Mowlem, McIlwains, the Abbey group, Civil & Civic, Bechtel and Concrete Constructions have contributed \$170,000 to developing the infrastructure associated with that skills centre.

Time expired.

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—ONP) (3.22 p.m.): Firstly, I thank the member for Nudgee for the way in which he chaired our Estimates committee. My remarks relate to the Ministerial Portfolio Statements issued by the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations but will be confined to a brief consideration of TAFE Queensland. I am grateful to be the only One Nation member invited to be on the Estimates committees. I hope that the member for Broadwater notes that statement after the remarks that he made yesterday. I have to admit that during the Training debate I felt like a junior flyweight between two heavies. However, I am happy to say that I still have two intact ears.

As a newcomer to this Assembly, and after some 15 years of writing and reviewing national and state budgets for developing Asian and Pacific countries, I am surprised and disappointed by the presentation of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. The funding agencies with which I am accustomed to working, including the IMF, would not accept such documents because of their lack of clarity and clear definition. I have been told that the Federal statements are worse, but that is of little consolation.

I am gratified that a 10-point plan for TAFE is being implemented, but I am a little curious about the \$12m that this Government is providing to assist in the restructuring so that TAFE can become more competitive in the provision of vocational education and training by improving internal operations and management. This is, after all, the age of the National Competition Policy, is it not? The previous Minister is to be congratulated on throwing vocational training and the provision of accredited courses open to private providers, but in so doing he has correctly created the need to convert a business structure shaped like a rectangle into a lean and mean pyramid.

The performance indicators are presented in an unusual manner but are nevertheless interesting. In 1997-98, 49% of staff were involved in administration-type activities and 51% were teaching related. In 1998-99, it is predicted that this ratio will improve to 45% administration and 55% teaching. However, it must be remembered that TAFE has a separate sales and promotion budget of \$50m. I have spoken to some private providers, and it appears that their administration and sales costs total 20% of their expenses. My own college in Laos—with some 900 private fee-paying students—allocates 10% of expenses to administration and sales.

The TAFE Queensland cost per student contact hour is \$10.16 for non-competitive courses. This includes an on-cost of \$2.87, or 39%. I understand that some private providers are charging about the same on-cost percentage, but I must say that that surprises me, as from my own experience that is low, and my college operates from a very modest structure. Within the agricultural consulting industry the on-cost on salaries accepted by the Federal Government after a long inquiry is 90%, or a factor of 1.9, and within large accounting firms it is up to 200% for senior partners. This low gross profit margin becomes more understandable when TAFE admits to a 35% loss of revenue forgone due to TAFE's concessional policy.

TAFE consumes taxpayers' dollars in the hope that non-taxpayers will pay tax by being employed, or existing taxpayers will pay more tax by being employed in a more rewarding position. No-one would disagree with that general philosophy. But how do we make it more revenue positive? TAFE teachers ideally teach for 21 hours a week and are expected to spend 11 additional hours in lecture preparation, that is, 32 hours a week. Unlike similar institutions in other countries, TAFE does not provide courses on a three-shifts-a-day basis and, in general, TAFE is closed to students for around 12 weeks a year. Additionally, I know of courses being provided for apprentices in the sugar industry in the middle of the crushing season and for trainees in the beef industry in the middle of the mustering season. Thus I suggest that, while we have TAFE facilities that are the envy of most countries, those facilities are severely underutilised, as are some very good teachers. Solutions could include getting closer to industry, combining with private providers and leasing them time in underutilised facilities—

Time expired.

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (3.27 p.m.): Firstly, I thank the honourable member for Nudgee, the members of the committee and the staff of the committee for their superb work in respect of these Estimates. This is a great Education budget of \$3.46 billion. That is close enough to \$3,500m. This is a record budget. It is a budget in which the spending is above the national average, and it is the highest figure that has ever been spent on education in a single year in this jurisdiction.

This is a budget that has a number of significant features. It has an additional \$35m over four years for our Education for All program to provide for those with special

needs. It is a budget of approximately an additional \$5m each year for literacy and numeracy. It is a budget of an additional \$5m per year for behaviour management. It is a budget that considerably enhances the capital works program above the levels that they would have otherwise been. It is a budget that will do a great deal for education in this State.

There is a dissenting report to the committee's report, and I would like to refer to it briefly. I thank the honourable member for Merrimac for his witty and erudite remarks earlier and the interesting paradoxes with which he presented us on the way through—like "more is less", "consultation is secrecy" and "transparency is opacity".

The honourable member for Merrimac was trying in his own witty and erudite way to persuade people that a record budget was, in fact, a budget of savage cuts. The fact that he managed to engage the Courier-Mail in that joke just shows what good humoured and fun-loving people they are there. The truth of the matter is that there were no cuts to any program in the Education Department. The honourable member for Merrimac has referred to the local area network service. \$13m is what we believe we will spend if we pay the bills as the work gets done as fast as we can get the work done. If we can get the work done faster than that, then we will pay more bills. If we get the work done less quickly, we will pay fewer bills. It as simple as that. That was not a cut.

With respect to airconditioning, the member for Merrimac says that the Cooler Schools program will be delivered at a lesser cost per school than it was under the Government of his complexion. The dissenting report states that, if one adds up the funds allocated to all the schools and divides that figure by the number of the schools, one will find that the average cost is much less than the average funds that we have allocated for doing the rest of the schools. That is interesting arithmetic, but it neglects the considerable start-up costs for the airconditioning program. If one subtracts the start-up costs, takes into account the schools that we will be airconditioning in the new zone where there are fewer centres of major population concentration and divides by the right number, one will find that we have approximately the correct amount. I say to the honourable member for Merrimac and to honourable members generally that we will get that program going as fast as we can. If it costs a little more or a little less, we will pay those bills. We promise that we will pay the bills, because we have a budget for the bills that we pay.

The honourable member for Merrimac said in his dissenting report that there were cuts to the primary sector. That is not exactly true. \$26m was parked in the primary schools budget, but that \$26m came from the works budget in the previous year. That \$26m was all parked in there and it is now back in the works budget. It is still dedicated for Queensland schools. There is no less money in the primary sector. The ratios will remain the same in Years 1, 2, and 3. We will still have 25 students for one teacher, except that large numbers of additional people also will be making their appearance in the classroom as a result of our behaviour management programs, literacy and numeracy programs and the Education for All initiatives.

This is a spectacularly good Education budget. I am concerned that the members of the Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens are awaiting a response. They are being advised that they will be fully briefed next week and they will have all their questions answered.

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (3.32 p.m.): Today is the celebration of my 15 years in Parliament. In those 15 years, one of the most delightful things has been the building of at least 20 schools in my electorate. My electorate originally started in Springwood and came down through Woodridge/Kingston to Beaudesert. It has been an area of amazing growth. One of the delights has been to watch the number of schools that have developed in that area. However, currently we are fighting for a particular high school, that is, Jimboomba high school. I was disappointed to see that, in the last Estimates, Jimboomba high school had not been catered for.

We watched the residential development of Kingston grow until the Kingston State High School had over 2,000 students. We watched that residential development extend through Marsden to Browns Plains and Park Ridge. The growth of that development was easy to predict. However, I have been disappointed that until 1990 it was quite obvious that a high school at Jimboomba would be necessary, not only to cater for the residential development that was coming south but also to take the pressure off the Beaudesert State High School, which has now hit 1,600 students. That is a very small rural school with very limited area. It is not possible to maintain a population of 1,600 students at that school.

In 1990 when the ALP came to office, the Government made a very significant decision. The Minister, David Hamill, who also today celebrates 15 years in Parliament, took

Education Department planning branch advice and decided to move the high school from Jimboomba across to a new area called Flagstone Creek, which is south of Greenbank and where, in the future, there will certainly be significant development. I disagreed with that decision of the Education Department planning branch and the Minister, David Hamill, who said at that time that he could not guarantee the growth of Jimboomba. Anyone who has ever been through Jimboomba would know that originally it was a hotel and a dance hall. Now, over 25,000 people live at Jimboomba. It is much, much larger than Beaudesert. We can expect the residential development to continue to extend from Park Ridge towards the south and towards Beaudesert. That growth will naturally come. It does not matter what sort of industries are put at Beaudesert and Jimboomba; the growth will come there in the same way that it will come to Beenleigh. As the main roads follow the Mount Lindesay Highway and the south-east motorway, that is where the growth will be.

The difficulty of moving the high school site from Jimboomba across to Flagstone Creek is that we have to wait for Flagstone Creek to develop a population that is large enough for a high school to be viable. The Camira bypass has not gone ahead and the area behind the military camp at Greenbank does not have developed main roads, thus we do not have the growth at Flagstone Creek to cater for a high school. The ALP and the Education Department moved the site across to Flagstone Creek, an area that does not have the growth in population needed for a high school. As a result, we now have the unbelievable situation of Beaudesert having over 1,600 students in a most limited area of land and we are unable to provide relief in the northern area.

The Education Department planning branch has been adamant that it will not build a high school at Jimboomba. However, the facilities branch has decided to buy land at Jimboomba and get ready for a high school. Now we have a split between the planning branch and the facilities branch. Unfortunately, the planning branch is supported by the ALP. The Education Department is saying to Jimboomba students that they must travel north to Park Ridge, while saying to students in Canungra that they must travel across to the Gold Coast. There is no way that students in Canungra and Jimboomba, who have always been linked to Beaudesert, want to travel to the Gold Coast or to Park Ridge. The coalition decided that those students would be allowed to attend the Beaudesert State High School

and that we would not say to those students that they must move back to the Marsden, Loganlea and Kingston schools—schools that have decreased in size because they have been left in a vacuum.

The Beaudesert State High School will continue to grow. There is massive growth in the number of Year 10s and Year 11s. The numbers will soon swell because of a very high retention rate. The Year 10 students will be retained and go into Year 11. As a result, the Beaudesert State High School will become larger and larger. I now receive from the planning branch the theory that large high schools are good and necessary and that unless a school has a large number of students that school will not have a top drama department and a top arts department. I probably pushed that theory when I ran a school of 2,000 students. The Education Department must consider the issue.

Time expired.

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (3.38 p.m.): I am pleased to report that the 1998-99 budget for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations provides hard evidence that the Beattie Labor Government is serious about employment and the creation of jobs. Record expenditure of \$721m represents an overall increase of 4.8%. That reflects our commitment to jobs and our intention of creating an economic environment that promotes growth and generates sustainable jobs. All activities within my portfolio are ultimately related to the need to create job opportunities for Queenslanders. We are doing what our predecessors failed to do by addressing unemployment, the State skills shortages and job security with a range of positive initiatives designed to get Queenslanders working again.

The \$283m four-year Breaking the Unemployment Cycle package will create more than 24,500 apprenticeship, traineeship and job placement opportunities throughout the State. Specifically, the Budget provides \$109m to create 9,000 job placements for the long-term unemployed, including disadvantaged youth, and mature-aged and indigenous people to work on essential public and community works. This Government believes it has the responsibility as an employer to give young people the opportunity to gain work experience and on-the-job training. We will set an example for the private sector and the community by attacking unemployment at all levels through a \$48m budget allocation in a full year.

This funding will create 6,500 apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities in Government departments, local governments and statutory authorities. The private sector can also play its part. With support from the Government, up to 9,000 additional apprenticeships and traineeships will be created. These include 7,500 apprenticeships and traineeships in industries with skill shortages or in regions with poor employment prospects. A \$2,000 cash bonus will be offered to employers or group training schemes that employ additional apprentices in skills shortage areas such as tourism, building and construction and the metals and engineering industries. Significantly for the building and construction industry, we are also establishing a \$5.4m training fund, which is expected to create up to 1,000 additional apprentices a year.

This portfolio has a key role to play in developing the economy and promoting sustainable employment and training. Specifically, our initiatives will produce a better educated, highly skilled and more flexible work force, consolidate TAFE as a dynamic and viable public provider of vocational education and training, attain a fair and balanced industrial relations system, and promote safer and healthier workplaces. We will also review the existing industrial relations legislation and promote new legislation. Our aim is to establish an industrial relations system that is fair and equitable. It will be based on cooperation and consultation that improves economic competitiveness, fosters job growth and enhances job security.

The Beattie Labor Government inherited a TAFE system in crisis. Funding had been slashed to such an extent that TAFE was brought almost to the brink of ruin. We will get on with the job of addressing the urgent funding and organisational needs that will restore TAFE to its pre-eminent role in Queensland's training market. As part of our 10-point plan for TAFE Queensland, we will maintain competitive funding at January 1998 levels. A \$10m adjustment has been made to the TAFE program to meet this commitment. Further funding of \$12m will also be available to assist TAFE Queensland to become more competitive in the training market. It is certainly true that we cannot make all the improvements that we need to make to TAFE in our first 12 months in office because of what had been done to it in the previous two and a half years by our predecessors in Government. However, this is a very good start.

Finally, \$1m will be provided for the employment of an additional 15 workplace

health and safety inspectors to service the building and construction industry. This will ensure a greater level of compliance within the industry, particularly in regional Queensland. The Beattie Labor Government will deliver on its election promises to reduce unemployment and alleviate the State's critical skills shortages. The 1998-99 Budget provides the means to achieve that.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (3.42 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments about this Estimates committee report. At the outset, I commend the Minister for Education on the implementation of the Cooler Schools program. It is a program that has particular importance for a large section of my electorate. I feel sure that a great number of schools will also benefit from it. I just hope that the Minister for Education has allocated enough funds in his budget allocations to cater for the uptake that will inevitably come for that program.

Mr Hamill: A lot more than there was in May.

Mr SEENEY: It is a great program. I give credit where credit is due. In the short time that I have been in this Chamber, I have not had cause to congratulate too many of the Ministers sitting opposite, but in all sincerity I commend the Minister for Education on the Cooler Schools program and the way in which it has been implemented according to the election promises. I think that the four to one subsidy rate is a great result. I just hope that those schools will see that scheme come to fruition, and I say that most sincerely.

I would now like to revert to form and make some comments about the Training part of the Estimates committee. I have listened to the rhetoric from the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations. Unfortunately, I cannot see that that rhetoric is backed by fact. It is worth repeating some of the figures that I quoted for the building industry during a debate in this Chamber yesterday. In 1992-93, the number of apprentices and trainees in the building industry who completed their training was 1,246. Two years later, under a Labor Government, that figure dropped to 874. That was a reduction of 362 apprentices and trainees—and the member for Bulimba should listen to this because I know that he has an interest in the business. There were 362 apprentices who never completed their training in that one industry. That was the pattern across the gamut of industries while Labor was in power.

Sooner or later, this Government must be judged on more than rhetoric. Sooner or later,

the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations must make it happen. There are too many talkers on the Government side of the Chamber and not enough doers. Too many talkers are concentrating on the rhetoric and tomorrow's press release rather than getting results in the field. Sooner or later, they have to be judged on the results on the ground, and it is those results that count. The success or otherwise of this Budget and the initiatives that it contains will not be measured in terms of dollars spent, or speeches made, or press releases issued; it will be measured in terms of people trained and tradesmen produced.

During the comments of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations on this Estimates committee report, he criticised the performance of the coalition Government. It is worth repeating some of the things that the coalition Government did. Under the coalition Government, part-time arrangements were built into apprenticeships and traineeships so that the number of businesses that could for the first time consider employing an apprentice or a trainee in their own right was widened significantly, and many, many businesses took up that opportunity.

Ms Struthers interjected.

Mr SEENEY: If the member is going to interject, she should do it loudly enough so that I can reply. I enjoy responding to interjections, but I cannot respond when I cannot hear them.

The coalition introduced school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, which allowed young Queenslanders to gain relevant and useful industry experience as well as vocational qualifications whilst still attending school. The coalition introduced work-based delivery of training, significantly reducing and in many cases eliminating the need for apprentices and trainees to leave their workplaces to receive formal education. The coalition upgraded efforts to ensure the application of competency-based training across the full vocational training spectrum. All of those policies were designed to achieve positive results, they were achieving positive results, and they would have continued to do so.

All we have heard from this Government is a repeat of the same old rhetoric. However, we must all ensure that that rhetoric produces results. Of the apprentices who start their indentures, 55% fail, and that is an unacceptable result for all of us.

Time expired.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (3.48 p.m.): Angry young man, isn't he? Although all portfolios are important, the Education and Industrial Relations and Employment portfolios are probably two of the most important. Therefore, I would like to comment on matters relating to those portfolios.

The Premier has given me the responsibility of looking after multicultural affairs. A couple of weeks ago, I took the opportunity to visit the Milpera Special School at Chelmer. For members' information, I point out that migrants who have decided to make Australia their home but whose children are unable to speak English, or who can speak very little English, have the opportunity of attending the Milpera Special School which is, as I said, a special school earmarked to teach young people English. I commend the work that is being done at that school by the teaching staff and I say to the Education Department that it is a great institution. After about six months or a little longer, the children have a grasp of English as a second language and can move into mainstream high schools. The school does a great deal of good work.

Speaking of English as a second language gives me an opportunity to talk about the LOTE program. I applaud the LOTE program, but teachers that I have spoken to believe that there needs to be some flexibility in this program, particularly in primary schools. Children who are struggling with their own language of English are still required to learn another language. There needs to be some flexibility in the program to allow principals to sign kids off the LOTE program so that they can concentrate on their English and improve their own language. That needs to be addressed.

The Building Better Schools program has been a great success, particularly in my electorate, which has a number of older schools. In fact, this year the Sandgate State School celebrated its 125th year, which gives an indication of how old some of the schools in my electorate are.

Mr Purcell: I've got the oldest school in Brisbane down in Hemmant.

Mr NUTTALL: One hundred and twenty-five years is not a bad track record. When the school celebrated its centenary, they hid a time capsule in the grounds. They went looking for it for the 125th anniversary and they could not find it. They asked former students if they knew where the time capsule was hidden, and they were told about 17 different locations. They checked every one

and they still cannot find the time capsule. It is still hidden away somewhere.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NUTTALL: Actually, my stand-up plebiscite was held at that school and I happened to win it, too. I believe that the Building Better Schools program has been a worthwhile project for primary schools and we should look at extending it to secondary schools. In terms of future job creation and improving our schools, the Building Better Schools program should be extended to secondary schools.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (3.53 p.m.): Although I did not take part in Estimates Committee F, I am interested in the subject matter of the committee. I take an interest in the State and non-State schools in my electorate, as I am sure the honourable member for Rockhampton does. I congratulate the Government on maintaining the level of spending on education that was set by the previous coalition Government. For the first time, we now spend up to the national average. The Government has maintained that level of funding and has, in fact, exceeded it. It should be commended for its interest in the education of children in Queensland.

The information technology initiatives, Schooling 2001 and Connect-Ed, are very important to bring children into the 21st century through the provision of state-of-the-art education facilities and give them the skills that they will need in pursuing their roles in life. I am a little concerned about the impost that is placed on schools in providing information technology. Schools will have to maintain equipment, look after programming and do all of the things that one has to do with new technology. However, the funding for that is not sufficient. Many schools are forming clusters whereby one full-time technician may be employed by several schools in order to maintain and upgrade information technology equipment. I highlight that problem for the Minister, although I am sure that he is aware of it. Provision will certainly have to be made for that, not in the distant future but very shortly, because several hundred schools are on line and are utilising new technology.

Some communities that have not yet been connected to the Internet are concerned at the possibility that the provision of fibre-optic cabling may not be continued but will be downgraded to a copper cable, which would be cheaper. It could prove to be a retrograde step in the long term if short-term expediency and savings take precedence. I certainly hope

that that is not the case. The issue has been raised with me when I have visited school communities in my electorate, so I raise it with the Minister today.

The provision for 685 extra teachers is very welcome. Most of those teachers will go to secondary schools, which of course desperately need them. However, I highlight the problem of some of the small primary schools throughout the State, many of which have only part-time administrative assistants. The principals have to do most of the duties that principals of larger schools have to perform, yet they have a shortfall in the administrative support that would only be fair and reasonable for them to receive. We have to look at the ratio of administrative staff to student numbers, which cannot always be calculated using a simple formula.

The Government will not proceed with the coalition's Leading Schools initiative. We look forward with anticipation to finding out what will replace it. Some of the schools that went into rounds 1 and 2 of the program made commitments on the basis of the funding that was promised. Another \$15,000 is due to them in the first semester, and that funding is supposed to be ongoing. I certainly hope that that is the case, because there is a degree of scepticism in the community on this issue. The Minister would be wise to keep his commitment for next year's funding and ensure that it is ongoing as promised.

The Building Better Schools program will provide \$80m for primary schools and a further \$10m for backlog maintenance, which is very important to schools throughout the State. A number of schools in my electorate have outgrown their administration block facilities as the student and staff numbers grow and as deputy principals and other staff are appointed. Many schools do not have the room to provide extra accommodation.

To cite another problem, \$158,000 worth of maintenance was identified as being needed at one school, yet only \$11,000 was allocated for this year.

Another area of concern is the Special Needs Support Group. Shailer Park High School in my electorate is the only school in the Logan/Beaudesert district that does not have that vital support. That school takes students from a low socioeconomic area and they need that sort of vital support. I wish to highlight the fact that all the schools in my area—

Time expired.

Report adopted.

Estimates Committee G Report

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Dr Clark):
The question is—

"That the report of Estimates Committee G be adopted."

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (3.58 p.m.): This afternoon it is with great pleasure that I speak to the report of Estimates Committee G during the Committee stage. Before I commence, I wish to comment on various aspects in relation to the Estimates committee. I thank the committee staff—our research director, Les Dunn, and our research officer, Cassandra Adams—for the excellent job they did. I thank also Hansard. I thank my fellow committee members from both sides of the Chamber. Both sides approached the job in a constructive and cooperative fashion. Not only was it conducted in that spirit; it was also conducted in a pleasant and cheerful manner. It is always nice when we can get on with people while at the same time undertake a serious task. As the member for Kurwongbah indicated, there was no dissenting report. That is clearly a pat on the back for the committee and for the Government's Budget. I thank also the Ministers and their departmental staff for the cooperation and assistance they gave to the committee.

The portfolios of three different Ministers were examined by the committee. Firstly, I wish to speak about the Department of Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning. Under the proposed budget, there has been a 17% increase in expenditure to \$90.5m. One of the very important things that Minister Mackenroth has achieved in his administration of this portfolio is the amalgamation of five functions in information technology over a number of agencies into one department. I understand that Queensland, through the Labor Opposition and then Opposition Leader Peter Beattie, was the first State in Australia that proposed having an information technology portfolio. That information technology portfolio has been adopted subsequently by many other States and the Commonwealth. That just shows how a good idea from Queensland Labor is being adopted and administered throughout the country.

We have a very decentralised State, and we have seen a number of commitments to increase rural access in the budgetary documentation. Technology can be a great leveller. The Minister and the department will put a lot of effort into looking at competition up and down the State, from Brisbane to Cairns,

in relation to our fibre-optic capacity. At present, Telstra has a monopoly. In Brisbane there is plenty of competition. However, we need to have competition up and down the State so that people in rural and regional communities can have a fair go.

In particular, I support the Information Industries Branch under the leadership of Liz Manning. A lot of effort goes into assisting information technology and computer programs to be developed within this country to be sold both here and overseas. Also, in Local Government and Planning we have seen a \$45m increase in expenditure, with \$12.4m for Planning. Regional and rural communities are very important in the State of Queensland. Eight new QGAP offices will be built in 1998-99. I was lucky enough to inspect the Mirani site with Bruce Flemming, the Director of Rural Communities. I was very impressed with the facilities that are being offered for people in rural communities. Access to those facilities is important. They are being brought together in the one place by working with the local community. I note that the Minister for Public Works and Housing is agreeing with me. He takes particular interest in rural and regional communities in this State.

Mr Seeney: I agree with you, too.

Mr LUCAS: I know that the member for Callide agrees with me, too. On many occasions he has told me how he really does support the initiatives that this Government has come up with.

Mr Seeney: I support that one.

Mr LUCAS: I know that the member supports that initiative. It is very good of him to recognise that.

Mr Schwarten: He is a nice bloke.

Mr LUCAS: He is a nice bloke. I look forward to his recognising that in a number of other debates.

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing is in the Chamber at the moment. I congratulate him on being a Minister with a real commitment to and a real idea about the policy future of this State. We have had a \$59.3m increase in Consolidated Fund expenditure in the last Budget. Tourism is the second largest industry in this State. One in 12 Queenslanders is directly employed—not indirectly—in tourism, and it contributes 10% to gross State product. That is almost double the contribution of mining, at 5.4%, or agriculture, at 5.5%. We have only to look at the benefits of Indy that the Minister has indicated to see the great initiatives that this Government has taken in this area.

I do not have a lot of time left, but I wish to mention one very disturbing issue that came up in the Estimates committee hearing, and that was the expenditure by the previous Government on sports facilities. We heard the outrageous information that \$5.5m was spent in Joan Sheldon's electorate for the benefit of her electorate. I understand that there are only three tartan tracks north of Brisbane, and two of them are in Joan Sheldon's electorate. That is outrageous.

Time expired.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (4.03 p.m.): At the outset, I congratulate those members who participated in the Estimates committee process, in particular the chairman, the member for Lytton, who conducted the proceedings very fairly. I also point out that, despite key differences in many respects, I enjoy a courteous relationship with the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources. I am pleased to say that that courtesy was extended during the hearings of Estimates Committee G. That does not mean to say that we did not get stuck into each other, but we were decent, fair and courteous about it.

Having said that, the State coalition still has a very serious reservation about the State Budget allocations for the 1998-99 financial year to the Department of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Natural Resources, and a number of other departments. The State coalition has also been very concerned about the continued attempts by the Beattie Government to stymie the Gold Coast's chances of hosting Expo 2002. Our concerns were further fuelled when the Minister admitted to the Estimates committee that his department had been asked by the Department of State Development to compile property descriptions and valuations of sites around Brisbane, including the RNA showground site. The admission came despite previous suggestions by the Premier and his deputy that they had no intention of moving the proposed Expo site from Coomera on the Gold Coast to the Brisbane area. The Gold Coast Bulletin carried a very appropriate headline following the Estimates debate titled "Exposed". The State coalition has some concerns. We wonder whether the Government's intentions are as honourable as it claims.

The Government's failure to address environmental issues is further demonstrated with cuts in funding to the Gurulmundi secure landfill site. This site, which in the past has been used as a toxic waste dump, was to be

funded to the tune of \$4.9m under the previous coalition Government. This funding was for the rehabilitation of the site and ongoing monitoring as well as an extra evaporation pond. The Government has cut this funding to \$3.9m. However, the Government's slashing of the environmental program put in place by the former Borbidge Government goes even further.

When the Borbidge Government handed down its Budget in May this year, we provided a further 160,000 hectares to be acquired for national parks. Even though the Queensland Conservation Council was critical of that target, saying that it did not go far enough, the Beattie Government has set its national parks acquisition target at 100,000 hectares—some 60,000 fewer than that proposed by the former State coalition Government.

As has become normal for Labor Governments across the nation, it has not taken this Government long to commence its onslaught on rural communities. Nearly \$45m earmarked by the former Borbidge Government for priority water projects has been scrapped. That is a disgrace. Nearly \$30m set aside for the Water Development Incentive Scheme has vanished under the present Government. That scheme was an initiative of the former Borbidge Government and came from an independent water advisory task force. The scheme provided farmers with a 22% subsidy for on-farm water storage.

Earlier this year, the coalition extended the program even further by announcing that the threshold of eligibility would be reduced from constructions costing \$200,000 to \$75,000. Industry groups welcomed this announcement, particularly the grazing and dairy industries, the canefarmers, fruit growers and vegetable growers. Unfortunately, this scheme is no more. Although I acknowledge that the Government has committed to finalising those water projects already under way as a result of the policies of the former coalition Government, it is obvious that future construction will not receive such a priority.

Water is what will drive this State in the future. If we do not have it and if we have not provided for it, we will be so much worse off. This year's Budget shows that over \$14m will be slashed from the budget of the former Government's Category 1 water projects.

Time expired.

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (4.08 p.m.): I am particularly pleased to participate in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee G, because when I was

the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review, that committee unanimously recommended that the Queensland Parliament adopt an Estimates committee system for examining the Budget. I think it has been most successful and I am really pleased to see that it has continued. There are always accusations of it being misused by members on either side of the Chamber, and I will touch on that later.

I was particularly pleased to have been involved in Estimates Committee G, because that committee involved portfolios with responsibilities very important for Cairns and far-north Queensland—environment, tourism, planning, communication, and regional and rural communities. It is important that people of far-north Queensland and Cairns are aware that all of these areas have received additional funding from the Government in this Budget for a range of programs and initiatives that are benefiting our region.

Members would know of my interest in conservation matters, and if I have time I will certainly address some of those issues in the Budget. However, I would like to use my time to examine in some detail what I do consider to be a misuse of the Budget Estimates process by the member for Toowoomba North. During the Estimates committee hearing itself, the member asked a legitimate question in relation to whether or not the Government had actually provided an additional \$5m in this budget. He pointed to what he believed was an increase in the overall budget of the QTTC of an amount of only \$1.2m. On the basis of that, he argued that there had not been this increase of \$5m.

He put a number of questions—very carefully worded questions—to the departmental officers; the CEO of the QTTC and the Director of Finance and Administration were there. For the benefit of the members of this House, I think it is worth while actually giving some indication of the responses that were provided. I refer to the transcripts. It was made abundantly clear to that member that, in fact, the budget of the QTTC, which was for \$47.2m, did include the \$5m Asian response grant from the previous Government. Mr Ronai said—

"The current Government has put another \$5m towards marketing in relation to Asia and in relation to the domestic response, and has also reaffirmed, for another \$4.5m, commitments made by the previous Government."

Mr Gregg went on to try to clarify the situation for the member and he said—

"I think there is confusion because some of our funding in the previous year was in one-off, one-year grants. For this year, that money has been replaced by the Government."

He went on—

"Because the previous funding was a one-off grant, if we did not receive the \$5m replacement from this Government our actual budget would have been \$42m. It would have been less. The \$5m has been added back into our budget. The previous funding was just for 12 months and it was expiring at the end of July. The incoming Government has provided another \$5m and has reaffirmed the commitments of the previous Government."

This debate went on. To me it was really disappointing that, even knowing the information provided to him and having been offered a briefing by the QTTC, instead of accepting the answer from the departmental people, the member for Toowoomba North travelled the length and breadth of Queensland, including coming to Cairns, creating a story which had headlines "ALP duping tourism over extra \$5m". That he would do something like this, I must say takes the member down in my estimation when he knew full well the facts of the matter. He went public, not allowing the facts to spoil a good story. He wanted to dump on the Government and mislead the tourism industry. I put it to honourable members that he has lost credibility with the tourist industry over this. The industry knows the facts; it knows where this money is being spent, and it is very, very regrettable that, when information was given to him by officers, the member went out and deliberately misrepresented the situation.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (4.13 p.m.): I do appreciate the opportunity to comment yet again on the report of an Estimates committee. I regret that I have only five minutes, because there are some very important issues in this portfolio for rural Queensland. In particular, I would like to make some comments about the budgeted expenditure program for the Department of Natural Resources and, for the second time today, I would like to commend the Minister. Some of the answers that he gave, particularly in regard to some of the big issues in the irrigation business—the tradeability of water rights, water pricing, the COAG agreement and that whole issue of full cost pricing—surprised me. I was gratified to hear the Minister's appreciation of these very complex and

important issues. Once again, I will be watching closely to ensure that the rhetoric is matched by the action. The Labor Government's record in these areas is not good and I hope that the Minister's rhetoric is matched by some action.

In common with the rest of rural Queensland and the shadow Minister who spoke before me, I am very concerned about the rather obvious lack of commitment to the implementation of the report of the Water Infrastructure Task Force that was set up by the coalition Government. The funding for the construction of Category 1 projects identified in that report was slashed from \$21m to \$7m, and \$7m will not build many projects or provide much in the way of badly needed infrastructure in rural and regional Queensland. It is badly needed to provide the jobs and the economic opportunities that come with irrigated agriculture.

A great example of how important the provision of irrigation infrastructure is can be seen in the small community of Mundubbera in the central Burnett. I invite the Minister to come to Mundubbera and see for himself what small communities can achieve when water is available. Unlike so many other small rural communities, Mundubbera is a growing town. There are new houses, urban land development and new caravan parks, and even a backpackers hostel is currently being built. Real unemployment is almost non-existent in Mundubbera. If people genuinely want to work, they can always get a job in the orchards, in the packing sheds or as a field hand. In fact, there is a shortage of labour, especially to meet seasonal demand. It is a real problem at times and many people travel there to take advantage of the work opportunities in the picking season. That season is extending as the range of crops extends from the traditional citrus out to grapes, mangoes, avocados and a whole range of horticultural crops. All these jobs and these job opportunities are based on the availability of irrigation water. There is a tremendous potential to expand those industries. If the water infrastructure is provided on the Burnett, Auburn and Boyne Rivers, those job opportunities will expand.

The future growth of those industries, both in Mundubbera and right throughout the Burnett Valley, is curtailed—restricted—by the lack of that water storage infrastructure. Therefore, it was particularly disappointing to see that the extension of the Jones Weir at Mundubbera was delayed, awaiting the result of yet another study. The Minister advised the Estimates committee that no projects in the

Burnett catchment would proceed until the catchment study and the WAMP study are completed, and that is deplorable. As well as those two major catchment-wide studies that are under way at the moment, each of these projects has been studied individually.

No-one disputes the need for proper planning and studies, but there is a widespread frustration out there in my electorate and out there in rural and regional Queensland that these studies have become just another ongoing excuse not to build anything. No-one—let me repeat: no-one—disputes the need for studies and consultation with the community to minimise the costs both in economic and environmental terms. But in the end we have to make a decision. We are never going to achieve the consensus; we are never going to reach a point at which everybody agrees. Sooner or later we have to make a decision that the costs are worth the development, the jobs and the opportunities that flow from these projects. These projects are worth the small cost, in many instances, that they bring to the environment, and the evidence is there in places such as Mundubbera where these projects have been proceeded with.

If this Government is serious about jobs, if this Minister is serious about his role—and his role is a very big one in producing the jobs and the economic development in rural and regional Queensland—then I strongly urge that the Category 1 projects identified in the Water Infrastructure Task Force be fast-tracked and that a start be made on building some of them.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (4.19 p.m.): We will have to get a volume control for the member for Callide. If he continues at this rate, he will have a heart attack before the next election. Perhaps the rest of us can have some earplugs.

I am pleased to be able to participate in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee G. Before I speak to the report, I will make some general comments. Firstly, I pay tribute to the Chair, the member for Lytton, who did a marvellous job. I also thank the committee staff. In particular I pay tribute to the three Ministers who had their budgets scrutinised by the committee that day—the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, the Honourable Bob Gibbs and the Honourable Rod Welford. I was most impressed with the breadth and depth of their knowledge of their departments. I felt that they only called on their departmental staff to make them feel part of the process and so that it was not a waste of

time for them to attend the committee hearing. I also commend the Opposition members of the committee for their constructive and cooperative approach during the day.

The hearing ran smoothly; however, I know that a comment was made at the end of the day that we would have liked more time to scrutinise the budget of the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing. The time went too quickly and I know that there were a lot more questions we wanted to ask. Next year's committee may wish to take that into consideration.

Turning to specific issues, and starting with Tourism, Sport and Racing, I applaud the Minister for reintroducing the funding program for the construction or upgrade of the multipurpose sport and recreation centres throughout Queensland. This was an excellent program when it was first introduced in 1995 but, regrettably, it was chopped by the previous Government.

Mr Lucas: A disgrace.

Mrs LAVARCH: An absolute disgrace. At the time Labor went out of office, there were 87 formal submissions awaiting assessment under that program. I know that the reintroduction of this program has been warmly welcomed in my electorate. I have a large youth population that does not have so many places to go. Recreation centres are being cried out for. The cost of building or upgrading multipurpose centres is enormous and beyond the reach of most community groups and even local governments. This program will go a long way to providing these much-needed facilities.

I make special mention of one group in my electorate that is using innovative sporting programs to get young people, especially those with disabilities, job ready. John Hart and his dedicated team at the Spectrum organisation have found that young people who are involved in sports and fitness programs gain confidence in themselves, become more motivated and learn to work cooperatively with others. I do not think we can ever underestimate the benefits of being involved in sport, no matter at what level. Regrettably, this organisation's application to the previous Government for assistance with this program and for facilities was refused.

Mr Lucas: Caloundra did okay.

Mrs LAVARCH: I was going to get to that, because the detail of what occurred is very revealing and very disturbing. At the Estimates committee hearing the Minister advised us that Caloundra received \$5.5m in funding for sports facilities. Compare this with grants given to

some of the Labor electorates. Everton received only \$4,467 and even the Minister's own electorate received only \$9,311. I understand that the electorate of Kurwongbah did a little better, but the amount was still only \$55,000. That is 1% of the amount spent on sporting facilities in the electorate of the member for Caloundra.

Another disturbing fact came out in relation to funding for sports and recreation programs. It was revealed that \$3.15m went to the shooting fraternity throughout Queensland. One sporting discipline was favoured over all other sporting disciplines. As the Minister pointed out, the tragedy of this \$3.15m being spent on the shooting fraternity—that is after the Port Arthur tragedy—is that—

Time expired.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (4.24 p.m.): I place on record my appreciation for the way the Chairman of Estimates Committee G, the member for Lytton, conducted proceedings before, during and after the hearings. I think he displayed a certain amount of professionalism and as a result he gained complete cooperation from all members of the committee, including the non-Government members. I also thank the research staff for their cooperation and assistance.

As to the Estimates committee process in general, I suppose by the time Estimates Committee G came around most of the mechanics were running pretty smoothly, although I do feel—I agree with the member for Kurwongbah—that in the future perhaps consideration could be given to allowing a little more time for the portfolio of Tourism, Sport and Racing to give a little more time for questioning.

Mr Lucas: Your colleagues might not agree with that.

Mr HEALY: They agree with it. It is a large portfolio area—I am sure the Minister will understand that—with a lot of different areas that require examination. Another half or three-quarters of an hour would have allowed more time for us to examine in detail the Estimates of the various areas of portfolio responsibility.

Also in the area of Tourism, Sport and Racing—this is no criticism of the Minister—the Minister requested that certain departmental officers be present in a particular order to assist with the answering of questions pertaining to certain parts of the department. That is fair enough, but a problem arises with the 20-minute blocks allocated to both Government and non-Government members.

The Government members may have only a few questions pertaining to, say, liquor licensing in their 20-minute block while the non-Government members may have a lot more, even carrying over into their next 20-minute block. Either the relevant departmental officials would then have to come back or the committee would have to split up the 20-minute questioning periods. This all became very confusing, particularly for the research staff in working out just how much time was left for the Government and non-Government members at the end of the day. I think this is something that can be worked out down the track. If the Minister does require that certain departmental officers be in attendance at particular times that is fine, but I think we have to work on an improvement to the system, particularly in an area such as Tourism, Sport and Racing, which contains some other departmental people who may not be required for the questioning.

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing followed exactly the same pattern as most of the other Ministers by using the hearing to answer Dorothy Dix questions from Government members of the committee and to launch an attack on the previous coalition Government and the initiatives that either were included in the May Budget document or had been announced as part of the lead-up to the election. That is somewhat hypocritical, given the fact that the Labor Party did not radically change the content of the coalition's Budget but in fact mirrored many of its initiatives.

In the couple of minutes remaining to me, I will concentrate my comments on the Racing area of the portfolio. I will have more to say about this subject in my speech to the motion that will be debated tonight. As everybody knows, a decision will be made at the Labor Party State conference next month which could have the most enormous ramifications on the future viability of the racing industry in the State—probably even since Statehood.

Mr Lucas: If you join the party, we will get you a seat there.

Mr HEALY: You have no chance of that, my friend.

Mr Springborg: But you're still alive.

Mr HEALY: That is a point. We on this side of the Chamber are still alive. The point I make—I will reiterate it later tonight—is that this infamous catchcry of the Premier of "jobs, jobs, jobs" will mean absolutely nothing if the Labor Party does not agree to the privatisation of the TAB. If Labor members reject privatisation, the jobs of thousands of their fellow Queenslanders will be immediately at

risk. That is something they have to remember. It is about employment as well as all of the other areas of the racing industry. Over 25,000 people are employed in the racing industry in this State. If the Labor Party decides to reject privatisation, it will be at its peril.

Time expired.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (4.30 p.m.): It is my pleasure to join in this Estimates debate. I thank the chairman of the committee and the members of the committee for their very thorough examination of the Estimates for my two departments. I also thank the Opposition spokesman for his constructive participation in the debate, although I must say—as I am about to point out—that there are a number of errors in the assertions that he has been making. And as to some of the statements that he has been making in the media—I would not for a moment suggest that he was deliberately saying things that he knows to be untrue, but the fact is that many of the things that he has said are untrue, and I will come to those in a moment.

The two departments under my portfolio have between them a budget of just over \$800m—\$188.5m for the Department of Environment and Heritage and \$611.9m for the Department of Natural Resources. The funding that we are providing to these two departments will carry out a very important role, and bringing the departments together gives us an opportunity to achieve some synergies and economies of scale from having the departments work more closely together. We have been able to do that, in a sense, by maintaining the previous Government's budget, but probably not increasing it to the extent that I would have desired or, indeed, some of the constituencies that rely on the work of these two departments might have desired. But the budget will, of course, grow in future years. Nevertheless, we have retained some very important initiatives in both portfolios, and I would like to outline a couple of them now.

Firstly, we have already made a start on the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency which, contrary to the media statements that the Opposition keeps releasing, is not a new layer of regulatory bureaucracy; it is, indeed, a transformation of the existing department into a much more industry focused and a much more proactive agency which members of the public will

identify as a high-profile protector of their quality of life.

In addition, we will be re-establishing—probably as a subdepartment with its own lines of accountability and reporting—the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service to be a front-line environmental education agency, not just to manage our national parks and the natural heritage which they contain for future generations but also to provide high-quality interpretive services so that all Queenslanders and, indeed, all visitors from around the world can have the opportunity to understand and enjoy the great diversity of flora and fauna within our national parks. \$5m was earmarked as a new initiative this year in the budget for capital works in national parks, including new walkways and amenities. This will be on top of the roughly \$4.25m of combined base funding and unspent moneys from last year. So a total of more than \$9m will be injected into capital works in our national parks this year. That is probably the biggest single expenditure on capital works for national parks ever.

Key environmental priorities also include improving air quality and water quality, reducing greenhouse emissions with a \$1.5m allocation to address climate change issues over the next four years, and a special allocation to address coastal protection and coastal management issues, which will be part of the important environmental planning function of the new EPA.

The Department of Natural Resources, as other members have indicated and as members opposite who have rural constituencies would well appreciate, has a very important role in providing water infrastructure and managing the other resources of rural areas—land and vegetation. The budget of the Department of Natural Resources has not been cut in any of the respects that Opposition members have suggested. The figures that they used in relation to cuts in funding for water infrastructure seem to be plucked out of the air. The Opposition spokesperson used one batch of figures, and the member for Callide used another batch of figures, but none of them squared up and none of them were accurate. The allegations made about cuts in funding for water infrastructure are simply untrue.

What has happened is that some of the budget that still exists has been put into the out years, that is, it is well acknowledged—and the previous Government was simply inflating artificially the figures it was putting in the

budget in an unrealistic expectation that that money would actually be spent; but the money is all still there in the budget, and it will be spent in future years.

Time expired.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (4.35 p.m.): The Minister has just said that there has not been a cut in funding. However, he has not actually been spending very much money on some of these programs, either. I refer to a couple of small projects in my electorate, such as the raising of the level of the Cedar Pocket Dam and the pumping in of Gympie's water supply. I have not heard anything from the Minister about those projects, and I will be looking for affirmative correspondence in that regard.

Mr Gibbs: Do you still give elocution lessons?

Mr STEPHAN: No, I am learning from the Minister, actually. I would not worry too much about that.

I turn now to the proposal for a Mary Burnett Centre for Water Sustainability, which has been put forward by people in the industry. I commend them for their interest and support. The proposal for a Mary Burnett Centre for Water Sustainability brings a regional focus to an issue of critical importance to the future economic viability and quality of life in the Wide Bay region. The centre will not be a decision-making body, but it will focus on knowledge and education and communication skills. The activities supported and the programs developed will have a regional focus, but the centre will develop State, national and international networks.

Water sustainability will not be viewed in isolation. It does not matter where we come from; we need to take notice of that particular aspect because, in many instances, we are using water but we do not really know where it is coming from. There is a lot of work to do in that sector, particularly in relation to the underground water system. I do not believe that much has been done to look for underground water supplies. In some areas it is very intense.

I turn now to highlight the problems pertaining to weeds and weed control.

Mr Springborg: Rat-tail grass.

Mr STEPHAN: Rat-tail grass is only one of them. I ask the Minister not to forget about that program. He should make sure that it is controlled as much as possible. Although it is being controlled reasonably well—and I say that with all sincerity—we need only to let it go

for about six months and we would go down the gulger very quickly.

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing is still in the Chamber. I think he has been waiting for an excuse to make a comment during this debate, but he has not found one yet. His department is very important, particularly because of the subsidies that it provides to sporting clubs. There is no doubt in my mind that this has had a great influence on many clubs throughout the State. It has helped them to upgrade their buildings and grounds and to provide lighting at various centres where daytime and night-time sports events are held. Although the funding that some of those clubs have received is not necessarily great, it provides incentives to younger people and others who are taking part in sports and ensures that they can take part in the sports of their choice. That certainly makes a great difference to the viability of many country sporting centres.

Time expired.

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (4.39 p.m.): I rise in support of the Estimates Committee G report and congratulate the chairman of that Estimates committee, the member for Lytton, on the excellent work that he and the committee did in scrutinising the budget requirements for the departments that come under the scrutiny of Estimates Committee G. One particular aspect of the report in regard to planning within the Department of Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning is of particular interest to me. The report states—

"The goal of the Planning program is to ensure sustainable development through integrated planning, that balances social, economic and environmental considerations."

I will take this opportunity to commend the committee, the department and the Minister on the work that is being envisaged to be done in the forthcoming budget year.

I would also take this opportunity to talk about the launch of the Townsville/Thuringowa strategic plan, which I launched on behalf of the Minister in Townsville a couple of weeks ago. Members would be aware that I am a strong supporter of regional planning in Queensland, particularly in the area of Townsville and Thuringowa. I am very pleased with the way regional planning has been embraced, not only by Governments but also by regional stakeholders and the community. There is a growing recognition that cooperative regional planning is the most sensible way to

deal with growth management, resource allocation and environmental conservation issues. I am very proud to be able to say that there are now eight regional planning exercises in Queensland coming under the control of the Minister. Most of those have been at the request of local government with the support of their communities.

I stress the enormous potential of the Townsville/Thuringowa region. The twin cities of Townsville and Thuringowa have an established role as the largest urban centre outside of south-east Queensland. They comprise a major transport and export gateway and industrial and service centre for north Queensland, the Pacific rim and beyond. Even in the difficult economic times occasioned by Asia's problems, there is good reason to be confident when one considers the assets, the quality of life and the economic potential of that area. I know that regional planning will play a substantial role in guiding decision making to realise desirable future outcomes for the Townsville/ Thuringowa region. It will also be a vehicle to promote confidence in the future of the area and an understanding as to how Townsville/Thuringowa will grow and develop. That has been sustained through proper and consistent regional planning for the area.

Once complete, The Townsville/Thuringowa strategy plan document should provide a framework within which the complex interactions between the economic, social and environmental elements of the region can be recognised and managed. Over the next two decades, the population of Townsville/Thuringowa is likely to grow by some 46,000 people. At the same time, the region can expect to expand and diversify its economic base and its role as the primary industrial and service centre in north Queensland. As we know, growth and development places increased demands on infrastructure and services, the natural environment and the region's human capital. It is critical, therefore, that future development occurs in a sustainable fashion commensurate with the region's environmental values, lifestyle opportunities and the aspirations of its people. The planning process ensures that the consultation process and the process of working with the stakeholders include those inherent values.

It is important that continued prosperity needs to be assured through economic growth and investor confidence. Infrastructure to support future economic and community development needs to be planned ahead of time so that it can be provided in an efficient

and cost-effective manner. At the same time, the attractiveness and liveability of the region must be maintained. Above all, Townsville/Thuringowa must be proactive if it is to shape its own future. The cooperative, consultative type of regional planning we have adopted in Queensland has had a few detractors in some planning circles. They say that it is not strong enough or that it is too bureaucratic. It is interesting to note the level of interest and support from other States as to how Queensland is planning its regions. It is an open process that encourages participation and increases the likelihood of obtaining the best balance between economic, social and environmental objectives. I applaud the planning process that has been examined through the Estimates committee. The Townsville and Thuringowa region can only be better for it.

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (4.45 p.m.): In opening I will comment on an issue that was raised in a contribution by the honourable member for Kurwongbah in relation to the funding of some of our shooting organisations around Queensland. We witnessed the beat-up during the Estimates committee process and in the Parliament today about how unfair that was alleged to have been. I support very much the responsibility of Government in ensuring that we have proper facilities for our shooting organisations. In the post Port Arthur period, a lot of our decent shooters went through an extremely traumatic period. I am sure that the Minister would appreciate that. We saw a growth in many of the shooting clubs around Queensland. Those clubs were wanting to put in place decent and proper facilities for their members. It is very important to ensure that, if we encourage people to join rifle clubs, pistol clubs or clay target clubs as a legitimate reason for the ownership of a firearm, we need to ensure that those people have the facilities to properly vindicate their right to use a firearm. That is extremely important. Therefore, I very much support the actions of the former Minister in supporting our shooting organisations around Queensland in obtaining reasonable and decent facilities for their members to use.

I will touch on the Estimates of the Minister for Natural Resources and the Minister for Environment and Heritage. I was a Minister in the Department of Natural Resources for a brief period. That is an extremely challenging portfolio. A lot of people do not realise that, when considering the issues of land titling and the effect of infrastructure development and

resource management, a whole range of very interesting and important issues start to come in: for example, the greenhouse response, catchment management and planning, water allocation management and planning, tree clearing, and water management planning as in the case of Cooper Creek. A wide range and a whole raft of issues are involved. From time to time, those issues prove to be challenging.

I hope that the Minister continues the actions of the former Government in relation to the catchment planning process that was put in place by the Water Infrastructure Task Force. We set about properly identifying the sites for new infrastructure in Queensland in areas that could actually sustain dams. We were not just constructing dams or weirs on a whim. I think that process was good, because it leads us to examine the catchments to establish how much water was in them and how many of the projects that may have been suggested for that area could be constructed some time down the track.

The St George issue is challenging for the Minister. Although we still had some controversy, many aspects of what I was putting in place were drawing to a conclusion. I wish the Minister all the very best in getting all the parties together. It is a very difficult issue. In relation to Stage 1, there is no doubt that that can soon be ready to go. In my final negotiations with Mr Cooper regarding Stage 2, I think we were on the verge of reaching a reasonably amicable agreement on a scaled-down version. There were some issues that were no doubt outstanding. That matter had gone on for eight years. How much longer could we let something like that go on for? It has dogged a lot of Ministers. It dogged my honourable colleague and friend the member for Warrego. If we were to sit back and decide to review the issue once again, we would never get anywhere.

I will briefly touch on the issue of the Cooper Creek water management plan and encourage the Minister to continue considering the draft plan that we put in place, which I believe was a fairly good draft plan for consultation. Once again, that issue involved a balancing act. Before we started considering the issue of a water management plan for that area, nothing was regulating the level of extraction other than the normal licensing process. I know that some people in that area have differing views. At least for the first time we recognise that a cap should be put in place with a maximum level of extraction based on a subcatchment basis. That is important. I believe we had in place a reasonable template for the Minister to start with. I encourage him

to continue down that line. Obviously the prerogative is his and the department's. In some ways, I believe the process that we put in place was not necessarily appreciated and was unjustly maligned, because it did recognise an important principle.

Time expired.

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (4.49 p.m.): Firstly, I wish to express the view that I have held for quite a few years that I am not a particular admirer of the Estimates committee system. After being a member of this place throughout the years the system has been operating, I have come to wonder what it achieves. We often hear the term "accountability" used in this place. However, I tell members now that, in terms of accountability, I do not believe that this whole process that we go through means much to my constituents, who are more interested in issues other than those mentioned during the Estimates process. I say that for a number of reasons. I realise the great effort that goes towards the preparation of these Estimates within my own department. For example, some evenings there were people working until 2 a.m. the next day preparing for this exercise. However, I have never considered the Estimates committees to be anything more than a blood sport.

I certainly congratulate the member for Lytton on the way in which he chaired the committee. I take great comfort in the following point that he makes in his foreword—

"The committee believes the individual skill of members in interpreting the budget papers and asking pertinent questions will always be the underlying reason for success of the estimates process."

It certainly disappointed me to see Opposition members come to that committee who, quite frankly, were not across the portfolio programs and had very little knowledge of the facts contained within the Budget papers. That was borne out by the abysmal performance of the member for Toowoomba North, who simply could not seem to absorb the fact that there had been a \$5m increase by this Government in the budget of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. The member for Barron River was quite correct: he went the length and breadth of Queensland uttering untruths about the Budget and, much to his embarrassment, he now realises that what he was saying was incorrect. There should be some process whereby the Opposition members can come to some understanding of the rudimentary

fundamentals of the Budget before they come to the Estimates committees.

The member for Warwick referred to the firearms issue. I am not against people legitimately joining sporting clubs because they want to participate in the sport of shooting. That is a recognised and legitimate pastime. The point that I made at the Estimates committee was that, over the past 18 months, an extraordinary amount of money has gone into shooting clubs. Of course, it is no coincidence that that happened at a time when the National Party was doing its best to defend its support base in the bush. Although it is true to say that there was a massive growth in the number of members of shooting clubs, the participation rates in those clubs declined. It was nothing more than a cheap political exercise of encouraging people to join shooting clubs so that they could keep their weapons. That is what it was all about. By encouraging people to join shooting clubs so that they could keep their weapons, the organisations were rewarded with massive grants.

A concern was expressed at the committee in relation to the review under the National Competition Policy of the liquor licensing laws of Queensland. I have given certain commitments in that regard. However, there is one commitment that I am not going to give, and I want to make that clear here today, as I did when I addressed the annual dinner and awards function of the Queensland Hotels Association last night. The previous Government had a tendency to react to issues that it believed would be vote catching or popular. Despite the attitude expressed at the recent local government conference, I want to make it very clear that I am not going to be part of any move to reduce trading hours on the evenings of Anzac Day, Good Friday, or Christmas Eve. The simple reality is that, if we did that, we would become the laughing-stock of this country. We are a major tourist destination in our own right. Only two States in Australia restrict trading, and they are Tasmania and Western Australia. Our liquor licensing laws are now recognised as among the very best in this nation. It is certainly not my intention to change them simply because some yobbo happened to disturb a dawn service somewhere in Queensland and the former Premier happened to be offended by it.

I am proud to note the massive growth in the Sport budget. When Labor came into office in 1989, the Sport budget was \$6m. This year, it is \$94.25m—a massive increase owing to the foresight of the Government of the time of introducing poker machines into

Queensland to stop the plundering of Queenslanders' money, which went over the border and into the coffers of the New South Wales Government. That has paid handsome dividends for our sporting organisations. If there is one regret, it is that poker machines were kept out of this State for years because of corruption and underhand payments.

Time expired.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.55 p.m.): Firstly, I want to say that the committee worked very well. I thank all the committee members as well as the staff and the public servants, who were able to answer some questions at various times. I thank also the Minister for his professional approach to the Estimates this year. I believe that he did it in a very professional way, and it was quite good. He had difficulty with his voice, and I wish him all the best with his health in the future.

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing questioned the benefits of the Estimates committee process. To a certain degree, I question them as well. I have no problem with going through the process, but at the end of the day all it really does is sharpen up the members and the department. It costs probably \$1m for each department to go through the process, which involves bringing staff from all over Queensland. At the end of the day, what do we get? I ask members: over the past two weeks, what have we achieved? During the Estimates process, for a couple of nights the news headlines related to the Education portfolio and \$2,000 worth of lunches somewhere and a night spent in Townsville on a training issue relating to the Department of Mines and Energy. I referred to a \$10.8m pork-barrelling bid by this Government to get Lorraine Bird re-elected. However, that did not even rate a mention in the news. At the end of the day, I wonder what benefit the Estimates process offers Queensland. During this process, what was exposed? If one considers the news broadcast of the Estimates, nothing! As the Minister said, all the media is interested in is the politics of it, anyway.

I wish to refer to a few issues that relate to the Department of Local Government and Planning. I believe that the Minister has inadequately funded the contaminated landfill sites section. That is a very, very important issue for local authorities to address. It will cost them something like \$500m over the next 10 years. Although the allocation of \$2.5m for 1998-99 and \$5m for 1999-2000—a total of \$7m—is something, I believe that in that second year it will be very, very much short of

what is required. In the first year, the Government may get away with that level of funding because it takes a while for any group to get together professional people to do the studies, call tenders and things like that. So the Government may squeak through with that level of funding in the first year. However, it certainly will not in the following year. The coalition estimated something along the lines of \$20m a year, which was what it would have been prepared to put into that program. Obviously, that funding would have been on a sliding scale. So down the track we will be requiring quite a lot more funding for contaminated landfill sites.

I referred previously to the \$10.8m for the Bowen Shire, which was really nothing more than a pork-barrelling exercise. Anyway, during the Estimates committee hearing I also said, "Good luck to the Bowen Shire." I understand that Councillor Bruncker was a bit upset with me for even raising the matter. However, I think that he probably got the wrong impression of what I said from the media. It was something in which I was rather interested. If that shire can obtain \$10.8m to reduce its rates, to reduce its sewerage costs, to reduce its water charges and to reduce its debt and create employment, what are the guidelines for such funding so that other shires can participate as well?

Another important issue that was raised and that we probably need to talk about a little more is private certification and the associated costs to the housing industry. In fact, private certifiers can save Queenslanders \$40m per year. That is quite a substantial amount, especially when one considers that approximately 70,000 houses are built each year in Queensland. Those savings can be made if private enterprise takes over certification for the building code and plumbing. That is a big saving for new home owners. We must assist local governments in reviewing the charges and reaching a stage at which a changeover can occur. There may need to be an inquiry into fees and charges. The Minister assured me that at the moment the department is talking with local government to see how that is going, but we may have to do something a bit harsher than that.

Report adopted.

Clauses 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bills reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bills, on motion of Mr Hamill, by leave, read a third time.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP)
(Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (5.02 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP)
(Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (5.03 p.m.): I move—

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

The objective of this Bill is to provide for a range of amendments to a number of Acts administered by my Department of Transport. They are the Traffic Act 1949, the Transport (Gladstone East End to Harbour Corridor) Act 1996, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 and the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. These statutes deal respectively with traffic management, transport planning, transport infrastructure and public transport issues. They are of importance to Queenslanders throughout the State and impact on each of us to differing degrees. The use of an omnibus Transport Legislation Amendment Bill means necessary amendments to legislation can be conveniently made in one Bill. It is in fact the second Bill of its kind that I have introduced into the House this year. This Bill facilitates the improvement of a number of policy areas and the delivery of important reforms that will help the Government reach its 5% unemployment target by stimulating the development of employment opportunities in Queensland.

This Bill amends the Traffic Act 1949 to alter the law as it currently exists with respect to the seizure and removal of vehicles and animals from roads. At present this can be conducted only by Queensland Police Service members. This amendment will allow a local authority to seize a vehicle on a road that has been abandoned by the last person who drove it, or to seize a vehicle on a road that is creating, or is likely to create, a danger or

obstruction to other road users and the driver cannot be readily located or that person fails to immediately remove it when required to do so by the local authority. Similar provisions exist in relation to animals on roads. These changes will benefit both the Queensland Police Service and Queensland's local authorities by extending to local authorities the powers of seizure and removal of vehicles and animals from our roads.

This Bill also seeks to amend the Transport (Gladstone East End to Harbour Corridor) Act 1996. Members would be aware that this Act facilitated the QCL development in Gladstone. In that case, a rail corridor was necessary to allow QCL efficient access to expand its capacity at its Gladstone operations. By establishing the rail corridor, this Act avoided the unacceptable expansion of heavy vehicle road use in Gladstone. Of course, the previous Labor Government helped to facilitate this project so that coral dredging could be stopped in Moreton Bay.

This Act was passed by the previous Government, with reservations expressed by my colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade, who was then the shadow Transport Minister, and was supported by Labor members when in Opposition. The Bill proposes amendments that will clarify property descriptions for land acquisition that has already taken place. The clarification of the property descriptions will only affect local Government-owned properties and will not affect any privately owned land. The proposed amendments are retrospective to the date of assent of the Transport (Gladstone East End to Harbour Corridor) Act 1996 and are put forward only on the basis that they clarify property descriptions for land acquisition that has already taken place. The Government understands concerns about the intended and unintended consequences of retrospective legislation. However, in this case the effect of retrospectivity is to correct the legislative record. The amendments made by this Bill do not in any way affect a person's civil liberties and rights.

Further amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 will enable proponents of railways in Queensland to access land for investigating the feasibility of future railway options. These amendments facilitate development of new rail corridors in Queensland without the proponents of these new corridors having to be accredited railway operators at the feasibility study stage. All future proponents of a railway will benefit, but immediate results will flow to the proponents of the Surat/Dawson Valley Infrastructure

Development project, SUDAW. This project is estimated by the Department of State Development to potentially generate 1,000 new permanent jobs and thousands of flow-on jobs throughout the State.

In addition, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 will also be amended by this Bill to alleviate difficulties encountered by project proponents and financiers of miscellaneous transport infrastructure corridors, for example, pipelines and conveyors. For example, this Bill will alleviate difficulties where a proposed miscellaneous transport infrastructure corridor crosses an existing road or rail corridor. Currently, where this occurs the corridor ceases at the side of the road or railway and resumes on the other side, and permits must be obtained for the intersecting land through negotiation with the relevant local government or State authority. There is no compulsion on these agencies to even negotiate, let alone come to an agreement on the terms of the crossing. Consequently, the integrity of the corridor is viewed by major utility providers as being insecure, discouraging investment in their provision. The amendments proposed by this Bill establish a mechanism for negotiating the establishment of the crossing through existing corridors. Procedures are also established to allow my colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade to facilitate the approval of the crossing if required. Naturally, any approval granted will be with conditions, as required. In effect, the means for arbitration over these conditions will also be firmly established.

The amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 contained in this Bill exempt the Minister making the decision to grant or refuse an approval from the Judicial Review Act 1991. Consequently, the Judicial Review Act 1991 is amended to reflect this situation. Similar provisions were enacted in the Transport (Gladstone East End To Harbour Corridor) Act 1996. This is not done lightly. The need to ensure legislation that is capable of promptly and efficiently responding to the transport infrastructure requirements of the State requires that judicial review be excluded. It needs to be emphasised that the exemption of judicial review is circumscribed and subject to important safeguards. At the outset it should be noted that the exemption will only affect Government or Government owned corporation land.

Finally, and most importantly, to ensure a properly accountable decision is made it is a requirement that a statement of reasons for the decision be tabled in this House within 14

sitting days. These amendments will benefit all Queenslanders through their facilitation of infrastructure development in this State and reflect this Government's determination to increase the number of jobs available in Queensland.

This Bill also amends the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to ensure that minor works associated with rail feasibility studies are not subject to this Act. Lastly, the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 is amended to close a loophole by clarifying that charter buses and taxis are very different modes of public passenger transport and have different rights and responsibilities. Several charter bus operators have been able to act much like taxis while not having to meet the significant social justice role that taxis play in exchange for protection from competition. This has, of course, disadvantaged taxi service operators. Under the amendments, charter bus operators will not be restricted from running a charter bus service but they will have restrictions that will effectively prevent them from acting like taxis.

The amendment in fact allows for the removal of an existing restriction on charter bus operators which prohibits operators from providing a charter bus service for a group of less than six people where the area in which the operator provides the service has a population less than 10,000. In summary, this Bill amends legislation administered by my department in a way which will benefit all Queenslanders through the delivery of infrastructure and by contributing to employment growth in the State and particularly regional Queensland. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Beanland, adjourned.

PRIVILEGE

Attendance at Estimates Hearings, Member for Barambah

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—ONP) (Deputy Leader of the One Nation Party) (5.11 p.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I have been criticised in this House today for not being involved in the Estimates committee process. One Nation was offered only one position, which we filled. The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading has accused me of not attending any of the hearings. The Minister has misled the House with that statement.

The facts are that because of my desire to fully comprehend the Estimates committee process, on two non-consecutive days I did travel from Kingaroy to attend as an observer. I resent the Minister's implication that I have not been interested or diligent. Even more, I resent the fact that the Minister has so little integrity that she has either deliberately misled the House or holds the truth in so little esteem that she has, as have other members of the House, used "The Bottom Line" as her reference material.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE)

AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 20 October (see p. 2571).

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (5.12 p.m.), continuing: I rise to continue the debate on this piece of legislation, which was adjourned a couple of days ago. There are a number of very important issues in relation to this matter, one of which I was touching upon when this debate was adjourned in the House the other day, namely, the raiding of hollow logs.

This legislation seeks to give the Minister the power to raid yet another hollow log. Labor made a complete mess of the Workers Compensation Fund. That is now history. It obviously now wants to get its hands on the Portable Long Service Leave Authority, to which major reforms were made by the coalition. The funding for the scheme is financed by a levy imposed on construction work with a project value worth some \$42,000 or more. At the time of its introduction, the levy rate was 0.5% for projects valued at \$40,000 or more. After some gradual reductions in previous years, the coalition reduced the levy to 0.15% in 1997. At the time of this reduction, the then Minister, the honourable member for Clayfield, stated—

"... this levy rate reduction will provide a direct benefit to the building and construction industry as it will reduce the impost on clients of the industry by \$4.3m per year without affecting benefits to employees coming under the scheme or using the fund's surplus as a funding source."

The coalition treated this scheme as a form of security for workers in the building industry, not as a hollow log that could be raided at the whim of the Government of the day. The coalition funded skills shortages initiatives out of consolidated revenue, and Labor has not.

Importantly, that is a significant difference. We all remember the situation. That was confirmed in Labor's Budget. \$35m was put into the Workers Compensation Fund, now WorkCover. That followed a \$35m injection two years ago by the incoming National/Liberal coalition Government and, of course \$35m, last year. A total of \$105m has been poured into the Workers Compensation Fund, now WorkCover, out of consolidated revenue to bail it out after it was raided. We are seeing the same thing again in this instance. We are now seeing another raid.

Members of the Government can point to the healthy condition of the Portable Long Service Leave Fund today. However, world financial markets—not so much Australia's—are highly volatile at the moment, and that will have an effect on this country and no doubt on this fund. One cannot say with any certainty that the fund will remain in its healthy state in the long term, given the current state of financial markets. In the future, unforeseen circumstances might mean that this authority will require all of its funds.

If the Government wishes to put aside more funds out of consolidated revenue for various training programs, so be it. It can do so. There is nothing stopping it. But raiding this hollow log—something for which the former Goss Government was so famous—will spell disaster in due course. This raises another important issue, namely, that the independent trustees will not be audited by the Auditor-General. I understand that they will be audited by someone else. That they will not be monitored by the Auditor-General is a matter of grave concern. After all, who knows what "independent trustees" means? That can mean anything. The Minister will appoint the trustees. I am not saying that they will be close friends of the Minister, but they may be people who are from the Labor side who wish to ensure that the Government continues to have input into this area. That is fine. However, we all know what happened in certain States—Victoria and South Australia—when banks were allowed to go unchecked when they should have been brought to heel long before they were. So we could end up getting into a serious situation in relation to this fund.

That is simply not good enough in this day and age. The Labor Party in Government elsewhere has been caught before and is walking into a similar trap in relation to this matter. This raises a range of serious issues in people's minds. People have every reason to question where this Government is heading. If money was coming out of the Consolidated Fund in the normal course of events, that

would be fine. However, this is not the normal course of events. A raid is taking place—something that we have seen so often in this place in relation to other funds.

It is worth while noting that the legislation had to apply from 1 October. I notice in the amendments that have been circulated—at least I think they have been circulated—that that has now been changed. Obviously, the Minister had some problem in getting the legislation into Parliament in accordance with the timetable. If the Bill was so important, one would have expected that at least he would have been able to have the matter processed through this place in the normal course of events. That has not even occurred and there have had to be some amendments.

The coalition did fund skill shortage initiatives out of consolidated revenue. We need to be very concerned about just what is taking place. Is the Government not prepared to put up funds for this area of activity? We have heard so much from the Government about jobs, jobs, jobs. What was it? "Last thing at night, first thing in the morning." If it was the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning, it has very quickly been given a fairly low priority in that suitable funding has not been made available in this area. I notice that this Budget has allocated \$25m less for capital works than what the National/Liberal coalition had in its May capital works budget. So much for that! There was an opportunity there to generate jobs and opportunities for people with skills and to help people gain additional skills by being trained. It must ring alarm bells for the building industry that the Government is going about this matter in this way. It is something that should be of major concern to all those opposite.

In relation to this piece of legislation, I would have expected that some detail would have been revealed as to the numbers who are going to be trained and the jobs that are going to be created in the long term through this process, yet none of that has been revealed in this particular piece of legislation at all. It seems to reveal that the Minister has no strategy—none at all—in place to reduce unemployment. We are certainly not getting that through this piece of legislation. We are told that it is so important yet, if it cannot show what the benefits are going to be at the end of the day through long-term job creation, one has to question what the purpose of this legislation is except to milk the cow and raid the hollow log so that the Government can get its hands on additional funds, because the relevant Minister has been singularly unsuccessful in convincing Cabinet, Treasury

and the Treasurer that he should have additional funds to spend in this particular area for training initiatives.

In speaking of that, I should say that the Government will need many initiatives—more than what we are seeing here in this legislation—to bring down the unemployment figure to 5% over three years. The facts are that the figure has grown in recent times. It is one thing to create opportunities for skills and training—we certainly need all of that—but it is another again to put in place long-term jobs, job opportunities and job security for people.

This piece of legislation is deficient in a number of very important areas, areas in which I believe the people of Queensland have every right to get some indication from the Minister as to exactly what the bail-out arrangements will be when this fund gets into trouble. He has to give some indication and some commitment to this Parliament in this debate as to what is going to be the situation. Surely this Government is not going to let this fund deteriorate to the extent of the problems a number of years ago with the Workers Compensation Fund—now WorkCover—which needed a direct input of \$105m over three years out of consolidated revenue before doing something about it. Surely there will not need to be a change of Government, with the National/Liberal coalition coming to power, before this fund is bailed out. We do not want to get into that situation because it is not good for the long-term benefit of this State or for the small businesspeople out there, and it is certainly not good for those people who are in the training field and those who are being trained and gaining skills and long-term job opportunities. It is to no-one's benefit and to no-one's long-term gain for that sort of situation to occur. Therefore, it is important that we get some commitments and indications from the Minister as to exactly what will happen in relation to this matter.

The Minister raised a number of other matters in relation to this. One such matter relates to the Construction Industry Skills Centre joint venture. In a report back in 1995, the Auditor-General was very critical of the way in which the then Government was operating this particular centre. He said—

"The Construction Industry Skills Centre joint venture was established to provide high quality building and construction industry related training and skills enhancement in which industry, unions and TAFE Queensland aim to deliver training and skills focused on the industry's needs and employment outcomes.

The Department, through the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Corporation, contributed \$4.304 million to the establishment and maintenance of the Queensland Construction Industry Skills Centre fund represented by—

\$4 million for property purchase ...

\$0.250 million for the purchase of equipment; and

\$0.054 million for a contamination survey on the site.

As no audited statements had been received to support the expenditure from the Department's appropriations and the uncertainty of taxation issues not resolved in respect of the College of Warehousing, I qualified my audit certificate ..."

The same senior departmental officers and other officials who were responsible for that unsatisfactory situation are now driving the agenda to focus construction training at this centre. It is little wonder that this side of the Chamber has these concerns when we see this sort of situation. Again the same people are in charge who were in charge previously, and these problems can easily come up again. I am sure that if it is left to the people at the helm currently, they will certainly do just that.

In that situation millions of dollars were collected through this backdoor approach and then control of these moneys was vested in independent trustees. The Minister needs to give this House a few assurances, as I have already indicated, in relation to independent trustees. We are going down the same trail again that we have been down previously. Wherever one looks, one sees that it is a repeat of what has gone on previously under the former Labor Government. It is repetition. We see it in other States and we see it here time and time again. There seems to be a problem when it comes to managing the taxpayers' funds in these particular areas.

It is worth while noting also that the Minister and his leader have been unable to get right some of the simple arithmetic to match up what are essentially straightforward items to show the transparency of the financial operations. In the second-reading speech, the Minister says—

"The amount involved under the current activity levels will be approximately \$5.4m in the first year of operation. The fund will be administered by Construction Training Queensland ..."

However, in a speech to the Construction 2001 conference last October, Mr Beattie said—

"Around half of the \$4m raised through the levy would be used as incentives to employ apprentices."

There is a slight disparity even in those figures: \$5.4m and \$4m. Surely it cannot be fully accounted for by an increase in collections by the Portable Long Service Leave Authority during the period since October 1997 when the member for Brisbane Central, the then honourable Leader of the Opposition made those statements and when the Minister made those statements today. There is quite a significant disparity.

Similar differences in arithmetic occur throughout. We are concerned that those differences do not come back to bite the taxpayers of this State, as we have seen so often, and as we saw with WorkCover—the workers compensation scheme. At the end of the day, it is small businesses that will have to pick it up, unless it comes out of consolidated revenue. As the money came out of consolidated revenue, it was the taxpayers who bailed out the WorkCover scheme. Had that not occurred, small businesses would have had to. The taxpayers' contribution of \$35m a year has not been recognised as saving small business from that particular onslaught of costs that would have occurred in that instance.

There are similar differences when the honourable member for Kedron, the Minister, and the Premier discussed Labor's radical proposal to let contracts for 150 public houses to be built under the Housing Industry Trade Training Scheme, thereby enabling Labor to match the coalition allocation of housing to this particular scheme.

I could go on at length, but I think that I have already shown the very significant concerns that this side of the House has because of the failings we have seen over and over again when these people in the Labor Party are running these programs. The funding problems that they experience speak for themselves. It is obvious that they did not throw in \$105m out of Labor Party funds for WorkCover. It is little wonder that we are concerned about seeing the taxpayers having to pick up the tab each time.

We believe that this Bill is totally unnecessary. The funding for this training should clearly come out of consolidated revenue. I think that this highlights that the Minister is simply not up to the job. He has failed the trainees and the young people of the State yet again, because he has not been able to honour his election commitments without raiding this hollow log.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (5.29 p.m.): The Building and Construction Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Amendment Bill 1998 has to be supported. The figures provided in the second-reading speech show that 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. This represented a fall of approximately 30% in investment in training by employers. The worrying thing is that Queensland accounted for \$8m of that national decline, or 56%. Those figures are sobering, and I am glad to see the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the Government taking positive action. The funds will be available through moneys that are surplus to the requirements of the Portable Long Service Leave Fund. This is a good scheme which has industry support, and it deserves our support.

Yesterday, when referring to Breaking the Unemployment Cycle, I think it was the Premier who alerted us to the shortage of boilermakers, requiring people to be brought in from, I think, Korea. That is a shameful situation. As I have pointed out previously, my electorate has the second-lowest percentage of people with skills. By "skills" I do not mean a university degree; I mean a trade qualification. Anything that can be done to improve that situation and to provide opportunities to gain skills for those young people and young families in my electorate will have my total support.

I also refer to the TAFE system. I know that the Minister is taking a great interest in the repair of TAFE. When he was the shadow Minister he came down to the Logan TAFE—I had the pleasure of accompanying him on that day—and he encountered quite a disgraceful situation. We found that the acting TAFE director in Logan was muzzled that day. She was not able to speak freely at all because the then Minister, the member for Clayfield, had told her that she was not to speak to the then shadow Minister. That was a shameful muzzling of the Public Service.

The person sent to preside over this meeting was a very respected public servant, Stan Sielaff. What was his reward for presiding over this? After the then Premier gave an undertaking that no more public servants would be sacked, Mr Sielaff was one of the ones sacked by the then Minister. That was his reward for going to the Logan TAFE college to help brief the then shadow Minister and me about the situation there. The Goss Government inherited the lowest per capita funding for TAFE of any Australian State.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The comments made by the honourable member for Logan that I sacked the former executive director of TAFE are false. I find them offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr MICKEL: If he finds the words offensive, of course I withdraw any offensive words. That does not alter the fact that Labor inherited the lowest per capita funding for TAFE in Australia when it came to power in 1989. That also meant that Queensland had some of the lowest intakes per head of population. Young people in Queensland were disadvantaged by the low level of funding and the low level of intake. Lack of training meant that Queenslanders were being further left behind.

As I said, under the Goss Government, through this Minister, the TAFE system was brought back to national average in funding. We gave people in Logan—those people seeking apprenticeships, those people seeking training—a bit of a go at it. In two and a half years this situation was virtually destroyed by the member for Clayfield. To try to ingratiate himself with the Federal Government and Minister Kemp, he tried to concertina into one year a process that had been taking three years in other States and virtually privatise it, leaving teachers out of the system and leaving courses almost abandoned.

I recognise that the Minister has an important challenge in trying to rectify that situation at the Logan TAFE, and he has my full support. I know that Carol Haase is doing her level best to try to provide training for those people. Importantly, she is trying to rectify for the people of the Logan West suburbs the situation brought about by the complete neglect that went on for two and a half years.

I also congratulate the new Director-General, Mr Bob Marshman, for altering what had been two and a half years of bureaucratic neglect at that senior level in relation to the people of Logan. It has taken only a couple of months. I have had Bob Marshman out in the area with some senior people from the department to see what sort of extension services can be provided. I know that the member for Crows Nest is deeply interested in this, because he knows that if we can get training there will be training for people such as the folks in Crows Nest. Once we get that training going and give them hope, both in Logan and Crows Nest, people's ability to obtain and retain a job is enhanced. I know that the member for Crows Nest would not

support the member for Clayfield; he is just being dragged along with him.

I also congratulate another group interested in training, wanting to help out wherever it can. I refer to the Greenbank RSL. It has 51,000 members. I declare my pecuniary interest by saying that I am one of them. As a result of its recent extension, Greenbank RSL has taken on 50 people. It is seeking to set up traineeships so that it can train people in the hospitality industry. The RSL employs many locals in the Logan West suburbs and I congratulate it on wanting to participate in the scheme set up by the director-general of the department. Another person taking an interest in trying to provide that extension service is David Jack from the Logan West Community Centre. Anything we can do to improve the accessibility of training in Logan West is something that I know the Minister supports and it is something that I, as the local member, support.

I know that the traineeship program being offered in Salisbury has been touched on, because it is in the electorate of the member for Archerfield. There is \$3m in this budget for that program. It is a very good scheme. I am hoping that the students in my electorate can access it. As I have told the House before, the problem in my electorate is one of a lack of transport to access those services. The Brisbane City Council, through the Labor administration of course, has set up a bus service that goes from the Grand Plaza in Browns Plains. It will now take students all the way to the Salisbury traineeship scheme. That will be a big asset in trying to overcome the tyranny of distance that people in those outer metropolitan areas face.

The other service I am trying to secure, along with my colleague the member for Springwood, is one that makes sure students can access the Logan TAFE college from east to west. I congratulate the member for Springwood on the energy he is showing in relation to that and for the representations he has made to the Minister for Transport in that regard.

I note from the Minister's second-reading speech that Government departments will promote traineeships. I refer particularly to the efforts being made by the Public Works Department. Maybe I will get into trouble with the Government for saying this, but so be it. I really want that maintenance money given to the Department of Education put back in with the Public Works Department. The reason for that is very straightforward. In my view, it should never have been taken over there. It

was a mistake. I think it was a mistake by the previous Government under the Leading Schools program, by which this responsibility was to be devolved to school principals.

I believe that a school principal should be interested in the welfare of the school community and the educational curriculum opportunities. It should not be the principal's role to have to work out what maintenance money the school needs or what maintenance program is needed. The Public Works Department provides a very important maintenance program in regional rural Queensland. I notice that the member for Burnett is in the Chamber. The program that the department provides in Bundaberg is first rate for all those small schools. That responsibility should never have been given to the Department of Education.

The Department of Public Works employs the greatest number of apprentices in the building program. It is very sad, when I attend P & C meetings, to find that some of those attending believe that Public Works should be done away with so that they can employ a contractor.

Mr Sullivan: And they want to get rid of Q-Build.

Mr MICKEL: That is what I have said. I am behind the times. It does not matter. I would rather be right than consistent. The point is this: the department employs the apprentices; a contractor would not do that, because they have to get the lowest price. So if we want to stick with apprentices, we have to stick with Q-Build. I make no apology for saying that. Members can distribute these remarks around my electorate. I would be happy to defend apprentices any day of the week.

Mr Pearce: Quality of work.

Mr MICKEL: Their quality of work is outstanding.

I also want to touch on another issue. We are employing contractors now—and I notice that Suncorp is starting to do it—in the motor trades and the vehicle repair industry. They are trying to squeeze the margins for those vehicle repair operators. I believe that means that many of those small businesses will go to the wall. As well, it will reduce the ability of that repair industry to take on apprentices. That is something that we all have to guard against. They are trying to reduce the margins. And Suncorp has been just as guilty of this as anyone else. I encourage the Minister to have a close look at that, because it is an issue that

I want to return to at a later date when I have a bit more time.

Yesterday, I was disappointed—I was shocked, actually—that the One Nation Party wanted to attack the setting up of the dairy processing industry in my electorate. Although that would create jobs for Queenslanders and jobs for Logan, that joker over there wants to oppose it. We get a humble firm in my electorate, and that cackle over there want to oppose it.

Dr Prenzler interjected.

Mr MICKEL: Did the member say that he opposes the jobs going to Logan? I will remember that, and when I next do a report to the people of Logan I will let them know that the One Nation Party opposed that factory and those jobs opportunities—120 jobs.

Dr PRENZLER: I rise to a point of order. I did not say that we oppose jobs going to Logan at all.

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

Dr PRENZLER: That is what the member said that I said, but I did not say that at all. I ask him to withdraw that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member did not say that the remark was offensive. There is no point of order. If he did not say those words, there is no point of order.

Mr MICKEL: If it satisfies the member, I will withdraw it. I just noted that members of the One Nation Party oppose that industry and those jobs going to Logan. The member for Tablelands opposed it yesterday. I know what they are all about: no more job opportunities for Logan. Did members see the pathetic performance from the member for Whitsunday when he opposed it? Pauline Hanson said that kids could leave school at 14 or 15 and get apprenticeships. She loses, goes out of sight, and so does One Nation's policy.

I support the Bill. Of course, I want the Minister to make sure that those people in Logan get every opportunity to gain those apprenticeships, which we consider to be absolutely vital for their future.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (5.44 p.m.): In his second-reading speech on 6 August, the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations made the claim that the coalition had done nothing in the area of training during its time in office, except for a massive engagement in rhetoric. The member for Kedron knows all about rhetoric. He knows all about rhetoric to the exclusion of practical

and positive effort. I will take this opportunity to remind the House of the strategy that underpinned the coalition's fine efforts in training in the 28 months in which my colleague the member for Clayfield was Minister. And I turn for inspiration in this instance, firstly, to the occasion of the Construction Training Expo held in Brisbane two years ago. The member for Bulimba was present on that occasion. He may like to remind the new Minister of the occasion.

The gathering heard on that occasion the coalition Government's view that the construction industry historically had made a great contribution to the development of Queensland. We should all recognise that contribution and pay it due credit. It is a major contributor to Queensland's economy and a significant employer of the State's work force. It is true, as my colleague the member for Clayfield pointed out on that occasion—as he had done previously and has done subsequently—that there has been a reduction in the number of formally trained tradespeople currently working in the industry. He referred to the fact that evidence suggests that the majority of workers in the industry do not hold formal qualifications and to the fact that there had been a drop-off in the number of apprentices in training over the preceding two years, following a peak in 1995.

But what was not perhaps widely known at that time—outside the construction industry itself—was that, by the third quarter of 1997, there were more apprentices in training in the building tradespersons category than there were in 1990—a 13% increase, in fact. At that time, the Opposition—the Labor Party now in office but not in power—was making a lot of the reduction in new apprenticeship approvals over the preceding couple of years. It was, of course, ignoring the cyclical nature of the construction industry—something that relates to another factor that the Labor Party historically has had difficulty comprehending: the law of supply and demand. This must inevitably have an impact on the intake of apprentices.

It is never surprising that, in the private sector—the sector from which the legislation we are debating proposes to obtain a concessional cash flow from workers' holiday pay to fund training—bosses who must be driven by the profit and loss account are slow to add costs when things are not going as well as they might. We would all agree that the bumps in the private sector economy should be ironed out as far as possible. The key lies in what is possible. And I just make the point that Fabian meddling has been a historic failure in

that regard. We would all agree that training our young people for a lifetime in the work force is the most important thing that we can do. And the fact is that the coalition was doing it with—on the evidence so far to hand—rather more effect than the Labor Party has demonstrated this time around.

In an economic context, Governments at both Federal and State levels in this country have to work to promote an economic environment and climate which will encourage demand and, in turn, ensure supply. That is an elementary rule of government on which there should be no argument on a partisan basis in this House. The question turns more on the ways of achieving this sort of outcome on a regular and sustained basis. In the construction industry, the subject of the legislation before us at the moment, subcontracting, for example, brings into play complications that do not exist in other sectors and for which, if I may make another critical observation about the relative weight of rhetoric versus action where this minority Labor Government is concerned, the ALP's history and political imperatives seem ill equipped.

High-level training wages is one such case in point. There remains a broad consensus among employers—one acknowledged by the union movement; a factor that deserves to be noted—that these are often too high to encourage private sector employers to take on apprentices. In Opposition, the member for Brisbane Central sought to persuade us that the answer lay in a compulsory training levy imposed by the Government—one of those Clayton's taxes; the tax you pay when the Government of the day does not want you to wake up to the fact that you are paying a tax. He takes the same view in Government, as we know. That is why we are having this debate today. But however the Premier and his Minister for Training dress up this little scam, the fact remains that a training levy in the construction industry is simply another new tax for home buyers and developers to pay—a new tax that effectively will force up the price of building a house or high-rise apartment block and thereby help to reduce demand. That is exactly the opposite of the outcome that a development-friendly Government should be seeking.

There are better ways to achieve the thoroughly laudable goal of a better trained building and construction industry work force. It would be better to focus on the wage issue within the industry's cost structure rather than add a further bureaucratic element to that structure. That is something else that Labor has yet to understand as it grapples with the

horrific difficulty of dragging its early 20th century class struggle mentality into the bright future of the 21st century.

When the member for Clayfield as Minister introduced the portable long service leave levy in 1997, it was well received by the industry and the community for the cost-reduction effect it brought to bear. What we have now, of course, is a Labor plan to get round the unpleasant public relations downside of a formal training levy by raiding the Portable Long Service Leave Fund. This minority Labor regime wants to do what all meddlesome and manipulative Labor regimes have always done: it wants to rob Peter to pay Paul—in this case by happy coincidence almost literally. The difficulty for the Peter in this principle, however, is that paying Paul will in the end inevitably cost votes.

According to the Minister for Training, the building and construction industry has been calling for a training levy. He said in his second-reading speech that we had ignored those plaintive cries for help while we were in office. He went on to say—and I believe his words are worth repeating—that Labor's initiatives offer substance that equates to real jobs and real skills. He said—

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

So that those opposite hear it one more time, I repeat: the coalition is the jobs-building party. The coalition produced 40% of all of Australia's new jobs when it held office in Queensland between February 1996 and June 1998. That is a proud record and one that gives the lie to Labor's self-serving prevarication on the issue. I remind members opposite that when the Goss Government left power, growth in Queensland was 2.2%. When this Labor Government took office the figure had grown under the coalition Government to 4.5%. I am pleased to see that the Minister is modest enough not to claim that he can create his brave new world in six days plus smoko time. He will not be curing the problem overnight. We can be sure of that at least.

Training is a complex issue made more complicated in this instance by the fact that Labor's much-vaunted jobs creation strategy—a strategy that owes its true sense of urgency less to the predicament of Queensland's

young job seekers than to the Premier's political requirement to deliver the undeliverable, his 5% promise—relies overwhelmingly on the public sector. It is the private sector that drives Queensland. It is the small-business sector that drives Queensland. This is the private enterprise State, the small-business State. Does Labor know that? Does Labor really care?

The coalition's jobs creation strategy—now being undermined by Labor's meddling—encouraged work-based training that reduced the need for apprentices to spend long periods away from their workplace. It demands training programs that are flexible and which offer short-term training arrangements. It is private sector oriented. It is aimed at delivering training in the productive, wealth-creating private sector. Labor's recipe instead carries the threat of a return to the failures of the past. It is important that that is recognised, particularly since the Government-run—or at least Government-controlled—training regime promoted by this Government proposes to fund a dubious public policy by raiding the holiday funds of private sector workers.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister told the House that as of 30 June this year the building and construction industry portable long service leave scheme had investment funds of \$144m. The Minister—and one could almost see the gleam in his eye when he mentioned this—said that that represented many times the amount required to cover payments of claims. Aha! There was a surplus, a hollow log for Labor to scrape out in pursuit of money to fund its manipulation of the industry. It never makes good financial sense to raid funds simply because there is a surplus that can, with the stroke of a ministerial pen, be made available for immediate use. It makes far less sense when the use to which it is planned to put those funds lies outside the ambit of the original intent. It is close to downright daylight robbery to seize the funds of building industry workers without so much as a by-your-leave.

There are many great workers in the building industry who toil long and hard to earn their crust. They are entitled to view the balance in the long service leave fund as theirs, collectively, to be used for the purpose for which it was collected and on which their fund can earn interest in the commercial deposit market. That is what is so wrong with the Government's smash-and-grab policy in this instance. It is not the Government's money; it is the workers' money. For the benefit of the Minister, I repeat: it is the workers' money. It does not deserve to be

turned into a tax on effort and enterprise at either end of the building industry—the input end, where the workers are, or the output end, where the buyers are.

It is also worrisome that these amendments to the coalition's sensible arrangements are predicated by the Minister on the basis that they represent no additional cost either to industry or the Government—for which, read the taxpayer. The danger is that another financial raid precedent is being set. The danger is that once a justification has been found to siphon \$5.4m a year out of the building and construction industry workers' holiday fund, some justification will be found in the future to siphon off a few more dollars.

I turn now to an organisation in Bundaberg that has done a lot towards the creation of apprenticeships and traineeships for young people. I refer to the role that BACAS plays. BACAS is a public company limited by guarantee that was formed in 1986 to help increase the level of apprenticeships and later traineeships that were available in the Bundaberg district. It is one of more than 100 such group training companies in operation throughout Australia employing more than 26,000 apprentices and trainees. Currently BACAS employs 129 apprentices, 60 trainees and 28 administrative training staff. No doubt the members opposite would join with me in commending BACAS for the efforts that it makes in providing a future for young people.

BACAS was created in 1986 in response to a need. It was delivered by private enterprise. It has a board. The original chairman, Mr Phil Ainsworth, is still the chairman of BACAS, which is funded by private enterprise with assistance from the Government. The manager of BACAS, Mr Tom Quinn, is well known to many members. He has provided excellent leadership in the role that he has played between 1986 and 1998.

Mr Santoro: He is one of the outstanding trainers in Queensland.

Mr SLACK: He is one of the outstanding trainers in Queensland. He has been recognised by an OAM in the 1997 honours list. He has been recognised by industry with several awards over the years. We need to pay tribute to the role that he plays in the Bundaberg area. The scheme that he administers provides 70% of the trainees and apprentices in the building industry in the Bundaberg region, which includes Monto, Gayndah and Mundubbera. Since 1986, many young people have gained jobs and

employment through the contribution that has been made by BACAS and by the people associated with it. I take the opportunity to commend those people for the contribution that they have made to the employment of young people.

I would like to point out that the administrative costs have been contributed by Government. \$146,000 has been provided by a combination of funding from this Government, the previous Government and the Commonwealth Government. Industry itself contributes a considerable amount of money to BACAS.

Mr Speaker, as you are well aware, members of the Opposition are very supportive of apprenticeships and traineeships. Through the efforts of the previous Minister, the now Opposition spokesperson, over the short years that we were in Government the coalition developed policies that contributed to a considerable number of people being employed in the construction industry. It is wrong for the Government to imply that little or nothing was done by the coalition in the two and a half years that we were in office. As members opposite well know, the figures speak for themselves: 40% of all jobs created in Australia in the period that the coalition was in Government were created in Queensland.

Debate, on motion of Mr Slack, adjourned.

PRIVATISATION OF TAB

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (6.01 p.m.): I move—

"That this House supports the privatisation of the Queensland TAB."

If ever there was a motion that deserved the full support of this House—from all of those members in whose electorates there are racetracks, dog tracks, harness racing complexes, TABs, clubTABs, pubTABs right across this great State—it is this motion. It deserves support from every member of this House whose constituents are transport operators, who work for feed companies, who are veterinarians, who work for catering companies, who are farriers, office staff, TAB staff, trainers, jockeys or stable hands. In fact, across this State more than 25,000 people are employed in an industry that is the very much under threat at this particular moment. If the Queensland TAB does not privatise, the jobs of many of those people are very much under threat.

I know that there are people in the Labor Party who are totally opposed to the

privatisation of the TAB. I know that there are people within the Labor Party who are totally in favour of it. As members would recall, last year the ALP State conference passed an urgency resolution opposing TAB privatisation. In fact, until only recently, the Premier indicated his caution on privatisation. Earlier this week in this place, it was pleasing to hear him indicate that perhaps he had changed his mind a little on the issue. In fact, the words that he used in this House on Tuesday could not be more true. He stated—

"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."

Even with the privatisation of the TAB, the level of TAB wagering tax revenue to the Government would still be at 25%. However, it would allow Queensland to be able to ward off the scavengers; for Queensland and the Queensland TAB to be even more competitive. Not only did the Premier make those statements in the Parliament but also he made statements publicly. On 20 October, an article in the *Courier-Mail* stated—

"Signalling the Government's intention to privatise the TAB, Mr Beattie said yesterday he and Racing Minister Bob Gibbs would argue strongly for the proposed sale."

Then, also on 20 October on the Carolyn Tucker program, the Premier stated—

"I've signalled my support for the privatisation because I think if we don't the TAB has a very bleak future."

The Premier is 100% right. I refer to the answer that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing gave to me during the Estimates committee hearings. This answer is part of the basis for the whole argument. I asked him a question in relation to TAB tax revenue. I asked him about the fact that it is now 36%. The Minister stated—

"It is currently 34%, which puts us at a distinct disadvantage, as you know, compared with Victoria and New South Wales. Once we corporatise it on 1 January it will come down to 28%. If we

are then able to go down the road of privatisation, it will come down from 28% to 25%, and that 3% difference—that is, Queensland will have 25% as compared with Victoria and New South Wales, which have 28%—will offset the distinct advantage that they have in relation to poker machine revenue into their TABs."

The Minister is spot-on. If it comes down to 25%, we will have that 3% advantage that we do not have now and we will not have under corporatisation.

The Queensland racing industry in all three codes has identified a number of issues which, in themselves, have not helped in the battle for the State's gambling dollar. Let me say that I think that the three codes have done a pretty darned good job in putting their strategic plans together. For the first time in many years, they have shown some sort of partisanship. I refer to the thoroughbred strategic plan, because the industry has gone out and identified for itself some of the problems within the industry. The plan outlines the problems as follows—

"Racing's ability to compete effectively with other forms of gambling and entertainment (eg the industry's share of the Queensland gambling market plummeted from 74% to only 18% since the start of the 1980s);

Rapidly changing lifestyles and consumer leisure patterns;

Heightened competition from privatised interstate TABs."

I refer to TABs such as TABCorp in Victoria, which is already privatised, already into Queensland, and already seeking out those markets. The plan has identified those factors. The plan states further—

"Too many race meetings and races, contributing to comparatively small field sizes and poor quality racing."

I congratulate the industry on identifying those sorts of problems. However, we have to be able to fix them. As a Government, we have to allow industry to take control of its own destiny so that it can compete with those other organisations.

This will be a real test. This debate tonight will be most interesting, because for probably the first time and probably the last time the Opposition is going in to bat for the Minister. It is a strange situation indeed when the Minister supports the privatisation of the TAB, the Premier lends his support to the privatisation of the TAB, many members of the Government who have spoken to me privately on this issue

are supporting the privatisation of the TAB, the coalition supports the privatisation of the TAB, the industry supports the privatisation of the TAB, yet the most important decision on the future of one of this State's greatest industries will come down to the vote of a few party hacks at an ALP State conference.

I will refer again to the Premier's comments made in this House the other day. One of the issues that has been raised by the ASU and Janice Mayes is job security. Even the Premier has said—

"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."

The Premier is spot-on. At the moment, we have an industry that does not have growth, because in other States of Australia two large TABs have decided to privatise. They are out there competing directly against Queensland. If we allow the industry to make the move to privatise, we can compete on even better than a level playing field. If there is growth in the industry, there are jobs in the industry. If we do not achieve that growth and allow this great racing industry of ours to wither on the vine, there will be job losses.

This is going to test who is really running this State. Is it the Premier and his Caucus colleagues or is it the union heavies and the party hacks? The decision at the ALP State conference will send a clear message to Queensland on who is leading this State. Is it Janice Mayes, Don Brown and Bill Ludwig or Peter Beattie and Bob Gibbs?

Already this week we have seen and heard all about the aggressive exploits of the privatised Victorian TABCorp in Queensland. I hope that the Minister is considering talking to his Crown law advisers in relation to some legislative amendments that may prevent what is happening with TABCorp in Queensland. The important thing to remember is that if privatisation is to go ahead and it is done right, it may give the average Queensland mum and dad the chance to invest in a major company without having to have a bet.

This is a chance for the Parliament and we must not walk away from it. If almost everybody agrees with it, why cannot this motion be passed tonight? Tonight's debate

will send the message that the Parliament debated the issue and resolved to show bipartisan support for the Queensland racing industry. The thousands of constituents—both yours and mine—who derive an income from the racing industry, who put food on their tables at night, educate and clothe their kids and put petrol in their cars because of the racing industry will get the message that members of Parliament from both sides of politics have agreed to support them.

Time expired.

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (6.11 p.m.): I have great pleasure in seconding the motion. This is not a case where people have been screaming and yelling in an attempt to convince others that this is the right way to go. I was the Racing Minister when we started to move towards privatisation. In moving from stage 1 to stage 2, the corporatisation side of the process, we involved people from across-the-board and I kept the current Minister fully informed. We brought together people from all sides of politics, such as Ian Brusasco, Jim Kennedy, Craig Black and John Crowley, who are heavily involved in what was a fragmented industry. If one could get the people from the harness racing, greyhound and thoroughbred industries together and one achieved some unity, it would be nothing short of a miracle. However, that sort of thing happened, not because we said that the industry must privatise but because the industry itself wanted to privatise. People in the industry know very well that the chances of surviving against the Victoria and New South Wales organisations are slim, if not almost hopeless. No-one can tell me that the consultation process has not taken place. It has taken place and it has been going on for months and months. The industry itself was constantly saying, "When are we going to bring this together? Let us bring it together." I table all of the press releases and any other information that people may want.

To those people who are having trouble making up their minds, all I can say is that a lot of work has been done, and members opposite cannot claim otherwise. They can catch up on it. I say that quite openly and in the friendliest possible way, because we are only speaking for the industry—all the people whom the member for Toowoomba North mentioned, the little players and the big ones, and all of the people who enjoy racing and want to see the industry competing with the southern States. For example, the other day this case was presented to me: in Queensland, a racing pool can get 2 to 1 for its horse, but it will be listed in Sydney at 7 to

1. People know damn well that we are on a loser up here. Therefore, this is really about sticking up for the industry.

Control of the industry will stay in Queensland. TAB headquarters will always stay here. Under the coalition, the racing industry was going to be in a position to control and own the TAB. Therefore, both sides of the racing industry would have controlled it. Such things are possible under the scheme that we have going. However, if we wait and procrastinate, the industry will lose badly.

To give people a rough idea of the benefits that would have flowed to the racing industry, in the first year it would have received approximately \$20m. That money could have gone towards increasing prize money, improving infrastructure and so on. That was to be done by cutting taxes from 34% to 28% in the first stage. We were ready to rock and roll with Stage 2, which would have seen the tax rate drop from 34% to 25%. Therefore, the Government of the day would have forgone \$20m-odd in revenue, which is a massive hit for the industry. The coalition planned to forgive a \$31m debt, which would have provided another massive hit for the industry, and give it \$10m up front to boot. That package was worth an extra \$20m to the industry. That was the sort of thing that it hungered for, and still does. The people who talk about the loss of jobs and those who want to listen to the Janice Mayes of this world are backing a loser. Janice Mayes does not know what she is talking about and it is unfortunate that people listen to her.

There has been a tremendous and rare unity in the racing industry, be it intracode or intercode. A common purpose can bring the three codes of the industry together, and the common purpose that exists is to privatise so that the industry can have total control of its own destiny. It will be able to grow and expand in Queensland, Australia and various parts of the world. That is the modern way; that is the information technology way. It is going to happen anyway and we do not want to be left at the start. This is far too important.

I feel sorry for those who say they want more consultation, because there has already been so much consultation. We must give the racing industry a chance, because the industry covers all political bounds. It affects the little people, the big people, everyone who loves a bet and everyone who owns a horse or a dog. The coalition is supporting and sticking up for those people. For heaven's sake, let us get on with the job. As I said, I used to keep the current Minister informed of what we were

doing and I know full that the Minister, Ian Brusasco and people from either side of politics support privatisation.

Time expired.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND)
(6.17 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'That', and insert the following—

'given the importance of the racing industry of Queensland and particularly the implications of any change to the TAB to the racing industry, that the issue of privatisation requires a full and informed debate as part of a formal legislative process.'

My main reason for moving the amendment is that this is a very important issue. I do not dispute that there has already been a great deal of debate, discussion and research into the privatisation or non-privatisation of the TAB. However, because of its importance to the industry, this is not a decision that we should be making in a one-hour debate at 6 o'clock on this sitting night, when no preparatory work has really been done. My last briefing on TAB Queensland was probably 12 months ago with the previous Minister. We had a well-informed discussion and he certainly had every suit from around the place in the room. They told me about their aspirations for the TAB. However, some concerns remain.

I have a personal opposition to the privatisation of public assets. The racing community in my own electorate has a split view on the privatisation of the TAB. In the last little while I certainly have not discussed their current views with them, because I was not expecting this debate to come up. I certainly have concerns about the effect of privatisation on country racing, especially the smaller racing clubs. We may see the demise of some of the country clubs. The Calliope club has about four race meetings a year, which are terrific. Gladstone City has a very active racing community. How will it affect them? I have received anecdotal advice that they will be better off, but I have yet to be convinced that that is the case. I have yet to hear the views of my own electorate on the issue.

From briefings and information that I have received in the past two years it would appear that the TAB is in financial trouble, and that its returns will deteriorate over time and will continue to deteriorate. However, in the last financial report for the TAB, its returns had

increased. I still have not received a logical reply or response as to why that is occurring. If in the last 12 months there has been such a huge amount of pressure on TAB from southern betting, why is TAB Queensland still returning a healthy profit?

I have read the comments of the Premier, the Honourable Mr Beattie, regarding the TAB sale. I have also had a number of meetings with Janice Mayes from the union, who holds grave concerns about the employment stability for workers in the TAB. Again, this is an issue that we keep talking about. We keep talking about the need to retain jobs for people, and yet historically privatisation processes almost guarantee that jobs will disappear. We have to look very carefully at any guarantees with respect to the long-term work force in the TAB.

I notice that the Premier's position has changed on the privatisation of the TAB. Even if he is not going to address us on that subject tonight, he will in the very near future. I am not saying that this matter has to be put aside for months and months to come, but I reiterate that I do not believe it is an issue in respect of which we have had adequate time to be informed after its being raised this morning without notice for debate this afternoon. There are a lot of new members who may or may not have been briefed on the matter. I believe it is important that in the process of making a final decision on this matter we are fully informed, that we have a full and open debate, and that all of the information relating to the matter is available to all members. I commend the amendment to the House.

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (6.20 p.m.): I am happy to second the amendment moved by the member for Gladstone. I understand that One Nation is to move an amendment. I am happy with that amendment also. I accept that amendment. In saying so, I agree with what the member for Gladstone said. In an hour it is impossible to have a constructive debate about what will probably be one of the most important issues for the Queensland racing industry in the future.

I accept that the member for Toowoomba North has brought the motion to the House in a spirit of goodwill, but I question the politics of his doing so this evening. However, although there will be a difference in the wording of the motion, broadly speaking there will be some bipartisanship displayed this evening. I was going to move an amendment as follows—

that all head office functions currently undertaken in Queensland remain in this State;

that a redundancy package is in place for employees in the extremely unlikely event of job losses at the TAB;

that market conditions allow for a favourable sale price;

that the final package provides fair and equitable value to investors in the TAB Queensland;

that the sale of the TAB only proceeds with the support of the racing industry and is subject to ongoing contractual negotiations between the industry and Government; and

that it be subject to the industry's support for the Racing Industry Strategic Plan due to be completed later this year.

Obviously one of the grave concerns that people have—and it is a legitimate concern—relates to the jobs of the Telebet operators of the Queensland TAB. I accept that. I think anybody coming from the Labor side of politics who did not accept that would be out of touch. I remember in Opposition that that was an issue that I discussed with the then Minister, Russell Cooper, on a number of occasions.

As a result of my concerns about that matter, I have recently given a direction to the board of the TAB to commence negotiations with the ASU in a spirit of trying to work out a proper and equitable outcome that would cover any redundancies that may take place as a result of corporatisation or privatisation. I do not believe that there will be job losses under either of those circumstances.

Recently, as a result of the introduction of home viewing on Sky, we have seen a massive growth rate in the TAB. Approximately another 40 operators have started at Telebet. The working hours that they have been offered have increased by about 60%. Home betting accounts, which normally run at about 210 new accounts per week being opened up at the TAB, are being opened up at in excess of 1,000 per week at present.

The threat to future job security at the TAB will not come from corporatisation or privatisation. The biggest threat to jobs at the TAB will be technology changes in the future. I do not have the answer to that. I do not think any member in this House has the answer to that. Earlier, I was telling some members that the Hong Kong Jockey Club has almost perfected a system that I understand will be put in place at the New South Wales TAB possibly within the next 18 months to two years. People will record a phone bet straight into a computer. The computer will voice identify people's accounts and the wager will

be laid. That is the way technology is going. I do not know how that can be stopped.

The other issue that people have a concern about is that head office functions must remain in Queensland. I agree with that. It is a State institution of Queensland. That is why I share with members from One Nation and other members in this Parliament a commitment to ensure that whatever form, if it is approved by the party conference, that the sale should take—and, again, I remember that we shared this point of view before—it must remain primarily in the hands of Queensland investors. There is no intention on behalf of me or the Treasurer to allow the New South Wales TAB or the Victorian TAB to take up the majority shareholding in it. That is not the aim at all. Certainly, I would see that part of the strategic plan of the TAB in the future would be to try to be a bit predatory in relation to South Australia or the Northern Territory—

Time expired.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (6.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment to the amendment moved by the member for Gladstone—

"Add the following words after 'process'—

'and that all steps are taken to ensure that in the future no jobs—full time or part time—are lost in the corporatisation and privatisation process. Furthermore, that in any public float Queenslanders would have a controlling ownership of TABQ.'

I wrote an incredible speech on the presumption that I would get an absolute flogging for moving this amendment.

Government members interjected.

Mr NELSON: I did. I was incredibly wrong. I am used to taking an absolute pounding when I stand up to speak in this place. However, tonight, after negotiations and the reaching of a couple of agreements, we have managed, I think, to come to a consensus in this House. This comes as an absolute shock to me.

Mr Gibbs interjected.

Mr NELSON: I must say that, yes, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing has treated us rather fairly, and I acknowledge that. However, I will continue with my prepared speech, because I feel that as a member of One Nation and as a person who has to speak out on these subjects I should make some of the points that I wished to make.

Let me make it clear that One Nation in principle is opposed to the privatisation of public assets. Too often Governments sell the farm to pay for all sorts of other bills and debts that outrageous election promises land them with. Corporatisation and privatisation are the processes that destroy jobs and put profits above people. Economic rationalism is the real issue here—the concept of shedding jobs for profits. Of course selling TABQ would generate a profit. Similar to the sale of Telstra, those profits could be large. I wish to highlight that it was the Federal coalition Government that sold off Telstra—something that was opposed very strongly, and rightly so, by Federal Labor.

Similar to the sale of Telstra, I fear that the profits would be used to fund more election promises and used to provide a false Budget surplus, therefore making the Government's job of reducing unemployment to 5% a little more realistic. The facts are completely ignored in most cases in this House. Politics always gets in the way. TABQ generates a massive amount of income for the State. Millions of dollars are already poured into Government coffers from taxes and statutory remittances. In Victoria, non-TAB meetings were radically reduced in number and therefore regional areas were affected the most by privatisation. This fact clearly shows that privatisation is not in the best interests of Queensland—a largely decentralised State with an important regional area. This is the crux of why I am opposed to this proposition. Herein lies the choice: only One Nation will defend the people of Queensland from the horrors of privatisation.

An honourable member: Rubbish!

Mr NELSON: It is not rubbish.

Mr Beattie stated in Parliament on Tuesday that the issue will go to his party's conference in Maryborough in November. Any real member of old Labor and not today's Labor would never support Mr Beattie's confused and radical shift in direction. I wonder what the hardcore unionists—wharfies, builders, labourers, and members of the Transport Workers Union—would think of today's Labor supporting the concept of privatisation, not to mention the concept of same-sex marriages. And they wonder why they lost six seats to One Nation!

I for one do not lament the fact that the Government will not listen. In doing so, it signed its death warrant. It has not heard the voice of dissent against the concept of economic rationalism. With that realisation, I believe that the old parties are on their last legs.

I could not go to my ancestors knowing that I did not do my best on their behalf. To the members of the major parties in this Chamber I say, "You sold out. You stopped fighting the good fight. You have lost your way and you are hopelessly wandering around without any direction. What are you going to do when there is nothing left to sell? You cannot sell your souls; they have already gone."

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (6.30 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment of the member for Tablelands and, in doing so, I acknowledge his support of the ASU, being an old union man himself from the TWU. I am sure he reflects the feelings of most unionists in this matter.

I agree that in this debate many have lost their way, but selling out a public utility is not the answer. The only short-term lift out is the bandaid solution—a bandaid for spending. It will only be used to fund election promises, and even then it is dubious as to whether or not it will really work out in that way. This is a classic case of killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

An Opposition member: That's original.

Mr FELDMAN: It certainly is. The figures from 1991 to 1997 actually show that TABQ returned \$584m in State taxes and other statutory remittances to Queenslanders. The Queensland racing industry also received \$335m in direct funding. What more could I possibly say? This is income, and income that will be there for the long term. It is not a one-off. It is self-funding and it is a sure-fire investment in Queensland's future. Selling it off is unthinkable. One Nation will never support the sell-off.

We look also at the concept of privatisation. Is it all that it is made out to be? Will it really be of any benefit to Queensland at all? Let me give honourable members an example. When Suncorp-Metway goes through privatisation, it is expected that around 1,500 jobs will be lost. Privatisation will not benefit the unemployed of this State at all. It will not provide a long-term solution for unemployment—not for anyone. I have spoken with Janice Mayne from the ASU, and she has lobbied me heavily in respect to what she believes may be the loss of full-time and part-time jobs in the privatisation/corporatisation of the TABQ, and I cannot support that sort of job loss. Another loser in this debate will be regional Australia. Federal Labor has shown its extreme lack of respect for regional Australia with the recent appointment of the well-known

turncoat Mrs Kernot as its spokesperson on this topic. Now the Queensland Government intends to do the same by taking away non-TAB races in the bush. When will it learn?

Let us get this in perspective. We can stop this. I am sure now that the member for Nicklin will support this motion, as will the Independent member for Gladstone. I say to these members, "Here is your chance to really support the non-privatisation/corporatisation of these industries. I am pleading with you on behalf of the people and on behalf of 438,000 Queenslanders who voted for One Nation for support on the amendment to this motion. This is not too much to ask and it is something that I am sure you will be able to support." The plea also goes to our friends from Labor, who are still old Labor, "Think about what you do. Think of your voters and supporters. Think of the platform that you stand on. Just have the integrity to stand up for your principles and not vote along the party line." I say that especially for the benefit of the members for Bundaberg, Rockhampton and Mackay.

In closing, I say that privatisation is a flawed and dangerous concept. The people of Australia are against it and they have shown that with the vote for Telstra. The Labor Party was once against it before its recent backflip. Now the only voice for the destruction of economic rationalism is the One Nation Party. Tonight, if justice is to prevail, I am sure this motion will be passed in the right manner.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.34 p.m.): I think tonight's debate in this Parliament is a very important one. When we talk about a debate such as this, we need to talk about some of the history of this matter. I have just heard the two members from One Nation who said that basically they are against privatisation, they are against changing or doing anything to the TAB and there is nothing that we could do to shift them. The reality of life is that, when we talk about the TAB in Queensland, we have to realise that it only commenced operations in Queensland on 11 August 1962. So people such as One Nation members would have been arguing in 1961 "do not bring in the TAB".

Those sort of arguments are silly because they fail to recognise two important things, that is, as we all know, history is evolving and changing all of the time. In this world, as we are now, we have to deal with the changes that are occurring in technology and the demands that that technology causes in raising capital. Organisations such as the TAB just do not exist on thin air. We do not put the massive computer technology in for nothing;

we have to do that by raising significant amounts of capital.

I think we all know the history of why the TAB started in Queensland. Basically, it was founded out of the increasing incidence of illegal betting via SP bookmakers. Of course, at that time the betting laws in Queensland were very restrictive. If punters wanted to have a bet in this State, they were required to attend a racecourse and bet with a registered bookmaker. Would anyone seriously suggest in this year that, if people wanted to have a bet, they had to go to the racecourse and they had to bet with a registered bookmaker? No, because the reality is that history changes. Of course, for some people it changes; for most of us it changes.

The TAB came into existence and it offered legalised betting and some protection from the law. Of course, it got rid of the problem that was occurring with SP bookmakers, which was the extension of credit. So it got rid of one of the worst aspects of SP bookmaking. Importantly, it also provided to clubs throughout the State profits from the TAB. Through people betting off the course, the money was able to go back to those courses.

What we have had here and what we are going to have is a series of myths about the TAB. The first one, of course, is that the TAB provides profits to the Government. The reality is that that does not happen; it never has. It has never provided the Government with profits from wagering. All profits from the TAB are reinvested in the racing industry for prize money and infrastructure development. As the member for Crows Nest said, the industry itself wants the change. That is the reality.

The argument about job losses is a complex argument, but the reality is that there have been no forced redundancies from the sale of the TAB in New South Wales or in Victoria. Of course, if we sit on our hands and do nothing and do not raise the necessary capital that is needed, privatisation is going to be forced upon us. As the Minister said, as technology changes and the ability is there for a person to get on the phone—even the One Nation mob opposite can get on the phone and make a phone call to Victoria and bet through the Victorian TAB or, if they are in New South Wales, they will bet through the New South Wales TAB. So technology is changing. Surely they know how to use a phone. That is the problem. Of course, some advantages come through changing technology. As the Minister said, pay TV racing has had the effect of increasing employment opportunities.

The issues of technology are driving our society. Whatever one thinks and whatever one does, in the end that is going to determine where jobs are. What is important about this is that the Government has ensured that a redundancy package for any TAB person who loses their job is in place, whether it is related to the sale of the TAB or not. They are the two issues that we have to deal with. The other myth, of course, is that the Queensland TAB can compete effectively in its current state. The reality is that the TAB now faces increasing competition from other forms of gambling. There are now forms of legalised gambling that many years ago people thought would never be possible.

Time expired.

Mrs GAMIN (Burleigh—NPA) (6.39 p.m.): This Parliament has a responsibility to do all it can to protect Queensland's very proud racing industry. That is why I support tonight's original motion, as moved by the member for Toowoomba North, calling on this Parliament to give its endorsement to the privatisation of the TAB. The Opposition has no problem with the amendment moved by the member for Tablelands, but we cannot support the amendment moved by the member for Gladstone, as supported by Government members.

The issues are quite clear and we do not need further procrastination. Tonight's original motion presented a unique opportunity, because it would have allowed the Premier and the Minister for Racing to stand by their word and support the State coalition. The carriage of the original motion could have united both sides of politics for a common good.

The racing industry contributes \$298m to Queensland's gross domestic product—that is based on 1996-97 figures—yet it is estimated that the industry contributes a further \$700m in flow-on terms. In addition, the racing industry accounts for the creation of 14,200 full-time or equivalent jobs in Queensland—6,800 created directly and 7,400 created from the industry's flow-on effect.

There is little doubt that the racing industry is an enormous economic and employment contributor to our State but, most importantly for all Queenslanders, the industry promotes an enormous amount of recreational opportunities. It is estimated that racing attracts an audience second only to Australian Rules. On the Gold Coast, where I come from, the racing industry is second only to the tourism industry in size. That is why it is important for this Parliament to stand by the

job, revenue and recreational contribution the racing industry provides. That is why it is important that we support the privatisation of the TAB.

This is not a political agenda; it is an industry agenda. The privatisation of the TAB offers the industry autonomy and responsibility. Even more importantly, it offers the industry security. The Racing Minister himself has admitted in the media that, unless we proceed down the track of privatisation, Queensland simply will not be able to stay on an equal footing with New South Wales and Victoria. The TAB's Chief Executive, Dick McIlwain, also has been quoted in the press as saying that jobs will be lost to the industry unless we proceed down this track. As the former Minister for Racing, Russell Cooper, so correctly pointed out, the privatisation of the TAB would allow the racing industry to be in the driver's seat. It would allow the industry to determine its own future.

Under the former Borbidge Government, privatisation was well on track, with Stage 2 of the plan scheduled to be implemented in the second half of this year. Since the minority Beattie Government was elected, all we have seen is procrastination. Week after week it has put this decision on hold. Now it has decided to leave it to ALP conference delegates to decide. That decision has been viewed with dismay in the racing industry as the greatest insult.

Effectively, the minority Beattie Government has said to the industry, "It's not your call. What would you know? We will leave it to our conference to decide—a conference that knows nothing whatsoever about your industry or its future." By contrast, the State coalition has always shown a strong commitment to racing. That is why, when the industry itself said that it wanted a privatised TAB, we said we would back it and we would make it work. The former Minister embarked on extensive consultation with representatives from the three racing codes—the thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing industries.

After Cabinet gave approval for the first steps towards privatisation in October 1997, the then Minister put in place a five-year interim privatisation deal which protected developmental race clubs. Part of that deal was to ensure that developmental clubs would have at least \$5.8m in financial support—equal to the current level of funding. This funding commitment gave clubs and communities confidence that their local race clubs would be safeguarded through the

transition program. This was a particularly important issue in rural and regional areas, which account for up to 40% of the revenue generated by the racing industry.

The plan put in place by the former coalition Government ensured the maintenance of a strong and viable wagering and racing industry which maximised returns to the taxpayer. The program put in place provided certainty for potential investors, TAB employees and stakeholders in the community and in the racing industry. If the coalition motion were to be passed tonight—as it should be because the Premier and the Minister have already given their public support—then honourable members could be assured that the racing industry is ready.

Time expired.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (6.44 p.m.): I am extremely happy to support the amendment proposed by the member for Gladstone and, dare I say it—I do not think even I believe this—I actually support the amendment moved by One Nation. In common with the member for Tablelands, I believe there needs to be a fuller and more informed debate about the advantages and disadvantages of privatising the TAB. In common with the member for Gladstone, I have made up my mind on the issue. The Minister knows this, but he is putting up a convincing argument.

The Premier, Mr Beattie, has come out and stated clearly his opinion on the issue. He has also demonstrated his principles in relation to it. We often hear people talking about politicians promising something and not delivering. The ALP currently has a party policy against privatisation, and rightfully so. We have a democratic party—a democratic party that selected all of the current Government members to be candidates for election, and what a good bunch it is! I am extremely confident in the ability of the State conference of the ALP. If it can choose such a great lot of members, it can debate and make a correct decision on the privatisation of the TAB. Listening to One Nation talk about our approach to the matter is quite strange, as it is the only private political party I know of.

My final consideration in deciding whether I support the privatisation of the TAB will be based on the most important issue, that is, jobs. We must all consider some important points when we talk about the job implications of the privatisation of the TAB. Firstly, the racing industry is the fourth largest industry in the State. It contributes over \$400m annually to the Queensland economy. Racing is a

relatively labour-intensive industry and a major employer in Queensland. It employs over 6,000 people directly in racing and racing-related activities. A further 25,000 are employed in supporting industries. Much of this employment takes place in rural and regional Queensland.

The industry includes a wide range of stakeholders, including breeders, livestock agents, owners, trainers, jockeys, bookmakers, TABQ employees, suppliers to the industry and racing clubs.

Mr Purcell: And punters.

Mr REEVES: And punters. I must declare my interest: I have been punting at the TAB ever since I can remember—not very successfully! In addition, race clubs form an important part of local communities throughout regional Queensland.

The Queensland racing industry is virtually dependent on TAB Queensland for funding. Approximately \$60m annually of the prize money for thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing is sourced from TAB Queensland, representing 85% of the total prize money available to the three codes. A downturn in TAB Queensland's performance would mean a reduction in funding available to the Queensland racing industry and those rural and regional racing clubs.

TAB Queensland profits could fall as much as 20% in less than five years in the absence of significant structural changes. As a result, there is a potential for a 20% to 25% reduction in employment in the racing industry, resulting in a loss of a minimum of 1,500 jobs. We need to look at this prediction in the light of what has occurred in the past few months with the introduction of pay television coverage. There has been a massive increase in employees in the telephone betting system. We must consider all of this when coming to a conclusion on the merits or otherwise of the sale.

I got my punting skills from my father. I must admit that the day pay television introduced home viewing of racing was my father's happiest day. My father is housebound due to a stroke and now he can watch the races at home. I will be considering his opinion also when I contemplate the privatisation of the TAB.

I emphasise that Premier Beattie has taken the truly democratic path. We currently have a party policy against a privatised TAB, so we would be dead wrong if we did not go

back to the party at the State conference in November to debate this issue. Unlike many members opposite, particularly One Nation members, we do have a democratic party.

Mr NELSON: I rise to a point of order. I find that comment offensive and ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The comment was not directed at a particular person.

Amendment (Mr Nelson) agreed to.

Question—That Mrs Cunningham's amendment as amended be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 50—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Black, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Clark, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Edmond, Feldman, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Kingston, Knuth, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Paff, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pratt, Prenzler, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 29—Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Davidson, Elliott, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Mitchell, Quinn, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: Elder, Sheldon; D'Arcy, Malone; Briskey, Rappolt; Rowell, McGrady

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! For any further divisions the bells will ring for two minutes' duration.

Question—That Mr Healy's motion as amended be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 50—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Black, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Clark, E. A. Cunningham, J. I. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Edmond, Elder, Feldman, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Kingston, Knuth, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Paff, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pratt, Prenzler, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 29—Beanland, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Davidson, Elliott, Gamin, Goss, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Mitchell, Quinn, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pairs: Rose, Sheldon; D'Arcy, Malone; Briskey, Rappolt; Rowell, McGrady

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

GRIEVANCES

Leckie Road Connection; Airport Motorway

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (7.01 p.m.): I wish to talk tonight about the decision by the Beattie minority Labor Government not to proceed with the sale of land along the Leckie Road connection. My challenge to the honourable member for Chermside, who lives right smack bang on the Leckie Road connection, is to take up the challenge to the Minister for Main Roads and Minister for Transport and to be of assistance to the member for Clayfield as he fights again for the sale of the Leckie Road connection.

The honourable member for Chermside was very much part of the original decision by the now discredited Goss Labor Government to build an airport motorway through my electorate. Only because of me and the organisational and strenuous efforts of the local community was that proposal put aside and destroyed once and for all. We thought that it was once and for all destroyed when the coalition Government came to power and decided to sell that land as a result of a decision by the Minister—then the Honourable Vaughan Johnson, the member for Gregory and then Minister for Main Roads and Transport—and, of course, the Government as a whole.

During all of that battle, the honourable member for Chermside, who constantly chides me, has been singularly silent. He lives in the community through which that road is going to go. He goes to church, he has his friends, he has his Labor Party branch members, his supporters and his mates, yet he remains singularly silent. The honourable member for Chermside will do nothing again, and it will be up to me, as the local member of the electorate within which the honourable member for Chermside resides, to force this Government to abandon its dastardly decision to reverse the decision of the coalition Government to sell off that land.

I say to the honourable member for Chermside: save some of the reputation that you have lost amongst your friends, neighbours, party members, fellow church goers and all those people who expect from you some action and some resolve.

Time expired.

School Uniforms

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (7.03 p.m.): I take this opportunity to call upon the Government to take the necessary action to support school communities that wish to

enforce appropriate uniform standards. The 1997-98 Ombudsman's report has created an uncertainty on this issue that needs to be clarified at the earliest opportunity. It is my view and understanding that the establishment and enforcement of appropriate uniform standards are supported by the vast majority of parents, and also by the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations.

Australia has a unique history with respect to the wearing of school uniforms. Although steeped in the traditions of the old English public school, the practice in Australia has its basis more in egalitarian principles that sought to remove the contrast between children from families from different socioeconomic backgrounds. I support that principle. Uniforms also assist in maintaining discipline and in focusing the minds of students on their role and place within the school community. They also provide a significant contribution towards enhancing the security of students within school grounds. Easy identification of students, visitors or unauthorised persons on a school ground is a crucial safety issue for today's schools.

It is interesting to note that countries that have a long tradition of not making uniforms compulsory—for example, the United States—are now starting to re-evaluate their stance and examine the benefits of such a policy. In Australia, we have a longstanding tradition that has worked well and is worthy of protection. Any initiative undertaken by the Government should enable the decision on whether uniforms are to be compulsory to be determined by the local school community. Any other approach would be unsatisfactory. In this regard, I believe the Government should be examining the possibility of providing legislative support to schools that choose the compulsory uniform option.

International Garden Festival

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (7.05 p.m.): The Nursery Industry Association of Australia—NIAA—is left surprised and confused by the Beattie Labor Government's decision not to proceed with the International Garden Festival planned for Queensland for the year 2000. The NIAA held the licence to hold a garden festival in Australia and had been working on it for four years. Originally planned for Gosford in New South Wales, it was decided to move to Queensland late last year after receiving bipartisan Government support. The site for the festival was to be the old Roma Street goods yards, planned since

the Goss Government days to be redeveloped into a park precinct. A major legacy for Brisbane from the festival would be a permanent garden of international standard worth an estimated \$97m at no cost to Queensland taxpayers. The gardens were planned to be named the "Millennium Gardens", similar to projects of a lasting nature being planned by cities all around the world to celebrate that event.

Although requiring over \$200m worth of funding, capital and festival running costs are expected to be recouped and provide a surplus. The Government's financial commitment is to underwrite the festival, although private underwriting and insurance will substantially minimise the risk. The benefits to Queensland are considerable. An estimated 13,000 jobs—man years—would assist the mid to long-term unemployed in particular. A further 25,000 jobs would be created indirectly through the festival. The number of ongoing jobs provided through the established Millennium Gardens has not yet been estimated. The economic benefit to the Queensland economy is estimated at \$4 billion. The boost to tourism from a six-month event similar to Expo 88 is obvious. Most importantly for the long-term benefit of the horticultural industry in Australia and Queensland in particular, our industry will be exposed to the world market and show our cutting edge, environmentally sustainable horticultural technology, such as water recycling, waste management and nutrient recycling. That will open opportunities for new markets in Europe, Asia and the Americas for exports, thus creating more jobs.

Despite assurances given to the NIAA by the Labor Government when in Opposition and subsequent assurances of support—

Time expired.

Mr H. Maroroa

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (7.07 p.m.): I would like to recognise and commend the efforts of many community groups in Townsville for their tireless endeavours to raise funds for Mr Harold Maroroa. In doing so, I must also congratulate the organiser of fundraising, Ms Anne Brooke Wagner. Soon after we were elected to office, Anne approached me detailing Harold's plight. Last September, Harold suffered renal failure. He fell into a coma and an emergency evacuation from his home in PNG brought him to Townsville. Harold arrived in Townsville in crisis without family or friends. He recovered

from a two-week comatose condition and is now receiving treatment for his illness at the Townsville General Hospital.

Harold is currently on dialysis three days a week and has reached a satisfactory level of health. The high cost of treatment, accommodation and living expenses since his arrival over a year ago has totally consumed his financial resources. If it were not for community and church support, Harold's position would be extremely troubled. Harold's wife, Faith, and youngest son, Harry, have come down to be with him during his ordeal and are being housed at Red Cross House. During the months in Townsville, family and community desperately tried to raise funds for the life-saving operation. A live kidney transplant is planned at Brisbane's Princess Alexandra Hospital and Harold's younger brother is to be the donor. Anne Brooke Wagner consulted with me as soon as we were elected and the process to provide funds at last began. The Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, acted immediately and the State Labor Government will fund the kidney transplant for Harold Maroroa. That decision will allow Harold to return to work as a PNG Government builder and allow his family to resume a normal life back in their home country. I am pleased to say that Harold's brother arrives next week and the operation can now proceed.

That story is an example of how communities can achieve desirable results by working actively and cohesively and involving a committed Government. This Government is listening to the grassroots. This Government is proactive. I congratulate the efforts of all those involved in effective community consultation, but thanks must go to the Minister for her prompt action during our first couple of months in Government.

Time expired.

Gatton-Gympie Allgas Pipeline

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (7.09 p.m.): I rise this evening to make a few remarks on behalf of constituents in the electorate of Mooloolah in relation to the Gatton-Gympie Allgas pipeline. I believe that there is considerable goodwill towards having gas come through the area because of the economic benefits that it will bring. However, there are some problems. In common with most of those sorts of initiatives, some people are asked to contribute more than others. Everybody benefits, but some people—particularly those who have the pipe go through their property—are asked to make a

greater contribution towards the outcome than others.

The contribution that those people are making is in relation to the compensation that they would receive, the loss of potential for subdivision and further development and the costs of having solicitors act on their behalf. Some of them are very concerned that the valuers from the company have not even visited their property. Land in Mooloolah is not similar to broadacre land, where one acre might be very similar to another. In those tighter areas in Mooloolah, the properties are only small, but it is all that many of those people own. It is very important to them. One gentleman and his wife want to sell their property. This has been going on for 18 months. They do not know how to value the property when they do not know whether the pipe will go through their property. They also have the problem that future water and sewerage pipes might not be able to cut through the gas easement. They need advice on those issues. They now have to pay for solicitors to act on their behalf. If the pipeline was not going through, they would not be going anywhere near solicitors. I call on the Minister to talk with his departmental officers and the people from Allgas and ask them to explain to people how to proceed as soon as possible.

Time expired.

Kuranda State High School

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (7.11 p.m.): The Kuranda region was included in the Barron River electorate following the 1992 redistribution. The lack of services in that area, which had been part of the Tablelands electorate held by the National Party member, Tom Gilmore, was immediately apparent to me. The lack of a high school and an ambulance station was of particular concern. Subsequently, I made it my top priority to remedy this appalling situation, which was largely the result of a past failure to identify and purchase land that had the support of the community. I put a lot of time and energy into addressing these problems, working very closely with the community and the Mareeba Shire Council.

In August 1995, those efforts paid off and the Kuranda Ambulance Station opened, which is providing an excellent service to the community. Providing a high school took a little longer, but I am pleased to inform the House that last week I joined the Minister for Education, the Honourable Dean Wells, at the

official opening of the Kuranda State High School, which enrolled its first students in February of this year. This architect-designed school is built on a magnificent, elevated site bordered by the Barron River in harmony with its stunning rainforest backdrop. This 40-acre site was purchased by the Labor Government. However, I wish to commend the former Minister, Bob Quinn, and member for Barron River, Lyn Warwick, for following through on the Labor commitment. I acknowledge their strong support for that school.

Mr Johnson: And the roadworks.

Dr CLARK: Also the roadworks. Although it is true that the official opening of the Kuranda State High School was a long time in coming, it was well worth the wait. The dance and musical items showed clearly both the talents of the students and the cultural diversity which is a unique feature and strength of the school. I congratulate Principal Jenny Jensen and her staff on their innovative program that values each and every one of the students and helps them to achieve their individual potential.

I would also like to recognise the commitment of those members of the community who have worked so hard since 1978 to make their dream of a high school in Kuranda a reality. I feel privileged to have played a role in obtaining the land and so helping to realise that dream.

Time expired.

Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (Leader of the One Nation Party) (7.13 p.m.): Jobs, jobs, jobs is the cry of Premier Beattie and his Labor Government. It is the cry also of all parties in this House, and rightly so, because through jobs the wealth, prosperity and progress of our community can be directly transferred into individual and family wealth and thereby improve and strengthen our society economically and socially. That is why I again draw the attention of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and other members of this House to the success of the enterprise centre at Caboolture. This centre is probably the most successful centre in Queensland.

Since the centre opened in 1995, it has created some 855 jobs in about 500 businesses. That is a great achievement and helps to explain why Caboolture is one of the nation's great growth areas. The centre is strongly community based, with 373 individual small businesses joining in just three years and

attests to the CBEC's credibility to the community.

Now, as a direct result of the CBEC's support and help, some 530 new ventures are up and running. These employ some 920 local people. That means 25 new enterprises have been established every month since April 1998. It also means that some 45 full-time jobs have been created every month during that same time. These are tremendous achievements. These indicate what can be done when Government gives a free rein to individual enterprise at the community level.

The leadership of the CBEC deserves full credit and commendation for the excellent service and support that it is giving to job creation—jobs, jobs and more jobs. The Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre deserves the full support and confidence of the Government, which would include the full funding entitlement of such enterprise centres. I commend the enterprise centre concept to the House and, in particular, the Minister's pledge to the Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre—a centre that has a proven record and is in general a proven model for enterprise centres, ideal for both this State and this nation.

MIGATE Skills Centre

Hon. P. J. BRADY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (7.15 p.m.): I rise to clarify my answers given in Parliament today concerning the funding of the MIGATE Skills Centre in Mount Isa. My department has reviewed the file and has advised me that the processes involved were as follows. In July 1997, the department received from MIGATE a proposal for approximately \$600,000 in funding for a skills centre in Mount Isa. Over the next 12 months the department and MIGATE, in consultation with ANTA, reviewed and refined the development of a detailed proposal. On 1 June 1998, the department referred a proposal to establish a skills centre in Mount Isa involving \$367,000 of ANTA funds to ANTA for its reaction. That referral advised that most of the ANTA criteria had been met and that, prior to making a formal recommendation to ANTA, the department was awaiting the outcome of a whole-of-mining industry study to see whether there were any implications for the proposal.

The study by the mining industry was delayed and the training division of the department decided to formalise the recommendation to ANTA without waiting for the outcome of the study. That

recommendation by the training division was made on 8 July 1998. At the time, this was not brought to the attention of either the director-general or me. On 22 July 1998, ANTA endorsed funding to the department.

However, this does not complete the process. Under existing arrangements, the training division would forward the proposal for approval of the project and expenditure to the director-general and/or the Minister, depending on the level of funds involved. Before any such funding approvals were sought either from the director-general or me, a number of relevant issues came to light.

Contrary to suggestions in Opposition questions today, no funding approvals for the MIGATE proposal have ever been given by the director-general or me. The training division has requested ANTA to suspend action on the funding to the department pending further advice. The training division has commissioned a study of the training needs in the Mount Isa region and the viability of the MIGATE Skills Centre proposal. Both TAFE and MIGATE have agreed to this study.

I inadvertently advised the Parliament, based on advice from the department this morning, that all of the processes for the funding of the skills centre occurred under the previous Government. I now make it clear that, after a review of the file, there has never been any approval to fund the MIGATE proposal from me or the previous Minister or the department under either Government. I apologise to the Parliament for incorrect information I inadvertently provided in my answers to questions this morning.

Flinders Highway

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (7.17 p.m.): I rise to point out to the House the state of play in relation to Type 2 road trains traversing the Flinders Highway in north Queensland. The piece of highway in question is that which is located between Cloncurry and Hughenden. The situation is that, with the curfew over that 259 kilometre section of road, these road trains had to have an escort vehicle. That is another impost not only on the industry but also on the transport operator.

I say to the Transport Minister that this is a very ridiculous set of circumstances. Talk about road safety! These are some of the most road safety conscious people in the country today. The road transport industry is already on its knees. This impost is certainly going to further cripple the industry in north Queensland. It will also affect the mining

industry, the road freight industry and the livestock industry.

I say to the Minister for Transport: lift this curfew before everybody in north Queensland goes broke. At a meeting that he will attend in Mount Isa on 26 October, I plead with him to show commonsense and to listen to what these people are saying. Some of these road trains can sit up to 12 hours or 14 hours waiting for an escort vehicle. At the same time we have cattle standing on road trains. These cattle are destined for the meatworks. So that delay is a cost to the producer, a cost to the meatworks and a cost to the transport industry.

We have to keep the industry viable in trying economic times. We all know that the road has been carrying Type 2 road trains for a long period. If the Minister wants to play politics with industry—the mining industry, the freight industry and the livestock industry—he is not being fair dinkum about creating jobs in Queensland, especially north Queensland. The mining industry is on its knees as a result of some of these ridiculous decisions.

Time expired.

Rochedale Landfill Site

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (7.20 p.m.): I rise tonight to inform the House of the requirements that the Environment Department has imposed on the Brisbane City Council in its operation of the landfill site at Rochedale. As many members of the House, including the member for Redlands—who, unfortunately, is not here—will attest, many years ago I fought hard to stop the dump. Unfortunately, many of the concerns that were expressed then have come to realisation. The promise of world best standards has not been delivered in the operation of the landfill.

Therefore, the Department of Environment and Heritage has taken steps to force the licence operators to spend immediately nearly \$10m to fix the problems. Those steps will ensure that the problems of the present are rectified and will also mean that future problems can be avoided. The stringent guidelines will allow the Department of Environment and Heritage to constantly monitor the performance of the dump and allow for the enforcement of these strict requirements. In fact, any breaches will result in much higher penalties. Further, the department can place extra requirements on the operators to ensure that residents are not subjected to detrimental health effects and diminished lifestyle qualities.

Some of these measures include the installation and operation of a landfill gas and disposal system. The collection and removal of landfill gas is probably the single most significant odour control strategy. The EMP requires full gas collection for closed cells, rather than the precious pilot program in gas collection. Methane levels will be measured above the landfill surface and in site buildings and other structures. Also, future cells will be smaller than the present size of cell 3. I believe that these measures will rectify the present and future problems of the dump. I thank the Department of Environment and Heritage for the effective guidelines that it has placed on the Brisbane City Council in its operation of the Rochedale landfill site.

Time expired.

Coorparoo Secondary College

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (7.22 p.m.): This morning, the Minister for Education tried to salvage some pride from the wreckage of his attempt to short-change the parents and students of the Coorparoo Secondary College. The Minister announced that he would fund the full extent of preliminary site works associated with the construction of multi-purpose ball courts at the Coorparoo Secondary College. It was not correct when he said that the project was an unfunded promise of the previous Government and that the P & C would have to pay an extra \$40,000. As proof, I table two letters from Education Queensland to the school's P & C. The first, dated 9 February 1998, states—

"I refer to the school's proposal to construct a multi-purpose courts complex and confirm the government's commitment to provide a suitable platform for the facility."

Education Queensland was fully aware of its obligation to fund the full extent of providing a platform for the multi-purpose area. The second letter that I will table is also from Education Queensland to the school. It is dated 19 June and tells the P & C to go ahead with the project and keep separate the costs of the platform and the courts.

The Education Minister's exercise in deception this morning was a disgrace. However, even more disgraceful and despicable is the cynical approach that this Minister and his partner in deception, the member for Greenslopes, have taken. Despite the fact that the funding was in place under the previous Government, and even though

the contractor is almost finished the work and is seeking payment—

Mr FENLON: I rise to a point of order. I find the suggestion that I have been involved in any form of deception highly irregular and offensive. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr QUINN: I withdraw. It is my understanding that the Minister is refusing to hand over the money before speech night when he or the member for Greenslopes can bask in the reflected glory of the hard work of the previous member for Greenslopes, Ted Radke, who secured this funding.

Mental Health Week

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (7.24 p.m.): On Sunday, the Minister for Health, the Honourable Wendy Edmond, launched Mental Health Week in conjunction with Melanie Scott, president of the Queensland Association of Mental Health, and Keith Williams, the executive director. The incidence of mental health problems in the community is higher than most would expect. A 1997 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found that almost one in five Australian adults fitted the criteria for a mental disorder at some time in the 12 months prior to the survey. One in five of us will experience a mental illness or a serious mental health problem. Mental Health Week is about increasing community awareness and understanding of mental health issues.

The message of this Mental Health Week is: it is on for young and old. This message has been chosen to remind us that people of all ages as well as all social and cultural groups can suffer from mental illness. It has been a neglected area. However, we have come a long way in our approach to treating mental illness. We have certainly come a long way since the Carter commission of inquiry into Townsville's Ward 10B.

Labor is proud of its achievements in mental health care reform. During our six years in Government, we put the focus firmly on the patients. Queensland was widely applauded as the first State to introduce minimum service standards. By the time that the Burdekin report into human rights and mental health in Australia was released in 1995, Queensland had already put into place an action plan for ongoing reform. I speak of the Queensland mental health plan that was released by the then Minister, Ken Hayward, the member for Kallangur, in 1994. This was a significant step forward for Queensland mental health and would appear to have bipartisan support as it

was re-released by the previous Government. However, clearly more work needs to be done.

Our focus is now on expanding community-based services, particularly in far-north Queensland and regional Queensland. Emphasis will be on closer integration of public, private and not-for-profit sectors to promote shared-care service, suicide prevention programs, improved appropriate housing for the mentally ill and better adolescent services.

Wandoan State School

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (7.26 p.m.): The Wandoan State School is badly and indisputably in need of a new administration block to solve many of the problems with which the school community is currently struggling. There is no space for effective administration, no dedicated office space for the principal or heads of department, no space for confidential interviews and nowhere for specialist personnel, such as speech pathologists and guidance officers, to talk to students during their visits to the school. The previous coalition Government recognised this rather obvious problem and had plans drawn up for a new block to be built at the Wandoan school. Of course, the school P & C has heard nothing of this since the election and wrote to me and the Minister seeking a start date for the building. I also wrote to the Minister seeking a start date for the Wandoan project.

On 1 October I received a copy of a letter to the Wandoan P & C from the Minister's office. That letter was not even signed by the Minister; it was signed by a ministerial adviser. It very arrogantly states—

"The Minister is unable to give an indication as to when funding will become available for this project to proceed."

It concludes—

"Your interest in the welfare of the students attending Wandoan State School is appreciated."

It is a shame that the obvious interest that the Wandoan P & C has in the welfare of the students attending the Wandoan State School is not shared by the Minister and his policy adviser. They have obviously killed off this project or delayed it indefinitely, as they have done or tried to do with so many other projects, large and small, throughout regional Queensland. This is yet another example of the contempt that the Labor Government has for communities and people living outside the major urban areas. The Minister for Education stands condemned for his arrogant letter to

the Wandoan P & C, which he could not even find the time to sign himself.

I call on the Minister to reconsider his decision and to allocate some funds to this much-needed project for the children in the Wandoan State School so that they can to some small degree enjoy the type of facilities that city children take for granted every day of the week.

Gordonstone Mine

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (7.28 p.m.): I note yesterday's announcement that Rio Tinto has bought the majority stake in the Gordonstone mine, which is in the Fitzroy electorate north-east of Emerald. As members would be aware, for over 12 months the Gordonstone mine has been closed by its owners, Arco Coal, because of its inability to reach an agreement with its work force. As the mineworkers' representative in this place, I am keen to see Gordonstone back on line producing coal. I want to see mineworkers back at the coalface. Therefore, I encourage the new owners and the unions to sit down at the table and talk through the issues.

I am very much aware of both sides of the argument and the principles at stake. Only the parties involved have the credentials to talk through those issues. However, as the State member of the Queensland electoral district in which Gordonstone sits, I wish to make myself available if and when required to assist the unions and Rio Tinto's Queensland subsidiary,

Pacific Coal Management. If I can help in getting miners back on the job, I am prepared to give it my best shot. That is my role. I do not want to butt in, but if I can be of any assistance to either of the parties, I am only too happy to do so. The economy needs jobs and the workers in the area have the expertise and the commitment to get on with the job. I believe that with the right commitment, good faith and goodwill, we can get Gordonstone operating again.

The company's managing director was right when he said, according to today's Courier-Mail, "We have to hire the best people." Gordonstone's world record breaking production figures demonstrate the ability and expertise of the mine's available work force. It is time for coal producers to stop the billion dollar expenditure on expertise. It takes years for workers to gain all the skills that are required and our mineworkers have those skills and commitment. I say to the company: take advantage of the dollars invested in those workers and get on with the job.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (7.29 p.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn to a date and a time to be fixed by Mr Speaker in consultation with the Government of the State."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.29 p.m.