

THURSDAY, 25 MARCH 1999

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

PRIVILEGE

Subpoena Served on Member at Parliament House

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (9.31 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. On or about Wednesday, 3 March, I was issued with a subpoena to appear in a case currently before the Supreme Court and this was served within the precincts of Parliament. The hearing was scheduled for Monday, 22 March, and for as many days as may be needed. This subpoena was served upon me whilst I was attending Parliament. I have received advice that this action may constitute a contempt of Parliament.

The matter of privilege suddenly arising is that although the serving of the writ may constitute a contempt, I am required to appear in court tomorrow. I have written to you, Mr Speaker, and would seek a ruling before the adjournment of today's proceedings as to my attendance at the Supreme Court tomorrow.

All members of this House accept their responsibilities before the law. However, a serious and urgent ruling is required as a conflict has arisen between the rights and privileges of members of this House and our obligation to attend the Supreme Court. What requires an urgent ruling is whether a summons potentially served in contempt of the Parliament requires the attendance of a member of this place in a court of law. As this matter potentially impacts on the rights and privileges of all members of Parliament, I ask that you refer this matter to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for an urgent ruling and report back to the House prior to the adjournment of the Parliament today.

PRIVILEGE

Parliamentary Standards

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (9.32 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege in relation to parliamentary standards. When perusing Hansard this morning, I noticed that last evening in the member for Callide's

speech during this place the member for Chermide, the Government Whip, referred to him as misleading by his half-truths and lies. In the interests of parliamentary standards, I understood the use of "lies" was unparliamentary and offensive. Apparently in the rush of the moment this matter was missed. I bring it to your attention in order that you may maintain parliamentary standards in this place.

PRIVILEGE

Subpoena Served on Member at Parliament House

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I draw to the attention of the House an extremely serious matter involving the serving of a subpoena on a member inside the parliamentary precinct. I have received a letter of complaint from the honourable member for Barambah. I will read that letter in full. It states—

"Mr Speaker

On or about Wednesday, March 3rd, an attendant came to me in the Chamber and informed me that a Mr Ted Briggs and a Mr Terry Sharples wanted to see me and indicated a lone gentleman in the gallery.

I left the Chamber and went up the stairs to the gallery but before I entered the gallery Mr Briggs came out and met at the top of the stairs. He stated he wanted me to meet Mr Sharples and after the introduction he handed me a subpoena.

Tonight, Wednesday March 24th, I was informed that this should be reported to you as it breaches parliamentary conditions and perhaps may be referred to the Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

I await your advice on this matter

Yours sincerely

(sgd) D R Pratt MLA"

Honourable members, in the House of Commons the service of a subpoena to attend as a witness has been treated as a breach of privilege by the House, particularly so if it has been effected within the precincts of the House. I have therefore this morning forwarded a copy of the complaint by the honourable member for Barambah to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for investigation and report back to the House.

PRIVILEGE

Subpoena Served on Member at Parliament House

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.34 a.m.): With respect, I raise a further matter of privilege. Obviously from the comments made by the member for Barambah, there is a situation in which she is required to attend the Supreme Court tomorrow on the basis of a subpoena that would appear *prima facie* to constitute a contempt of this place. Whilst I thank you for the ruling and the speedy reference to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, the honourable member did request that a ruling, if possible, be handed down today so that she was aware of her responsibilities, and indeed the privileges of the Parliament can be protected or clarified prior to her requirement to attend the Supreme Court tomorrow. I would therefore seek your guidance on whether it will be possible to report back to the House because this is such a potentially serious contempt of this place that the Parliament may wish to resolve this matter prior to the honourable member being required to attend the Supreme Court tomorrow.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will seek legal advice on this matter immediately after question time.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

Report

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I have to report that today I received from the chairperson of the Criminal Justice Commission a report titled Inquiry into allegations of misconduct in the investigation of paedophilia in Queensland: Kimmins Report, term of reference No. 5. I table the said report.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Collinsville Hospital

Mr Black (741 petitioners) requesting the House to aircondition and screen the wards and theatre areas of Collinsville Hospital.

Rail Corridor, Little Mountain-Corbould Park

Mrs Sheldon (726 petitioners) requesting the House to ensure that the alternative proposed rail corridor, from Little Mountain and around Corbould Park Racecourse is adopted, as identified in Queensland Transport CAMCOS Stage Two Report, as this route has minimum environment impact, minimal impact on existing homes and businesses, creates a close interchange at Corbould Park for interstate and intrastate rail travel and is identified by CAMCOS itself as the most environmentally and user-friendly option.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

(a) Treasurer (Mr Hamill)—

Queensland Treasury Corporation—
Report and itinerary for visit to financial centres

Merrill Lynch Economic and Financial Outlook

Salomon Smith Barney Economic & Market Analysis

Brochure relating to the National Railway Museum

(b) Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Arts (Mr Foley)—

Report on visit to Fiji, United States of America and the Philippines.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sun Metals Dispute

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday in Townsville the Industrial Commission convened a compulsory conference regarding the Sun Metals dispute. It involved the QCCI, the unions which signed the Sun Metals agreement and the ACTU. The Government's strategy to appoint Bob Hawke as negotiator has encouraged the parties to focus again on resolving this dispute. I am advised that considerable progress was made in resolving the issues which have arisen from the agreement. As a result of this progress, the commissioner will reconvene the compulsory conference at 10 a.m. today.

Consequently, the commissioner asked that the deadline for alternative mediation arrangements involving Bob Hawke be moved from midnight last night to at least lunchtime today. Yesterday, the Government spoke to Mr Hawke about the need for him to be

available if the dispute was not solved by midnight last night. He advised that he can be in Brisbane early tomorrow, that is, Friday, if needed so that he can be briefed by the QCCI, the unions and the Government before flying to Townsville. There is, therefore, no need for me to put back the deadline.

There has been unfounded speculation that Mr Hawke's fee could be as much as \$10,000 a day. I can tell the House that we have negotiated a fee with Mr Hawke and that it is nowhere near that amount. I advise the House that this morning I have had discussions with Sun Metals, the QCCI and union representatives to advise them of the Government's plans to resolve this dispute.

I hope that all members of the House will show bipartisan support for this process and will join me in urging the parties to come to a speedy resolution of this matter. It is clear that one of the weaknesses of the current industrial relations legislation is the weakened role of the Industrial Relations Commission. The Government's new industrial relations legislation will fix this problem.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Premiers Conference

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: My ministerial statement is in relation to the Premiers Conference on 9 April. Members are aware that I have written to the Prime Minister seeking to have four matters of great importance to Queensland placed on the agenda for the Premiers Conference on 9 April. They are, firstly, the GST and the need to make sure that Queenslanders receive their fair share of any revenue raised; secondly, illegal drugs, and the need to find new solutions to a problem which is killing about 600 Australians every year; thirdly, the security of our external borders and the need for increased surveillance to detect not just illegal immigrants but drug shipments; and, fourthly, health and the urgent need for additional funding for State health services from the Federal Government.

On the GST, I will tell the Prime Minister that we continue to oppose the proposed transitional arrangements for GST revenue distribution because Queenslanders will be short-changed about \$465m. Federal Liberal member, Alex Somlyay, agrees with us that Queensland is being unfairly disadvantaged. He says we are spot-on with our estimates and the position taken by the Treasurer on behalf

of the Government. He is worried that the Sunshine Coast will miss out on adequate funding to meet the area's growth. I hope he convinces each of his Liberal and National colleagues in Queensland to make their voices heard in the party room as he has done publicly because the whole of Queensland will suffer if Mr Howard refuses to put things right.

I am also concerned that recent correspondence from the Prime Minister foreshadows an extension of the transition period beyond the current three years. If this happens, the loss to Queensland will be even greater than the \$465m we have already outlined.

Mr Howard and Mr Costello say that they are giving all the GST revenue to the States. If the GST comes in, all the GST paid in Queensland should be returned to Queensland. Under the current proposal, a GST means that Queensland loses on jobs and on its fair share of revenue.

I also believe that Premiers should be given more than one initial opportunity to consider the Bill dealing with the reform of Commonwealth/State financial relations. One opportunity to consider a Bill of this importance is grossly inadequate. That is all the Prime Minister is allowing. The States and Territories must be allowed the opportunity to examine later drafts of the Bill and engage in formal discussion on the Bill at the Premiers Conference.

I am also concerned at the increasingly flexible interpretation that Commonwealth officials appear to be placing upon the GST-based changes of "a minor administrative nature" which would only require majority support of the States and Territories as opposed to unanimous support. What may seem to be minor adjustments to the Commonwealth could have significant impacts on State and Territory revenues, particularly those of the smaller States. It is therefore important to define these "minor administrative" changes as being of \$20m or less.

What else do I want from the conference on the GST? Let me spell it out to the House. What the Government wants is to see financial assistance grants maintained in real per capita terms to reflect inflation and population growth. We want to see improvements in special purpose payments, particularly for education, health and national highways. We want to see a better deal for Queensland so that we do not continue to be short-changed \$60m in fuel transfer payments.

I am pleased that the Prime Minister has agreed to place illegal drugs on the agenda. I outlined some of my proposals on how to deal with the drugs problem in last night's 6 o'clock debate and in previous contributions in this House. I will be raising all these suggestions—and others—at the 9 April meeting.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Libraries

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of action taken to support innovations in regional Queensland through the State's single most used cultural facility—Queensland's free public library service. This wonderful free cultural resource, which this financial year will receive around \$17m in grants to 121 local authorities from the State Government, serves all Queenslanders throughout their lives, regardless of who they are or where they live, in every corner of the State from the border to the cape. This \$17m includes the allocation of nearly \$250,000 to libraries in 20 local government areas around the State under the 1999 State Library innovation grants.

Local shires around the State that will benefit are: Banana, Broomsound, Burke, Caloundra, Chinchilla, Herberton, Hervey Bay, Hinchinbrook, Logan City, Mareeba, Maroochy, Maryborough, Mundubbera, Noosa, Pine Rivers, Richmond, Rockhampton and Thuringowa. As well, a project has been funded to develop a marketing plan for the entire Queensland public library sector.

Queenslanders are great library users. Last year they borrowed a record 33.8 million books—a 6% increase on the previous year—and the response to the innovation grants has been tremendous. Sixty-seven submissions were received from 32 local government authorities—and several were joint projects—which demonstrates not only the strong degree of cooperation that exists in regional Queensland but the fact that the thirst for culture is as strong in remote communities as it is in big cities.

To give some idea of the impact of this funding on the communities it will benefit, Chinchilla Public Library, which services a population of 5,816, received \$11,000; Herberton, with a population of 5,375, received \$19,550; and Maryborough, with a population of 32,603, received \$10,500.

As the name of the grant scheme implies, this funding is designed to encourage Queensland's local public libraries to reach out to their communities and deliver better, more imaginative services tailored specifically to their own communities' needs. In regional areas, those needs include access to technology to overcome geographical distance. They also include affordable access for rural and remote youth to computer and Internet resources widely available to youngsters in the city. The grants also take into account the need to record the history of regional Queensland through the eyes of its older generation, whose first-hand experiences are an invaluable part of the heritage of our State and a legacy from one generation to the next which can bind them together.

The Government believes that this \$250,000 funding is money well spent—an investment in the future of Queensland and in the quality of life of all its residents. However, it is impossible to put a dollar value on the individual, human benefit to ordinary Queenslanders. In Banana Shire, for example, the library will use its \$7,700 grant to bring together the young and the elderly to record the shire's history "through our eyes". This oral archive will be placed on the Internet web pages, ensuring that a group of Queenslanders can tell their unique story to those who come after, and to the world.

In Mareeba, the \$22,450 allocation will enable the library to provide a place where the young people of Kuranda and surrounds can pursue cultural and recreational activities that will stimulate them intellectually, encouraging them to read, learn and improve themselves. In Burke—which has a population of approximately 400, half of whom live on isolated rural properties and 70% of whom are indigenous—the \$3,500 innovations grant will enable the library to provide more than just books. It will be spent on a sporting equipment lending service, in a place where sports equipment—always expensive—is neither easily affordable nor widely available to the whole community. This will enable the young people of Burke for the first time ever to fairly participate in team and community activities and will alleviate boredom, while at the same time introducing them to the resources of their local library.

I table an outline of the innovation grants made by the State Library to the libraries of 20 local government councils throughout the State.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Coal Mine Site Rehabilitation Program**

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: Today I will sign an agreement that will take our State a further step towards responsible environmental management in the mining industry. The agreement is with the Australian Centre for Mining and Environmental Research to establish a coal mine site rehabilitation program. The centre is an incorporated body involving research organisations and includes the CSIRO, the University of Queensland and a number of major mining companies. This agreement will see about \$2.5m channelled into the research program over a period of 10 years to fund postgraduate scholarships and research grants.

The program will be funded by moneys held in trust following the disbandment of the Queensland coal board some years ago. The intention of the fund was for the moneys to be utilised for the benefit of the mining industry. Environmental research related to coalmine sites is considered an appropriate application of the funds available. The University of Central Queensland and the University of Queensland will each receive grants over the first two years as funding support towards academic positions associated with coalmine rehabilitation, teaching and research.

I am hopeful that the ongoing research will result in new and better ways of addressing environmental management during mining and rehabilitation after mining. An added bonus will be that the two universities involved will be able to increase their teaching capacities, which will result in more graduates trained to assist the coalmining industry to achieve best practice for environmental operations.

After the planned 10-year research period, any funds left in the account will be applied directly to enhance the standard of coalmine rehabilitation in Queensland. This funding will have definite, long-term benefits to the people of our State as the outcomes of the research flow into the mining industry. In this way, the payback for Queensland's environment and economy will be many times the original investment made. The signing of this agreement today will undoubtedly bring immense benefit to the universities involved, to the coalmining industry and, indeed, to Queensland as a whole.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Nerang-Broadbeach Road**

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: I rise on this occasion to advise the successful outcome of consultation with community groups in the Carrara area of the Gold Coast who are affected by the Nerang-Broadbeach Road issue. In December 1998, after considerable community discussion and consideration of options, I made a decision to approve the alignment for the Nerang-Broadbeach Road. In making this decision, it was clear that there would be some people who may not be happy with it. Whilst I was not intending to revisit the alignment issue, I was prepared to consider enhancement to the approved alignment if there were persuasive reasons to do so.

For several months, Main Roads officers have been seeking community input into the concept planning of a section of this road between Ross Street and Nielsens Road. The local community was particularly concerned that a section of the existing pavement be retained so that it could be used as a service road linking properties between Ross Street and the Carrara market area near Goodings corner. Representatives of the three Carrara community groups met with my director-general and district director of Main Roads to argue the case for an enhancement to my decision on the alignment to the Nerang-Broadbeach alignment route. The Department of Main Roads worked with the Carrara groups to expand the alignment decision and to consider their proposed alignment enhancement.

I congratulate the Carrara community groups for establishing an excellent working relationship with Main Roads. As a result, the three Carrara community groups called a public meeting on Sunday, 6 March 1999 to put up to the whole community an enhancement proposal. The meeting held in the community hall of Emmanuel College was attended by approximately 300 residents, who overwhelmingly endorsed the principle of the roadway system explained by Mr John Worrall, District Director, South Coast Hinterland. The three Carrara residents groups requested the Director-General of Main Roads to make recommendations on the enhancement to me. I gave the recommendation serious consideration and I have now approved those changes. The enhancement of the alignment will improve access to the area for emergency services, it will improve public transport services and it will improve the amenity of the area for

local residents. Furthermore, this initiative is not expected to result in any significant increase in overall project costs.

The outcome is the result of lengthy consultation between Main Roads personnel and all stakeholders affected by the road alignment in this area. I congratulate those community representatives who have continued to search for a solution which meets their needs without any detrimental effects on others.

This outcome was confirmed in a recent letter from the Carrara organisations in which they have commented that—

"Not only was the meeting an overwhelming success, it also conclusively demonstrated what is achievable when interested parties act in a cohesive and responsible manner, do not allow the subject to become politicised by any level of Government, person or community group and there is mutual respect and appreciation on matters that effect and determine resolutions."

This positive outcome has been achieved in spite of the efforts of the member for Nerang to derail the consultation process.

Mr CONNOR: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive and untrue. I did not try to derail—

Mr SPEAKER: Is the member for Nerang asking for the comment to be withdrawn?

Mr CONNOR: I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr BREDHAUER: I withdraw. Furthermore, members may recall that in October 1998 the member for Nerang made allegations of official misconduct against a Main Roads officer in respect to this matter and, in particular, to the lack of public consultation. The member for Nerang threatened to refer the matter to the Criminal Justice Commission. I strongly refuted these allegations in a ministerial statement of 10 November 1998. As part of the normal protocol on parliamentary allegations of official misconduct, the matter was referred to the CJC by my department on 20 November 1998 and the CJC subsequently requested a departmental report be prepared to allow their full assessment.

This report was provided, and on 1 March 1999 the CJC advised that, based on the available information, it agreed with the report's conclusions that there is no reasonable basis for suspicion of official misconduct by any public officer. I table a copy

of the letter from the CJC to my director-general, which he has provided me in this regard. The determination of the CJC supports the validity and success of the public consultation process and leaves the member for Nerang accountable for his questionable use of parliamentary privilege.

Mr CONNOR: I rise to a point of order. The CJC did not even inquire into my evidence in relation to this. They have not interviewed me whatsoever.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr CONNOR: I ask him to withdraw it. It is offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: No, the Minister has not mentioned the member in that respect.

Mr CONNOR: He has referred directly to me, and I find it offensive. It is unfair, untrue and I had no opportunity to respond to this.

Mr SPEAKER: Did the Minister refer directly to the member for Nerang?

Mr CONNOR: I ask him to withdraw.

Mr BREDHAUER: If the member finds something offensive, I will withdraw it. That is the easiest way.

The determination of the CJC supports the validity and success of the public consultation process and leaves the member for Nerang accountable for his questionable use of parliamentary privilege. He should apologise to all those he has maligned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Action Program

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.55 a.m.): by leave: I table an independent report titled Evaluation of the Youth Action Program. The external evaluation, conducted by Colmar Brunton Research, showed overwhelming support from parents and students for the program.

The Youth Action Program was piloted last year in 10 State secondary schools with more than 400 students. It was an initiative of the coalition Government. Indeed, it was one of the better ideas of the honourable member for Merrimac and I am pleased to be able to implement that which the people of Queensland gave him the opportunity merely to imagine. It links schools to programs from Surf Life Saving Queensland, the Royal Life Saving Society Queensland, St John Ambulance Australia, the Air Training Corps, the Australian Army Cadet Corps, the Naval Reserve Cadets, Australian Red Cross, State

Emergency Services, Scouts Australia (Queensland) and Guides Queensland.

The independent report found that 99% of parents think the program has been beneficial to their child. Across the State, Youth Action Program students made significant improvements in measured levels on five of the six core attributes of leadership and team building skills—self-reliance, self-esteem, individual responsibility and a sense of community service. The reported overall satisfaction levels with the program were very high. More than 90% of student participants were satisfied with the Youth Action Program and what it had done for them. Benefits to students included an opportunity to participate in an activity that they would not otherwise have had available to them and to take an opportunity to mix with a wide range of people from different backgrounds. Some students have already gained employment as a result of participating in the Youth Action Program or are already serving in community-based units like the State Emergency Service or local surf clubs. The evaluation also found that benefits of participating in the program extended to schools. These included the school enjoying a raised profile in the community, lower truancy levels and a reduction in behaviour problems amongst Youth Action Program students.

The YAP has positively changed the lives of a number of young people and has added an extra dimension to their education. After the success of the 1998 program, it has been expanded in 1999 to a total of 23 Youth Action Program schools across the State, from Thursday Island in the north to Stanthorpe near the southern border. A maximum of 750 students in participating schools are currently preparing to commence Youth Action Program activities for 1999.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disability Funding

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Labor Government has delivered one of its key election commitments in the September 1998 Budget by providing \$30m to assist people with a disability and their families. As I have said before, this is the largest single financial commitment made to the disability sector by any Government in the history of Queensland.

This record commitment stands in stark contrast to the shameful record of the previous coalition Government, which failed for three

Budgets in a row to deliver its \$34m election promise to people with a disability. I am proud to say that the Beattie can-do Labor Government has delivered what the coalition not only could not but did not. This Government has delivered a record sum to help address the critical levels of unmet need brought about by decades of neglect. I am proud to inform the House that this \$30m in additional recurrent funds will assist at least 600 Queensland adults and children with disabilities and their families this year.

The allocation of this funding has begun. After three years of inaction by the former Government there was such a crisis in the disability sector when I became Minister that last November I approved immediate funding of \$2m for 48 people in urgent and critical need. Those individual packages will improve the quality of life of people with disabilities living in the community. In order to illustrate the level of unmet need in the community, I inform the House that more than 3,000 people have registered with my department for support since the funds were advertised late last year. This week, I approved a further 199 individual packages across Queensland as part of the first round of funding. This is a quantum leap forward. For most of those people, it is the first time that they have ever received any Government support.

Some of the people who have received support include: a 26-year-old man with a psychiatric disability and no family to support him; a 35-year-old woman with autism spectrum disorder whose elderly mother is so ill that she can no longer support her daughter; and three young people who have just turned 18 and who would be homeless and at risk of injury and abuse without funding. For those hundreds of people who did not receive funding the first time around, another funding round will be advertised this Saturday and a third in July.

To ensure that these funds are allocated fairly, my department developed a transparent process through the establishment of priority panels in the five departmental regions. The pilot priority panels have, for the first time ever, introduced a transparency and fairness to the allocation of scarce resources, and the process further establishes a positive working partnership between Government, my department and the community sector. Together we have taken an enormous step forward in developing a fairer and more open society for Queenslanders.

Not only will this significant injection of funds improve the quality of life for hundreds

of needy Queenslanders, I am proud to say that throughout this year it will also deliver nearly 800 jobs in the community services industry. The funding I have outlined this morning marks the first step towards addressing the high levels of unmet need in this State and marks a new beginning for disability services in Queensland.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Auctioneers and Agents Committee

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.01 p.m.), by leave: Over the past two days the Opposition, particularly the Liberal Party, has obsessed itself with the vilification of members of the Auctioneers and Agents Committee. It has pursued a vendetta against this committee and called into disrepute its integrity. I believe that this week too much of the time of this House has been devoted to the issue.

Yesterday, I tabled a letter from the committee chairman which any fair person would have to say put the truth squarely around the issue. Of course, it supported the ministerial statement that I supplied to the House to explain the law in regard to this matter.

So concerned were committee members by the baseless and false attacks on their integrity by Liberal Party members this week that yesterday they held an extraordinary meeting and have issued a statement of facts and the reasons for their decisions. I believe that the committee's views should become public knowledge within this Parliament.

I now table those documents. I trust that Liberal Party members opposite will give proper examination to the facts. I suggest that they will then need to consider their form of apology to the committee and to this House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Retirement Villages

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: Today I draw to the attention of members the work of a group of people whose commitment to reform will help shape the future of Queensland's retirement villages. Last year I informed the House of the Retirement Village Working Group that I

established, which comprises resident and owner representatives. Against the odds, it set out to build a new platform of consensus to carry the industry into the 21st century. Many people thought that it would fail to reach common ground on differences once regarded as intractable. However, it is now my pleasure to congratulate the working group for proving the cynics wrong.

As shown by the heads of agreement delivered to me in February, both sides have recognised an urgent need for reform and have put aside differences in order to facilitate this. The heads of agreement will be the blueprint for legislation that I intend to bring to Parliament in the form of a retirement villages Bill.

The village lifestyle is an attractive one, giving retired Queenslanders security, convenience and companionship. Unfortunately, the 11-year-old Retirement Villages Act has produced some disturbing stories. We have heard of residents virtually signing their rights away, being threatened with eviction for petty breaches of contracts, being forced to continue paying for services like laundry and meal deliveries long after they have left their village, and being unable to sell their own units. The working group has crafted a way forward that should see a significant reduction in those types of stories and optimise the benefits of village life.

The new legislation will: clearly outline village operators' obligations, including their accountability to residents; ensure prospective residents are provided with concise and relevant information before they sign residence contracts; enhance the long-term financial operation of villages; and introduce statutory rights governing the resale of residents' units. The issue of the resale of units has long been contentious and unfortunately has caused a great deal of anguish for retired Queenslanders and their families. Many members will have been made aware of this from constituent representations.

The proposed changes establish a process that is both just and practical. In contrast to the old system, residents or their estate will be able to become involved in marketing a unit if the operator cannot or will not do the job promptly. If the unit is not sold after six months, they will be able to employ an outside agent at their own expense and, subject to an independent valuation, set a realistic price.

Many of these provisions will apply to existing residents as well as people who adopt the retirement village lifestyle after legislation

comes into force. The working party also bridged differences over capital replacement and maintenance spending. Capital replacement will be the responsibility of the developer or owner, who will also be responsible for a capital replacement sinking fund. Villages that now have an inadequate fund or older villages that have no fund will be granted time to build up a fund.

Other proposed changes to the legislation include the following: residents or their estate will cease paying the full ongoing service charges 90 days after they vacate the village. The charge will then be split between the operator and the resident, according to their levels of equity in the unit. Residents or their estate will cease paying for personal services no more than 28 days after they have vacated. Advertising, commission and other charges relating to the sale of the unit will be shared, again according to equity levels. The cooling-off period on contracts will expand from seven to 14 days.

Now that the working group has proven residents and operators can come together, the Government will encourage them to continue working constructively through their differences. It is proposed to have three levels of dispute resolution. This will range from an internal dispute resolution process within the village through a mediation process, such as the alternative Dispute Resolution Centre offered by the Department of Justice, up to a binding adjudication. The working group has succeeded in constructing for Queensland retirement villages a framework for a fair and prosperous future. I now table the heads of agreement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Parthenium Weed

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of an important initiative by the Beattie Government to support rural Queenslanders. Last week, a workshop was held at Roma to develop a Queensland-wide strategy to control parthenium weed. As our rural community is well aware, parthenium has the potential to dominate the environment and reduce productivity in both grazing and cropping areas.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WELFORD: I appreciate that the Opposition is not interested in this subject, but I am concerned about rural communities. I will

tell the House what the Government is doing to address the concerns of rural communities.

Parthenium is an expensive and difficult problem to control. It poses a threat to human health as it can cause severe allergic reactions. Late last year, there was extensive germination of parthenium weed in central Queensland brought on by early rainfall and flooding. The Beattie can-do Government has provided immediate financial and human resources to help land-holders combat the threat to pastures. A sum of \$220,000 was allocated to cover the cost of free herbicide to local government for roadside spraying and for the construction of wash-down facilities at Taroom and Injune. Another \$400,000 is being spent on research on biological control agents.

Last week, stakeholders met in Roma to start work on a Statewide strategy—a long-term plan to protect rural land-holders and their important contribution to our economy. Participants represented a wide variety of occupations, regions and expertise. A working paper arising from the workshop addresses health issues and primary production impacts through a range of strategies.

There will be wide consultation prior to the drafting of the Queensland parthenium weed strategy. I am pleased to say that the member for Fitzroy has taken a keen interest in the issue and has drawn my attention to the concerns of the rural constituents in his electorate. With this community engagement process moving quickly, a strategy should be ready for endorsement by late May.

Our Government's objective in the field is aimed at restricting core infestations of parthenium in central Queensland and preventing its spread to other parts of Queensland. The Roma workshop endorsed this objective. In addition, the Government has launched a three-year project across southern Queensland, with the assistance of Natural Heritage Trust funding, to further combat the spread. The project will focus on four key elements: awareness, prevention, eradication and containment. It will support the initiatives of the Queensland Murray Darling Committee and the South West Local Government Association to stop this weed gaining a foothold in the region. It will be overseen by a community-based steering committee chaired by Mungallala land-holder and councillor, John Ford.

Industry, catchment and land-care communities and all levels of government will work together to develop effective strategies for on-ground action. Some of the issues

identified to date include the spread of parthenium by vehicles, machinery, stock and fodder, the availability and coordination of resources, and incomplete data and information. This Government, the can-do Beattie Government, will work closely with all stakeholders to develop effective and relevant strategies to control this threat to rural production. Our Government has been more active than any Government has ever been before in tackling these weed problems. We will continue to work to protect the livelihoods of rural families.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Debate

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.11 p.m.): I move—

"That Notice of Motion No. 1 on the Notice Paper in the name of Mr Wellington be debated from 5.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. today.

Time limits—mover 10 minutes, other members 5 minutes."

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Reports

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (10.12 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 29 of the committee titled Report on a Matter of Privilege—Matter Arising from Public Accounts Committee Report No. 43. I commend the report, and the committee's recommendation, to the House.

I also lay upon the table of the House report No. 28 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee titled Report on a Matter of Privilege—Matter Referred to the Committee on 21 April 1998. On 21 April 1998, the member for Chermide raised a matter of privilege in the House relating to the security of members and electorate officers. The member's complaint arose from an incident which occurred at his electorate office on the evening of 31 March 1998.

On 21 April 1998, the then Speaker referred the matter to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee of the 48th Parliament—the previous committee—for its consideration. The previous committee was unable to complete its inquiry, however, due to

the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly on 19 May 1998 for the State election. The committee of the 49th Parliament considered the matter at its inaugural meeting on 5 August 1998 and agreed to undertake an inquiry into the matters raised by the member for Chermide.

During the course of its inquiry, the committee noted that there were a number of apparent anomalies in the Criminal Code relating to the offences of "disturbing the legislature", "disturbance in the House when the Parliament is not sitting" and "going armed to Parliament House". Honourable members may be interested to learn that under the current Criminal Code if someone disturbs this House while it is sitting it is an offence that carries a penalty of three years' imprisonment. However, if someone carries a weapon to this House the penalty is but three months' imprisonment. The committee resolved to seek the advice of the Attorney-General regarding the apparent anomalies and on a number of other issues raised by Mr Sullivan.

I take this opportunity on behalf of the committee to thank the Honourable Attorney-General for his assistance. The committee has recommended that—

- (a) sections 56A and 56B of the Criminal Code be amended to rectify current anomalies between the penalty provisions of sections 56, 56A and 56B, by raising the maximum penalty for the offence of "disturbance in the House when Parliament is not sitting", which is section 56A, and the offence of "going armed to Parliament House", which is section 56B; and
- (b) the Attorney-General set in hand the introduction in the House of the appropriate legislative amendments as soon as practicable.

Finally, I lay upon the table of the House submissions received by the committee in connection with its inquiry into a code of conduct for members. The previous Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee tabled its draft Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Assembly prior to the 1998 State election. The draft code was tabled to enable a period of consultation and debate prior to its final presentation to the Legislative Assembly. The majority of submissions to the committee supported the draft code which the previous committee formulated. A number of the submissions also made useful suggestions that will be taken on board by the committee in drawing up its final recommendations to the

Legislative Assembly. The committee will now consider all suggestions made in the submissions, and will present its final report to the Assembly in the near future.

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Report on Expenses

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND)
(10.16 a.m.): I lay on the table of the House a report on the expenses for the Office of the Independent Member for Gladstone for the period ended 31 December 1998.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Cypress Industry, Western Queensland

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP)
(10.16 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this Parliament unequivocally reject any attempt to destroy the western Queensland cypress industry by the application of National Competition Policy principles; and

Further, that this House provide a guarantee to that industry that no action will be initiated or allowed which will cost timber workers their jobs, employers their businesses and rural towns their future."

FINES BILL

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA)
(Deputy Leader of the Opposition)
(10.16 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act about the issue and enforcement of infringement notices and the enforcement of fines and certain court ordered debts, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA)
(Deputy Leader of the Opposition)
(10.17 a.m.): I move—

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

The coalition has taken the initiative to reintroduce the Fines Bill 1998, because we have become seriously concerned at the inaction of the Government. This Bill was originally introduced into Parliament in April last year by my colleague the honourable member for Indooroopilly as a much-needed and responsible measure of fine enforcement reform. It is my privilege to reintroduce this necessary measure as a private member's Bill and in that way provide the Parliament with an opportunity to speedily introduce significant and community-friendly and responsible changes to the justice system in Queensland.

The coalition has taken this step because of the inaction of the Government, which has taken nine months to come up with a new name for the fines collection system and has only now promised to introduce this legislation in three months' time, to be debated some time thereafter. However, this Fines Bill can speed up this process tremendously. It required only minor changes as a result of changes to the Traffic Regulations that postdate the original Bill's introduction last April.

These changes, and any other minor changes that the Legislature might require, can be debated in this place and should be capable of debate in a spirit of cooperation designed to enhance justice for all Queenslanders. We on this side would certainly listen to the Government on the question of amendments. The Attorney-General can be assured of that.

The Fines Bill represents progress and better justice, because it will keep fine defaulters out of jail. The coalition believes serious offenders, violent offenders, should be locked away. We believe the law should be tough. But we also believe that fine defaulters should not be incarcerated, for their own sake as minor transgressors and because it is expensive and counterproductive to lock up people when they can pay for their mistakes in other ways.

In response to our opponents' claims that a financially pressed single mother would be disadvantaged by this Bill, this is a fallacy. The Bill allows time to pay—exactly the same provision as that within the proposal that they have promised to introduce in their Bill. Contrary to some claims, the Bill does not automatically and immediately suspend a defaulter's driver's licence. A person, in effect, has 56 days from the date of receipt of the infringement notice to take steps to pay the amount either outright or in instalments, or

apply to do community service before their licence is suspended.

This is all about self-responsibility. A person has a choice—a reasonable choice—following ample notice. Further, it will immediately increase the flow of funds into the public purse from people who quite wrongly, under the present lax system, can simply thumb their nose at the community. When my colleague the honourable member for Indooroopilly introduced this Bill the first time, he made a short second-reading speech and sought permission to table the remainder. To assist the House and honourable members in their business today, I seek leave to table and have incorporated in Hansard the remainder of my second-reading speech.

Leave granted.

FINDER will replace the current SETONS registry and will be responsible for the collection and enforcement of all penalty amounts due and owing to the crown, including:

- court ordered fines;
- infringement notice penalties and charges;
- compensation or restitution under the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992; and
- amounts forfeited by sureties and under bail and good behaviour recognisances.

FINDER will be a fine collection and enforcement system and not just a central bureaucracy. It is a whole-of-Government solution to the problems associated with the collection and enforcement of fines and other penalties, exacerbated by years of inaction and a growing debt. The enforcement of fines has become a growing problem in all Australian jurisdictions in recent years. In Queensland approximately \$52m remain uncollected since (and including) the 1994-95 financial year. I will now set out a brief explanation of the new FINDER model.

Infringement Notices

On receipt of the infringement notice the offender is given 4 choices as to how to settle the matter.

- (a) payment in full to the appropriate issuing authority;
- (b) application by the offender to have the fine commuted into hours of unpaid community service (without incurring further court costs);
- (c) application by the offender to have the matter paid by instalments (without incurring further court costs); and
- (d) election by the offender to have the matter heard in a Magistrates Court.

To encourage offenders to make some payments, rather than none, an incentive will be offered. If the offender elects to apply to have

the matter paid by instalments he or she will not incur further fees or costs. If the offender elects to apply to have the penalty commuted into unpaid community service (again, without incurring fees or costs), the Queensland Corrective Services Commission will be responsible for assessing the offender's suitability for a fine option order.

Once an infringement notice is more than 28 days old, (and none of the actions described above have been chosen) the infringement notice will be registered at FINDER. Registration attracts a \$42 fee (as it does already at SETONS).

FINDER will then send to the offender, by ordinary post, a notice of intention to suspend driver's licence. Experience shows that certified mail articles are too easily avoided.

If, after 28 days have elapsed since the issue of the notice of intention to suspend driver's licence, the amount remains unpaid and no application is made to pay by instalments or to do community service, FINDER will automatically suspend the person's driver's licence until full payment or discharge of the outstanding penalty. An enforcement warrant to seize and sell property may also be issued with a fee of \$66 (as SETONS does already for issuing a warrant).

The enforcement warrant will be sent to a bailiff. It must be emphasised that it is only those people who do nothing to take responsibility to discharge the penalty who will be affected by licence suspension or other enforcement action.

FINDER will give people every encouragement and assistance to do something to discharge their debt. As long as people do something, like pay by instalment or do community service, they will not have property seized or licences suspended.

Besides the warrant to seize and sell property, FINDER will have other collection and enforcement tools available to use at the discretion of the registrar. These include garnishee orders, direct debit facilities and recording an interest on any register of property interests such as land titles and motor vehicle securities.

If the bailiff returns a warrant to seize and sell property as "nulla bona" (that is, no property available to seize), the warrant is cancelled and a warrant of commitment for the total outstanding amount (including bailiff's costs) may be issued. The default term of imprisonment is calculated using a statutory formula. After a warrant of commitment has issued, no application for a fine option order will be entertained unless the person can show that he or she has previously applied and been refused and that the offender's financial position has become significantly worse.

If the warrant is executed, and the offender cannot make full and immediate payment, the

offender is to be taken into custody to serve the default term of imprisonment. Cut out rates for default imprisonment will be set at \$60 per day compared with \$120 per day for doing community service. This will deter people from taking imprisonment as a "soft" option to payment of infringement penalties.

Court Imposed Fines

When a court has imposed a fine on an offender, the sentencing judge or magistrate will usually impose a term of default imprisonment and, in the vast majority of cases, the offender will be given time to pay the fine and such other monetary penalties as ordered (that is, costs of court, restitution, professional costs etc). Under FINDER, the courts will retain full control of the imposition of fines and such other orders. However FINDER will provide for the collection of those fines which are unpaid. If the fine remains unpaid after the time allowed by the court or registrar, it will be passed from the court to FINDER. The court will only pass on the amount that remains outstanding. FINDER will not impose any further costs. FINDER will then send a notice of intention to suspend driver's licence to the offender giving a further 28 days to pay or make an election.

Fine option orders will still be available at time of sentence. However, a much simpler breach mechanism will be used if the person fails to comply with the requirements of a fine option order. If the total fine remains unpaid then the offender's driver's licence will be suspended and FINDER will issue any one or more of the enforcement warrants (such as a warrant to seize and sell property, or garnishee).

If the enforcement warrants are not successful, FINDER will issue a warrant of commitment for the arrest and imprisonment of the offender. The cut out rate will simply be the period of default imprisonment set by the court at the time of passing sentence.

Compensation and Restitution

As well as other debts owed to the State such as forfeited bonds and sureties, the FINDER model will apply to the enforcement of orders for the payment of compensation and restitution to victims under the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992. By removing automatic default imprisonment for non-payment the chances of the victim recovering all or a substantial part of the order will be enhanced. FINDER may retain a prescribed fee or prescribed proportion of the sum recovered to recoup expenses once enforcement action is commenced. This will be appropriate given that victims could otherwise still take civil recovery action at their own expense or with the assistance of Legal Aid.

Amnesty

There will be a well publicised amnesty on all outstanding warrants, limited to two months from the commencement of this Bill. During the amnesty all enforcement costs will be waived.

No fresh warrants will issue during the amnesty. All warrants of commitment remaining unpaid at the end of the amnesty will go directly to the enforcement warrant stage rather than a notice of intent to suspend licence.

This will avoid a large number of drivers suddenly becoming unlicensed drivers due to the end of the amnesty and because enforcement warrants to seize and sell property can go immediately to bailiffs for execution. The speedy follow up of the amnesty with a highly visible bailiff's exercise should produce payments.

Juvenile Offenders

The enforcement of money penalties against juvenile offenders will not come under the FINDER system and will remain, as it is today, under the Juvenile Justice Act.

Prison Numbers

The number of fine defaulters admitted to prison has increased from 5% of the total admissions per month (16 admissions per month) in March 1994 to 33% of the total admissions per month (about 150 admissions per month) at last count in 1997.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission annual report for 1995/ 96 does not show the fine default prison population to be over-represented by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. For all groups the figure is about one-third of all admissions. However the figures do show that fine defaulters, as a class, are, at that rate, very much over-represented as a proportion of all admissions. It should, however, be noted that the above figures do not account for the people who serve the whole of their time-in-default in watch-houses.

The CJC report on police watch-houses in Queensland (August 1996) found that on any given day in 1996, the State's prisons hold about 150 fine defaulters, while the State's 11 major watch-houses held an average of 36 fine defaulters, a total of 186. Because the SETONS warrants are for small amounts, many defaulters end up serving the whole of their default period in watch-houses.

It is estimated that with the implementation of FINDER the daily state of fine defaulters serving default imprisonment in prisons will be reduced substantially.

Insurance implications

The FINDER model will have minimal implications for compulsory third-party insurance and for the Nominal Defendant in relation to personal injuries relating to fault, or for comprehensive motor vehicle and other insurance policies relating to property damage. Under this Bill compulsory third-party insurance in relation to personal injuries relating to fault, and comprehensive motor vehicle and other insurance policies relating to property damage, are not voided if the insured has an accident causing loss or damage to property or personal

injury to another person while driving under licence suspension.

In conclusion, FINDER will be a fine collection and enforcement system and not just a central bureaucracy. It is a whole-of-Government solution to the problems associated with the collection and enforcement of fines and other penalties, exacerbated by years of inaction and a growing debt. Under FINDER, the fine option order will no longer be a soft option to be exploited to delay the inevitable. Fine option orders will still be available to those, and only to those, who genuinely cannot afford to pay. Fine option orders will be an alternative to enforcement or imprisonment, not an easy alternative to payment of the penalty.

A whole-of-Government solution to the growing debt due to years of inaction will present a win-win situation to the people of Queensland. It will increase the rate of collection of fines and other penalties without the necessity for enforcement action; it will reduce the costs of any necessary enforcement action; and it will radically reduce the number of fine defaulters in our jails and watch-houses. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Foley, adjourned.

ANIMALS PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (10.21 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Animals Protection Act 1925."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and Explanatory Notes presented and Bill, on motion of Dr Prenzler, read a first time.

Second Reading

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (10.21 a.m.): I move—

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

As a veterinary surgeon, I generally support the work of the RSPCA in Queensland and I believe that there is definitely a legitimate place for the RSPCA. My reasons for introducing this private member's Bill to modify the Animals Protection Act of 1925 is not to nobble the RSPCA or stop it performing its essential functions. However, there are real concerns about some of the methods used by the RSPCA in Queensland, and this Bill has

been introduced to correct most of these concerns.

As an example, I would like to draw the attention of the House to a raid conducted by the RSPCA on a dairy farm in the Wondai area owned by Ken and Ruth Schloss. On 26 February 1997, an RSPCA inspector visited the dairy farm on the basis of an alleged complaint. The owners asked the inspector for information and advice during the visit, but the inspector told the family to leave things as they were. The owners twice contacted the RSPCA in the following week asking for advice, but they were not given any additional information.

On 4 March, RSPCA officers made an unannounced raid on the property accompanied by a television crew, and I can assure the House that this was a traumatic and shocking experience for the family concerned, particularly considering the fact that the family had attempted to communicate with the RSPCA in good faith for three weeks before the raid. The RSPCA officers even searched the children's bedrooms looking for goodness knows what. Perhaps they were trying to find a heifer or two under the bed.

A cynical person would say that the RSPCA organised the raid on the first day a television crew was available. If the RSPCA was genuinely concerned about the welfare of the animals, then why did it wait all those days before commencing the raid? After the raid, the family was not informed of the offences that they were alleged to have committed for three weeks. In the meantime, the RSPCA had confiscated 18 heifers, four chickens, two dogs, six pups and five cats. The family was not convicted. They did not have the money to defend themselves and, as a result, they were forced to settle out of court. They were still out of pocket tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees, in addition to a \$9,000 bill from the RSPCA for the impounding of the animals.

I am concerned about the poor quality of some of the evidence presented in the case, the lack of scientific investigative techniques used by the RSPCA and the apparently inadequate qualifications and lack of experience of some RSPCA personnel. I seek leave for the rest of my speech to be incorporated into Hansard so that members can read it.

Leave granted.

The RSPCA in its present form is virtually unaccountable.

RSPCA officers are not required to possess any qualification or animal husbandry experience.

RSPCA officers can enter a property at will, without a warrant, and can confiscate any animal or anything.

There is no avenue by which a person can make a complaint against the RSPCA.

The current situation is untenable, and this bill will return a degree of transparency and accountability to the operation of the RSPCA in this state.

In brief, this bill will require the RSPCA to ensure that all inspectors have appropriate qualifications and experience to enable them to perform their functions correctly and objectively.

All inspectors will be required to carry photographic identification.

All inspectors will be required to obtain a warrant before entering a property.

An inspector will be able to obtain a 'special warrant' by phone or fax or other means, if the circumstances are justified.

The bill also removes the power of the Minister to order the forfeiture of any animal or thing regardless of whether or not a person is convicted under the Act.

A detailed explanatory note accompanies the bill, and I urge all Members to read it thoroughly.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Palaszczuk, adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr L. and Mrs K. Bilney

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP)
(10.24 a.m.): I speak on an issue of grave concern to many Queenslanders and, in particular, to two of my constituents, Len and Kay Bilney. Mr and Mrs Bilney consulted Prestige Constructions with regard to building a new home for them. They were told that they would need to make a preliminary deposit of \$1,500 in order for their home to progress. They did this on Friday, 12 February and put the money into the bank nominated by the construction company. They contacted the company on Monday, 15 February and Tuesday, 16 February and could not obtain any information. They subsequently discovered that on Tuesday, 16 February the salesman was advised that the company was in the hands of the administrators Worrell Whitehill.

On Wednesday, 17 February the Bilneys were advised by the salesman and tried to stop the cheque. But their Adelaide credit union advised them that the cheque had been honoured on Monday, 15 February. This was

the same day that Mr Mike Simpson, son of the directors of the company, was in Brisbane arranging for the appointment of administrators. The Bilneys had interviewed Mr Simpson only a few days before the directors visited Brisbane to arrange the appointment of the administrators and had received his personal assurance that the company did not have any problems. Therefore, they acted in good faith, deposited their \$1,500 and promptly lost it.

The Bilneys are retired and can ill afford to lose this money. They believe—and the facts as presented tend to substantiate their belief—that they were deliberately defrauded of their money by an insolvent company. They have contacted the administrators but have been told that secured creditors will be paid out first if, indeed, there are any salvageable assets left in the company. However, all the subcontractors, who are hardworking small businesspeople, and citizens such as the Bilneys will miss out.

I ask Judy Spence, as the Minister with portfolio responsibilities that cover issues such as these, to ensure that the personal assets of the directors of Prestige Homes are taken into consideration when endeavouring to deliver some justice to my constituents and also to ensure that any amendments to current legislation are made to bring equity back into the regulation of the building industry and to protect innocent consumers such as the Bilneys.

Time expired.

Member for Caloundra

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP)
(10.26 a.m.): On behalf of the female Labor MPs, I reject the comments made by the member for Caloundra on ABC radio this morning. The member claimed that she had privately received support from a few female Labor MPs for the coalition's truth in sentencing legislation. I have contacted each of the female Labor MPs this morning and, as I expected, none of them has expressed support, privately or otherwise. The member for Caloundra has totally misrepresented Labor's position on this Bill.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. They may not have expressed any support to this particular member, but it was expressed to me.

Ms STRUTHERS: The Beattie Government is tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We believe that those who break the law, including serious violent

offenders, should feel the full force of the law—no ifs, no buts. This Government has a number of strategies to fight crime, including a series of crime prevention community forums currently occurring across the State to canvass Queenslanders' views on the best way to tackle crime in their local communities. This task force is all about listening to the views of the people and delivering a crime strategy that reflects the partnership between the Government and the people. It will report to Cabinet later this year. I suggest that the member for Caloundra stops talking privately to herself.

Consultation with Rural Queenslanders

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): Recently the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, and I toured Townsville, Tully, Ingham, Innisfail, Cairns and a place called Bluewater Spring, which is about two and a half hours west of Townsville, to meet with cattlemen, cattlegrowers and people concerned with land care issues, such as parthenium weed and other forms of noxious weed, National Competition Policy and many other issues. We also met with banana growers, pawpaw growers, canefarmers and the representatives of the sugar industry. We found that the reception was good, but that there are people who are sceptical and cynical as far as politicians of all descriptions are concerned. They are extremely concerned about being hurt and neglected and about their voice not being heard.

I am concerned, particularly for those people who have been hurt by the recent floods. We do need to have a major summit as far as the Federal Government, State Government, local government and those producers organisations are concerned in order to restructure and——

Time expired.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Electricity Supply

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: why did he not reveal to Queenslanders the loss of almost 600 megawatts of generating capacity at Tarong and Swanbank this month, which pushed Queensland to the brink of blackouts and which drove the cost of power to Queenslanders on the national electricity market to an incredible \$3,076 per megawatt

hour—more than 150 times the average price in Victoria and New South Wales?

Mr McGRADY: I am delighted to take this question from the Leader of the Opposition. When the Beattie Government came to office, the electricity industry was in a total shambles. On 17 occasions in a 12-month period when the now Opposition was in office, this State was close to having load shedding. In the past six months we have completely transformed this industry. In fact, the restructuring which took place just a few weeks ago should demonstrate to all Queenslanders that we have a plan and that we know where we are going.

I gave a commitment to the people of Queensland that whenever the State had a major problem I would inform them. On every single occasion there has been a potential problem in this State and it has been brought to my attention, I have notified the people of this State. This question gives me the opportunity today to inform this House——

Mr Borbidge: You didn't know we had lost 600 megawatts.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Will the Leader of the Opposition allow the Minister to answer the question or not? He has asked the question; the Minister is answering it.

Mr McGRADY: This question allows me to tell the people of Queensland the good situation we are now in. Presently we have a spare capacity each day of about 1,200 megawatts. A couple of weeks ago, on three consecutive days we created records for demand, yet we had massive amounts of supply available.

The message I want to get across today is that the Beattie Government has tackled electricity problems head on. Those opposite have to understand that their previous Minister allowed this State on 17 occasions to almost suffer load shedding. He did not tell the people of the State the perilous situation we were in. This Government is honest. This Government tells the people and will continue to do so.

Sun Metals Dispute

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Premier to his claims, repeated again this morning, that the State Industrial Commission has insufficient powers under the Workplace Relations Act to deal with problems such as the Sun Metals dispute. I refer the Premier to the fact that his Minister for Industrial Relations has power under section 337(3) to intervene in proceedings before the State Industrial Commission, and sections 351 and 352 give

the court power to enforce the commission's orders. Given that the CFMEU and the BLF have been in direct contravention of orders of the commission, why has the Minister for Industrial Relations not sought to have those orders enforced under section 351, using his powers under section 337(3)?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the temporary Leader of the Opposition for his question. The temporary Leader of the Opposition knows well that his Government reduced the power of the independent umpire and its ability to intervene at an early stage to resolve disputes. That has been the central problem here. We have moved as quickly as we can to facilitate an outcome. This morning I spoke to the senior partner in Sun Metals, I spoke to the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I spoke to union representatives, and I confirmed the Government's strategy.

The Government's strategy is very simply this, and I spelt this out in my ministerial statement. There is a compulsory conference of the Industrial Commission in Townsville, which started at 10 o'clock—35 minutes ago. I think the fact that the Government indicated it was going to appoint a negotiator, Bob Hawke, has helped focus everyone's minds much more on resolving this dispute. Considerable progress was made yesterday. I am hopeful that this dispute will be resolved today. If not, the negotiator, Bob Hawke, will be here tomorrow and the Government will use that opportunity to try to resolve this dispute.

Let us be very clear about this: the Government's position here has been hampered by the inadequate industrial relations laws we inherited from the previous Government. We will fix that situation. As I spelt out to the House in my ministerial statement, the Minister for Industrial Relations, on behalf of the Government, will be introducing legislation into Parliament this year to fix the inadequate industrial relations laws we inherited from the previous Government. The temporary Leader of the Opposition can come in here and try to misrepresent sections, as he tried to do this morning. The bottom line is that there are inadequacies in the current law, which we will fix.

There is a clear difference between the temporary Leader of the Opposition and me and my Government, and it is this: we want to resolve this dispute in the interests of Queensland. We want that project to go ahead. All the Leader of the Opposition wants to do is use industrial relations as a political football. I do not and my Government does not. We want a resolution. He is the only one

who has sought to undermine Bob Hawke. We want this matter resolved and we will be proceeding on that basis.

Health Funding

Mr SULLIVAN: I note that in his ministerial statement today the Premier mentioned that he had asked the Prime Minister to put health funding on the agenda of the Premiers Conference. Will the Premier tell the House the Prime Minister's reaction?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the member for Chermide for that question because, as we all know, he has a keen interest in health. He has one of our major hospitals in his electorate—that is, the Prince Charles Hospital—and he has been a strong advocate of that hospital and its facility for some time. I wrote to the Prime Minister to put the issue of health funding on the agenda. I have received a reply from the Prime Minister, and health funding is not on the agenda. I think that is not in the national or State interest.

There has been an increase in the number of Queenslanders utilising hospital services. It is running at 6%. This is the growth State of Australia and we are seeing that reflected in pressures on the hospital system. While the number of Queenslanders has increased by 6%, the Australian health care agreement with the Commonwealth limits payments to a rise of only 2.1% for the next five years. We have excessive demand in this State, yet under the Commonwealth financial arrangements we are being financed to the tune of only 2.1%, when the increase in population is 6%. That is the pressure on this system and that is what we want rectified by the Commonwealth.

Miss Simpson: \$1.3 billion is more than 2%.

Mr BEATTIE: The Opposition may well argue, as it is doing now, that it does not want any more money from the Commonwealth for public hospitals, but my Government does. We will be doing everything we can to get additional Commonwealth funding. Let the record show: the Opposition is opposing our moves to increase funding to public hospitals in this State. Even Dr Wainwright from the AMA agrees. She said—

"The number of people using our public hospitals is increasing exponentially—for example, at the Royal Brisbane Hospital there are over 200 per month extra acute operations required compared to last year."

In other words, there are more operations being done in the public hospital system under this Government than under the Borbidge Government. There is a greater demand—a 6% increase. That is why we want more money out of the Commonwealth.

What else has the Commonwealth done? In addition, the Federal Government has withdrawn services, such as the dental program, at \$20m a year in 1996, and the AIDS/Medicare/HIV viral load testing and other Commonwealth programs, at \$20m-plus a year. So the Commonwealth has pulled that money out of those programs. I would have thought that the Opposition in this place would have supported us when we are out there arguing for more money from the Commonwealth for public hospitals. We will fight for more money for the public hospitals in this State even if the Opposition seeks to undermine that bid.

Sun Metals Dispute

Mr SANTORO: I refer the Premier to his often-stated belief that the Sun Metals project is of vital importance to Queensland. I also refer the Premier to the practice of the previous coalition Government in intervening in the commission where the public interest demanded it. I refer the Premier to the fact that the dispute at Sun Metals in Townsville has been ongoing for four weeks. I also refer the Premier to the repeated and serious breach of commission orders by his union friends involved in the Sun Metals dispute in Townsville during the past four weeks. I ask: why has it taken the Premier four weeks to intervene in this dispute, and why is he intervening so inadequately when, for the past four weeks, he has had the powers, under the Workplace Relations Act, as referred to by the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition, to intervene decisively and bring the unions who have been breaking the law to heel?

Mr BEATTIE: I find it ironic that this is the only Government in Australia that is seeking to intervene—which we are doing through the appointment of Bob Hawke—to resolve a dispute.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Clayfield will allow the Premier to answer the question.

Mr BEATTIE: We are trying to resolve this dispute. We have spoken to a former Prime Minister to intervene, as a negotiator, to assist. Where is the other major dispute in this

country? It is at Gordonstone. And whose jurisdiction is it? It is Federal jurisdiction. Who is in Government federally? The National/Liberal Parties! Are they intervening? No! Have we heard one word from this Opposition about the Federal Government—Peter Reith—intervening at Gordonstone? Have we heard one word? No, not one word! Philosophically—

Mr Borbidge: That's Federal law.

Mr BEATTIE: Ah! Philosophically, what did the Borbidge/Santoro industrial laws provide? They are identical to the Reith/Howard laws, and what do they support? Non-intervention! That is the Opposition's philosophical position. So let this nonsense be totally exposed.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Clayfield!

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr BEATTIE: The philosophy of the Opposition has been non-intervention—not one word, not one phone call to Mr Howard or Mr Reith to get them to intervene at Gordonstone—not one. That is under Federal jurisdiction. The challenge to them today is this: let us hear Mr Borbidge, the temporary Leader of the Opposition, and Mr Santoro, the member for Clayfield, publicly call on Mr Reith to intervene at Gordonstone. That is my challenge to them: go out today and intervene at Gordonstone. I challenge them to call on the Federal Government to intervene at Gordonstone, like my Government is doing to intervene to resolve the Sun Metals dispute.

We have set the precedent. What have we done? We have spoken to Bob Hawke to come up as a negotiator to resolve that dispute. But all we have heard from the Opposition is an attempt to undermine it. Who attacked Bob Hawke? The Opposition did, because it does not want a resolution! Who attacked Rio Tinto? The Opposition did, because it does not want a resolution! We are determined to do everything that we can to resolve that dispute. That is why I rang the company this morning and spoke to the senior partner. Why? Because I want it resolved! I rang the QCCI this morning. Why? Because I want it resolved! I rang the unions this morning and spoke to them. Why? Because I want it resolved! And my message was the same to all of them: fix it today in the commission or, if not, Bob Hawke will be here tomorrow.

Torres Strait Islands Autonomy

Mr LUCAS: I refer the Premier to the push for greater autonomy for the Torres Strait, and I ask whether this issue was raised during meetings last week with Torres Strait leaders?

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, it was. Last Thursday and Friday, I visited the Torres Strait with my colleague the member for Cook, Steve Bredhauer. That was my first visit to the Torres Strait as Premier. As well as enjoying some warm hospitality, I discussed a number of issues with island leaders, and among the most important was the push for greater autonomy for the Torres Strait along with the security issues involving the coastline, to which I have referred previously in this House.

The Government supports the concept of autonomy in principle, as does the Commonwealth Government. However, I want more discussion about the definition of "autonomy", because it means different things to different people. I support Torres Strait Islanders having a greater say in the direction of their communities. However, there are two important conditions. Firstly, I support the Torres Strait remaining a part of Queensland. That is the bottom line. All leaders indicated to me that they support that position as well. So that area will remain part of Queensland and part of Australia; there is no argument about that. That is the first point. Any model that emerges, however—and this is the second point—must have the general support of the local communities.

I was very impressed with the discussions that I had with John Abednego, who is the Chairman of the Torres Strait Regional Authority, Getano Lui, who is the Chairman of the Island Co-ordinating Council, and Pedro Stephen, who is the Mayor of the Torres Strait Shire, and other island leaders. They were supportive of the position that I have just outlined to the House. There does, of course, need to be a great deal more talking and discussions. I have asked my colleague the member for Cook, Steve Bredhauer, to be involved in future discussions with island leaders. The Queensland Government will work with island leaders and the Commonwealth to achieve an outcome that is in the best interests of the people of that region.

I want to add one other thing to the autonomy issue, and that is the security issue. I remind members of this House—and I will be raising this with the Prime Minister on 9 April at the Premiers meeting—that, in 1997—and all leaders were concerned about this—a boatload of illegal immigrants from southern

China arrived at Thursday Island—130 of them. What we saw at Holloways Beach—about which the member for Barron River asked me earlier this week—was simply a repeat of what happened in 1997.

The exchanges that we have had with the Commonwealth about this are, unfortunately, regrettable. However, I remind the Commonwealth of its responsibility under the Constitution to secure the borders of this nation. That is why I will repeat and emphasise the need for the upgrading of the naval facilities at Thursday Island and the upgrading of the Scherger base. I cannot understand why Squadron Nos 10 or 11 from Edinburgh in South Australia cannot be moved up to Scherger to guarantee the security of this State. I have not heard of any boatloads of illegal immigrants arriving in South Australia in recent times. And whereas I do not want to see Edinburgh lose facilities, we need them in Queensland.

Incident at Wolston Park Hospital

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to a situation at Brisbane's Wolston Park Hospital on 24 January this year, when a psychiatric patient allegedly slashed a female nurse's throat, resulting in the nurse's hospitalisation. I refer the Minister also to disturbing reports that several hours elapsed before the police were notified of the incident and that, during that period, significant evidence, including the purported weapon, was cleaned up. Given that prior to the alleged attack hospital staff had lodged several complaints about the lack of security, jeopardising their personal safety, and given that she, as the Minister for Health, holds the statutory powers of investigation into mental health facilities, will the Minister confirm that evidence pertinent to a criminal investigation was destroyed? And will she outline who it was who gave the order for the evidence to be destroyed?

Mrs EDMOND: I will confirm that an incident—a very regrettable incident—occurred at the Wolston Park Hospital. The member has made a number of serious allegations, and we will investigate those serious allegations. That is what they are at this stage: allegations. What did happen was that the nurse concerned received immediate medical attention. I cannot confirm whether that happened before she went to the police. I would think that it was important that she received immediate medical attention.

An expert independent review team from interstate conducted extensive immediate

investigations. All the people who gave evidence were given full protection under the whistleblowers legislation. There was no cover-up. The review produced seven recommendations aimed at addressing problem areas or what we saw as deficiencies in security at Wolston Park in order to minimise the possibility of such an event happening again. I have issued instructions that I expect all seven recommendations to be implemented in full as soon as possible and I will be monitoring their implementation. Within days of the report's completion, and after it had been to me and the department, staff and unions received a briefing on the report. The same information was made available to the media. We have been quite open about our concern over this serious incident. We are intent on making sure that it does not happen again.

On legal advice, sections of the report which related to the patient's clinical condition were not released. I believe that everyone involved in the briefings has accepted that that is an important principle. I can assure the House that everything that can be done to ensure the safety of our staff, whom we value very much, is being done.

Queensland Industry Development Scheme

Mr MICKEL: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Trade. Can he advise the House of the outcomes of any Government programs to support the manufacturing sector in Queensland?

Mr ELDER: I can outline the successes of the Queensland Industry Development Scheme. During the debate last night on major projects I was intrigued to hear comments coming from the other side of the House in relation to the coalition's successes in this area. As I said, the only project of which I was aware was the gas pipeline between the south-west and the north-west which ended in Mount Isa. It was a Goss Government initiative and was opened by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Borbidge: Boeing.

Mr ELDER: I agree that Boeing is a reasonable project. It is a good project.

Mr Borbidge: Dascom and Silicon Graphics.

Mr ELDER: Boeing is not hard infrastructure, as I would see it, as a major project, but it is a good project. It is a project that provides intellectual infrastructure that is needed in this State. If the Opposition

considers Boeing a major project on its criteria, then on the same criteria National Foods at Logan—which is enhancing the manufacturing sector—Indus Industries, Saville Systems, Stellar Communications and Citibank are all major projects that build on the intellectual capacity and communications capacity in this State. On the basis that Boeing is a major project under the Opposition's criteria, in the past eight months this Government has delivered five major projects to Queensland in an area—intellectual infrastructure and communications—that is important to this State.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr ELDER: There is more, and there are more to follow, believe me.

Under the Queensland Industry Development Scheme we are looking after the small business and manufacturing sector as well. I refer to the small businesses that underpin the big picture. So far this scheme has assisted 64 companies—18 in January, 18 in February and 28 this month. This has led to the saving of 742 jobs in companies which, but for our intervention, would have closed. More importantly, 1,260 jobs have come directly out of this initiative. We have developed a program that has been supporting businesses at the big end with major projects and supporting the manufacturing sector with QIDS.

This is all about leadership. The leadership displayed by the Government is quite different from the leadership potential I see from the temporary Leader of the Opposition. As I see him, he is Mr Teens. He has a popularity rating of some 19% and the figure is falling quickly. The Leader of the Opposition said that he had managed to remove the nest of rats from the Opposition. I have to tell him that it is a nest of vipers now and there is no antivenene for the next strike. The next strike can only be a few months away.

Department of State Development Web Site

Mr SLACK: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Trade. As Minister for State Development and Trade he was emphatic this week that the Government remained "diligent" in "building our reputation as an IT hub of the region" and he talked about leadership. I therefore ask: how does the Minister's IT reputation stack up when his department's web site—the Government's virtual front door—quotes statistics that are more than two

years out of date? Is the Minister's public enthusiasm over Queensland's "grunt" status this week designed to hide the plunging value of our exports as shown by the 6% drop recorded in the January figures?

Mr ELDER: It is interesting to see how members who did not deliver when they were Ministers enjoy running down the State. The current web site is being replaced by a full new web site that will deal with every bit of activity delivered from a department that did not deliver when the member for Burnett was Minister. We will have a comprehensive web site with all the delivery mechanisms and all the programs that we have as a Government. The member can rest assured that people around the world will see this State as it should have been painted on the web site. They will see a State with a strong, can-do Government. The member will be disappointed when that hits the screen.

Our export performance, whilst disappointing to the extent that it is holding its line, is well ahead of export performances right across Australia. Those opposite are a bit slow because I made that comment in answer to a question in the Parliament two weeks ago. Our export performance is holding. The reason it is holding is that we have changed focus.

I might refer to the Department of Trade that was left to me by the honourable member. It was just not performing. The KPMG review which I ordered clearly stated that the policies being adopted by the Opposition at the time were policies devoid—

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the Parliament, because our figures last January were of the order of a 14% improvement whereas this year we see a 6% drop.

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

Mr ELDER: You are right, Mr Speaker, there is no point of order and the member will continue to knock Queensland and will continue to be concerned about his performance—and so he should. He performed fairly poorly in that portfolio over the years.

Mr Borbidge: Down 6% in March.

Mr ELDER: I say to the temporary Leader of the Opposition that I will measure my performance against his. In six months' time we will see if I am sitting here and if he is sitting there. We might judge the Leader of the Opposition's statement on the position in six months' time, because from what I hear

around the corridors it will not be long before the Leader of the Opposition is removed. A few of my colleagues have been reliably informed that it will not be too long before the Leader of the Opposition's day of reckoning. His colleagues are clearly watching what is happening in the Newspoll. This plummet into the teens has led to a certain thought process on the coalition's backbench. I would not like to be in the Leader of the Opposition's shoes over the next few months. I suspect that as his popularity plummets—as he knocks, whines, and whinges—so do his job prospects. If any job prospect is under pressure in Queensland, it is that of the temporary Leader of the Opposition.

Goods and Services Tax

Ms NELSON-CARR: My question is directed to the Treasurer. I refer to the concerns raised publicly by the Queensland Government and former Howard Minister and member for Fairfax, Alex Somlyay, that Queensland could be short-changed through the proposed Commonwealth tax reforms. I ask: what has been the Federal Government's response?

Mr HAMILL: I was dismayed when I saw a statement in the Australian newspaper this morning that the Prime Minister had slapped down one of his own MPs on the issue of GST share for Queensland. When I read a little further into the article it appeared that the Prime Minister does not want to listen to even his own backbenchers when they are raising legitimate concerns on the part of their constituents in Queensland. This is the same Prime Minister who, earlier this week, was everybody's mate. Mateship was the hallmark of the Prime Minister. He is certainly proving to be no mate of Queensland.

Mr Bredhauer: A little bully.

Mr HAMILL: He is nothing more than a little bully when it comes to this very important issue. Let us look at the situation. Mr Somlyay at least had the intestinal fortitude to raise his concerns, which is more than I can say for honourable members opposite. When the Prime Minister slapped down Mr Somlyay he turned around and accused the Queensland Government of being provincial—"Oh, I say, the Queensland Government is being provincial in relation to this matter."

Too right we are, and proudly so. We are concerned about the impact of the Federal Government's package on this part of Australia and the people who live here. We are being unashamedly provincial, and standing up for

the provincial, State interests of Queensland and Queenslanders, and proudly so.

Let me reiterate the point for the benefit of the Prime Minister and, indeed, for the Liberal Party and National Party members of this House, who I wish would come on side, open their mouths and support the stand taken by this Government, a stand which has been supported by the member for Fairfax: Queenslanders are being asked to pay more tax and not get the money back. Queenslanders will pay 25% more tax per capita and provide a tax cut to the Victorians and the New South Welshmen.

That is the fact of the matter. Mr Somlyay knows that is a fact. We know that is a fact. Once again, we find that the Opposition in this place are nothing more than apologists for their little mate, the Prime Minister.

Regional Communities Program

Mr HOBBS: I refer the Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities to the employment advertisements in the Courier-Mail of Saturday, 13 March 1999 for 24 positions in eight regions for regional managers, regional community officers and management support officers located in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Nambour, Beenleigh and Ipswich. I preface the question by stating my strong support for the regional forum concept. However, I note that all of these positions are located along the coast and in Labor or de facto Labor seats. I ask the Minister: why is he using up to \$2.6m of taxpayers' funds to prop up the ALP? Does this fit in with the Premier's standards that he talks about? When is the Minister going to provide the equivalent resources throughout the whole State and, in particular to the rural and remote areas, or is this Labor's internal jobs creation program to shore up these marginal Labor regions and seats?

Mr MACKENROTH: I do not know how somebody can say he supports a program and then put it down. Eight regions were identified in the Regional Communities Program. Those eight regions are based on the growth regions in the State. To cater for the rural areas, we have a Rural Communities Program.

In relation to the eight offices that are being established in the eight regions, one is being established in Cairns because the Department of Local Government and Planning already has an office in Cairns and it is cheaper for us to establish a regional office within that office. In fact, the City of Cairns is

the centre of the Cairns region. We have established an office in Townsville, because we already have an office in Townsville and have had for quite a while. We are establishing that regional office within that office.

In relation to the Mackay/Whitsunday area, we could have established the office in Mackay, Proserpine or in Bowen. However, we established it in Mackay because we have an office in Mackay already and we are joining that regional office with that office in Mackay. In relation to Rockhampton and Gladstone, we already have an office in Rockhampton, so we are putting that regional office with that office.

In relation to the Wide Bay area, we have put the office in Bundaberg, which is not a marginal Labor Party seat. We also could have established the office at Hervey Bay or Maryborough, which are two seats that Labor lost at the last election and which it would like to win back. However, I did not do that because we already have an office in Bundaberg. In relation to the three areas where we do not have offices, Nambour is certainly not a marginal Labor Party seat and is never likely to be, so I do not think that we could be accused of putting an office there for political reasons.

In the western region out from Brisbane, the office could have been established at Ipswich or Toowoomba. The office is actually located in the Treasurer's seat of Ipswich. I do not think that Ipswich is a marginal seat for the Labor Party. In relation to the south coast area, the office is located in Gold Coast City but at the far end of Gold Coast City at Beenleigh.

I cannot help it if Labor holds all the regional seats. That is just the way it is. When we do things in rural areas, such as I did this week in approving the \$1.6m allocation for the Rural Living Infrastructure Program, nearly all of that money will go to seats held by the National Party. It just happens that the National Party holds those seats.

Building Contractors

Mr PURCELL: I ask the Minister for Fair Trading: could she inform the House of what steps can be taken to reduce the risk faced by building contractors engaged by construction managers rather than by building companies?

Ms SPENCE: I thank the member for the question. His concern for the plight of workers in the building industry is well known to all the members of this House and the construction

industry generally. The question comes to light because of a disturbing situation that has occurred on the Courthouse Hotel project in Southport in the past month. I would like to acknowledge that the member for Southport, Mr Mick Veivers, has also spoken to me about this issue. We are both concerned about the subcontractors on that site.

Subcontractors in Queensland do not want any of us playing politics over this issue. What is happening on the Courthouse Hotel project is that, at this point in time, subcontractors are owed over \$800,000. The work has stopped, and I am told that the subbies on this site are currently facing appalling hardship.

This situation was brought to my attention earlier this month by Mr Chris White of the National Subcontractors Association, who I have to say is a very fine advocate for his members. He contacted the Queensland Building Services Authority to say that the contractors on the site were not being paid. The BSA ascertained that this project was one of an emerging breed of major construction projects where the owner engages a licensed builder to manage the site but the owner, not the licensed builder, pays all the contractors.

We are disturbed by this move, because although the BSA has the authority to check the financial credibility of licensed builders in this State, it does not have any authority to check the financial credibility of companies generally. The BSA, while not being able to be involved directly in this particular project, has convened meetings between the affected parties and has tried to get the responsible body, which is the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, to come along to those meetings, because it is ASIC that is responsible for checking the financial capacity of companies in Queensland, not the BSA.

I have to tell members that I have written to the Federal Minister responsible for ASIC, the Honourable Mr Joe Hockey, asking for its cooperation to provide some relief for the contractors on this particular site. Although the BSA and the Queensland Government are not involved directly with this particular project, or the plight of subcontractors on this particular project, we are not going to walk away from our commitment to the Queensland building industry. As members would be aware, we have announced reforms to the building industry in Queensland. Currently we are working with the MBA particularly and industry generally to see if our reforms can incorporate in future this kind of situation.

Tugun Bypass

Mr JOHNSON: I ask the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads: is he aware of concern regarding delays in progressing the Tugun bypass? Is he aware of a meeting in Brisbane between officers of Queensland Transport and Main Roads with Friends of Currumbin and the Tugun Progress Association, where representatives are quoted in the Gold Coast Mail as saying that they were extremely concerned and that they came away "bloody dissatisfied"? Does the Minister recall that when the coalition released the preferred corridor for the bypass, including the rail extension, 12 months ago, within a couple of weeks the member for Currumbin complained that construction had not commenced and promised during the election campaign that a Labor Government would fast-track the project, knowing full well that the issue involves New South Wales? As the member for Currumbin sat in on a meeting that I had with the New South Wales Minister, the Honourable Carl Scully, can the Minister now advise the reason for the significant delays and the total confusion regarding this project which have marked his nine months in office?

Mr BREDHAUER: That is a rather complex question, but I will answer it. I am not aware of the report in the Gold Coast Mail to which the honourable member refers. I have to say that over the past nine months one of the strongest supporters for this project has been the Minister for Emergency Services, who has regularly beaten a path to my door to talk about progress on the Tugun bypass.

As the honourable member for Gregory would know, about two thirds of the corridor for the project is actually in New South Wales; it is not in Queensland. We are required to go through substantial processes in relation to meeting the environmental impact and impact assessment statement requirements of the New South Wales Government. I am anxious and am doing my best to progress this issue as quickly as we can. However, it is clear that we have to make sure that we do the detailed investigations that are required under the impact assessment process of New South Wales before we lodge an application for an impact assessment. There are significant concerns in northern New South Wales about potential environmental implications. Following discussions with the relevant authorities in New South Wales, my department is currently working on a program that would initiate an impact assessment process.

The New South Wales Government has been rigorous. On a number of occasions I have spoken to Carl Scully, the New South Wales Transport Minister, in relation to this and he has said rigorously that their impact assessment processes will have to be applied and that there are significant environmental concerns which they will meet. The officers of my department are working diligently, both with the people from New South Wales and the member for Currumbin and Minister for Emergency Services, who I think is due to be briefed again later this week, probably on Friday afternoon. I had a further briefing yesterday. We are progressing this issue.

I know that the project is not moving as fast as the member for Currumbin and a lot of people from that part of the Gold Coast would like, but we have promised that we will get on with the job. That is what we are doing. I anticipate that we will embark upon an impact assessment process in the not-too-distant future.

Illegal Sale of Alcohol

Mr HAYWARD: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing to inform the House of ongoing efforts by liquor licensing inspectors and the police to crack down on the illegal sale of alcohol at unlicensed premises such as Players Inn, the Spring Hill establishment associated with Warren Neil Armstrong.

Mr GIBBS: I am sure that all members of the House would have been appalled at the conduct of this particular gentleman when he appeared on national television and in a national news magazine some time ago, deliberately flouting the law in Queensland and virtually challenging the legal authorities to come after him. He certainly got his wish.

Last year, Armstrong was convicted and fined a total of \$40,000 by the courts for illegally selling alcohol on unlicensed premises. Since then, liquor licensing inspectors and police have raided the Players Inn on 13 occasions, including 11 times since 5 February. The police have also raided the premises a further six times and arrested staff for illegally selling alcohol.

In the raids to date, authorities have confiscated cash and alcohol worth in excess of \$50,000. The confiscated booty includes: \$6,840 in cash, 9,497 cans and stubbies of beer, 893 bottles of spirits, 434 bottles of wine, 180 bottles of liqueur, 139 bottles of vodka pulp, eight bottles of port and—and I guess that this next item is a little like the body

stomping that has been going on on the poor old temporary Leader of the Opposition, except that they must have been doing a bit of Cossack dancing—414 bottles of lemon russkies.

I assure the House that while Armstrong and his underlings continue to deliberately flout the law, I have directed the Liquor Licensing Division and the police to keep raiding Players Inn to enforce the law. In the not-too-distant future, it is my intention to introduce an amendment to the Liquor Act which will ensure that Armstrong's illegal activities are brought to an end very quickly.

Sun Metals Dispute; Mr. R. L. Hawke

Mr BLACK: While I understand the mounting pressure on the Premier to resolve the Sun Metals dispute and in light of that, I ask that he inform the House of the further cost to the taxpayers of Queensland of hiring Bob Hawke to broker the peace deal. What are the terms of the reference of the hiring of Mr Hawke to intervene in this dispute? Further, is there any guarantee that the money that the Premier is intent on paying Mr Hawke is being well spent? Does he have any assurances that these disputes will be settled with the intervention of Mr Hawke or is he throwing good money after bad?

Mr BEATTIE: The Government has moved to resolve this dispute by the appointment of Bob Hawke as a negotiator. It may well be, and I certainly hope that this is the case—indeed, I hope that all serious members of the House hope that this is the case—that this matter will be resolved today as a result of a compulsory conference that is being held in Townsville. As I have already indicated to the House, this morning prior to the holding of that compulsory conference I rang Sun Metals, QCCI and the unions to indicate that I wanted this matter resolved today. It is a matter for the parties, but I have indicated that view. I have also indicated that if it is not resolved today, Mr Hawke will be here tomorrow.

It may well be that we do not need to pay Mr Hawke anything. I am hopeful that the matter will be resolved today. If Mr Hawke is needed to resolve these matters, I will release publicly the package that we have negotiated with Mr Hawke. I can tell the House that it is a very reasonable one.

Youth Detention in Watch-houses

Mrs LAVARCH: I ask the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and

Minister for Disability Services to inform the House about the outcome of yesterday's workshop to minimise the detention of young people in Queensland watch-houses?

Ms BLIGH: Yesterday evening a significant step was taken towards finding real and long-term practical solutions to reducing the inappropriate detention of young people in adult watch-houses in Queensland. The workshop was a clear demonstration of the commitment of this Government to addressing the issue and a clear demonstration of the commitment of the State's judiciary, senior State police, the Departments of Families, Justice and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy to keeping young people out of adult watch-houses where possible.

Last night, some of Queensland's best and most influential minds in the field of law joined with key players from a range of interest groups to work on this problem. The list of participants who were involved in the workshop included the President of the Childrens Court of Queensland, the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, a Childrens Court magistrate, a Supreme Court judge, a District Court judge, the acting Children's Commissioner, senior officers of Queensland Police, my own department, the Department of Justice and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, many members of the legal profession including the National Children's Lawyer of the Year, the President of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties and a range of committed youth advocacy groups.

More than 40 dedicated professionals gave up four hours of their valuable time to debate the issue and develop recommendations for Government. I thank them all sincerely for their efforts. A number of recommendations have emerged, including proposals to introduce a bail regime specific to young offenders to ensure that the police and the courts have effective alternatives to watch-house detention. They also included flexible proposals in relation to accommodation and infrastructure to recognise the difficulties that distance and remoteness place on the provision of services, and also looked at developing a standard of care based on best practice principles in relation to the detention of children in watch-houses when it is necessary.

There was an overwhelming determination through a common vision to find solutions. While all participants recognised that from time to time it will always be necessary in a State such as Queensland to detain children in adult watch-houses, participants

unanimously believed that the detention of children should be minimised, and all agreed that Governments should resist the temptation to adopt simplistic solutions, such as building mini youth detention facilities across regional Queensland.

Once again, I thank all of the participants for their commitment and vision on this issue and look forward to receiving a full report on the recommendations for the Government's consideration. This is just another example of this Government's capacity to solve problems and of our capacity when there is a job to do to roll up our sleeves and do it. As I said yesterday, in eight weeks we have already reduced the length of time children are staying in these facilities by half, and we are committed to improving that. When we move on problems, we do so in a way that brings people with us instead of seeking to create conflict. Once again, we are doing what the coalition could not do, would not do or just did not do.

Queensland Film and Television Industry

Mr GRICE: On Tuesday this week in a ministerial statement the Premier announced that Arts Minister Foley had finalised negotiations recently with Coote/Hayes Productions in Los Angeles to locate five television movie productions in Queensland. The facts are that the movie *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* commenced on 16 November 1998, *The Lost World* commenced on 1 September 1998, and *Flipper*, seasons three and four, commenced on 5 May 1998. Perhaps I should add "*Baywatch Red Faces*", starring the Premier and the member for Bundamba! I ask: will the Premier now explain why he deliberately misled the House and the people of Queensland?

Mr BEATTIE: I would have thought that a member who represents the Gold Coast region would have been enthusiastic about \$100m in new productions.

Mr Grice: They're not new.

Mr BEATTIE: The member cannot have it both ways. Here is \$100m worth of investments for five new productions. Let me advise the House that these are—just wait for it—

Mr Borbidge: Is this while you think of what to say?

Mr BEATTIE: Is it not funny that the temporary Leader of the Opposition, who represents a Gold Coast electorate, also seeks to denigrate companies that are coming here to produce—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, you are.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. That comment is offensive. The question is now one of the Premier's credibility and why he misled this House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the Leader of the Opposition asking for a withdrawal?

Mr BEATTIE: I am happy to withdraw. If I could get a chance to answer this question, I would simply say—and members opposite should listen very carefully—that these are new series. Not only is everything that I said about this true; the Attorney-General and Minister for The Arts deserves congratulation, because he got off his tail and made certain that this \$100m worth of productions and these new series are filmed on the Gold Coast. These new series could have been shot anywhere. They did not have to be shot on the Gold Coast, but that is where they are being shot. This is a can-do Government that delivers to all people of Queensland. This is about hundreds of jobs, the future of this State and one of its great industries. Let the record show that the member for Surfers Paradise and the member for Broadwater have come in here and been critical of \$100m worth of investment.

Mr GRICE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: They cannot have it both ways.

Mr GRICE: Mr Speaker, I find that offensive and ask that it be withdrawn. The intention was to denigrate the Premier, not the industry.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has asked for a withdrawal.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I will withdraw, but let the record show that all Queenslanders—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE:—I withdrew—would applaud this. The Gold Coast Bulletin even put this story on its front page, because it was such a great announcement. However, the Opposition has come in here and sought to undermine the Gold Coast and jobs. It is a sad state of affairs.

Mr GRICE: I rise to a point of order. I find that offensive and ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw. I would have thought the member would have supported it.

Positive Parenting Program

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I ask the Minister for Health—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We cannot hear the member asking the question.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: Is the Minister for Health aware of the recent attack by the Opposition Health spokesperson on the Government's decision to fund a positive parenting training program, and would the Minister please clarify whether this is the same training program featured so prominently and positively last night on Channel 9's A Current Affair program?

Mrs EDMOND: Yes, it is the same program. It is one of the parenting programs that we have recently introduced across the State, including Bundaberg. It has been received very enthusiastically by parents and health workers. Why is there so much enthusiasm for the program? Last night's report showed how the program works to support families. Perhaps these are the things that the Opposition spokesperson on Health does not like: it supports families, reduces stress on families and family conflict, and it helps to keep families together. Perhaps that is what she does not like; she is not interested in families. It is proactive, it is prevention at its best and it keeps kids out of hospital.

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. That is offensive and untrue. I support the Positive Parenting Program.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will state her point of order.

Miss SIMPSON: However, we want the Minister to fix the hospitals where people are waiting for their surgery.

Mrs EDMOND: No point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroochydore did not ask for a withdrawal. I ask the Minister to continue her answer.

Mrs EDMOND: That is what I was indicating, Mr Speaker, and I thank you for that. We all heard on 4QR—

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I ask that the Minister withdraw that offensive comment.

Mrs EDMOND: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. I refer members to the comments the member made on 4QR and let that stand for itself.

Again, this is positive, proactive, preventive medicine at its best. We are keeping kids out of hospital. I find it surprising,

given that every health worker and doctor in Queensland supports this program, that some supposed Opposition spokesperson on Health does not support it. This is a program that Queenslanders should be proud of. It was developed at the University of Queensland and it is being used not only in other States around Australia; it is also gaining credit and acclaim internationally. It was extensively evaluated and it was shown to work. I urge all members opposite to have a look at the program that aired last night and see how the program enables parents to handle their children without having to resort to violence and beating them into submission. It gives parents the skills to modify their behaviour. In extreme cases, it reduces child abuse.

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

WORKCOVER QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (11.29 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP)
(Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (11.29 a.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is part of a reform package aimed at restoring equity and balance to the Queensland workers compensation system. This Government believes that the workers compensation system must benefit the whole community. We cannot tolerate a system which discriminates against particular workers or employers, or has the hurdles so high that access to compensation is extremely difficult. We believe the system must be fair, balancing the rights of injured workers against the need for competitive and affordable premiums for employers while maintaining a secure and viable workers compensation system.

Unfortunately, changes made to the system by the previous Government have upset that essential balance. The coalition's WorkCover Queensland Act 1996 has resulted in significant reductions in the rights of workers to compensation and added exposure to common law for some employers.

Prior to winning Government, Labor clearly stated its policy intention in relation to the definition of "injury" and "worker" and the maintenance of a viable public workers compensation system. The Government recently released its package of proposed reforms in the position paper Restoring the Balance. This was followed by a Queensland-wide information campaign and consultations with key stakeholders. I have considered the views of stakeholders in developing the final package, which now includes some additional changes to those proposed in the position paper.

I believe that it is a well-balanced outcome which will give more workers access to statutory no-fault benefits and common law damages. In addition, employer premiums will be reduced from 2.145% to 1.95%. This is the second lowest rate in the country. There were two particular concerns raised by stakeholders during the consultation process that I feel warrant specific mention: first, the need for fair treatment of workers within the workers compensation system and, second, the possible harsh effects of the common law changes introduced by the coalition in the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996.

As Minister, I support the fair treatment of both workers and employers, and the objects of the Act have been changed to reflect this. In relation to common law, I am concerned about the possible unfair impact on damages awards resulting from the current contributory negligence provisions. The arbitrary and mandatory reduction of at least 25% in awards for each negligent action by the worker potentially means that if a worker contributes even in a minor way to his/her accident, the worker could be left with nothing. I understand that the Kennedy report recommended that a statutory definition of "contributory negligence" be included. However, the current provision goes beyond providing such a statutory definition and mandates defined contributory negligence reductions.

While I am very concerned about what could happen unfairly to workers' damages awards as a result of the contributory negligence reductions, the Government is not currently in a position to make substantial changes. This is particularly so as there has

been no experience yet to evaluate their impact as no matters have been brought before the courts under the coalition's provisions. Actuarial advice is that it would be artificial at this time to attempt to quantify the cost of changing the coalition's contributory negligence provisions to remove the mandatory "at least 25%" contributory negligence reductions. Common law issues are extremely complex and the effects of any changes need to be fully evaluated in terms of impact and costs.

Having said that, I want to state clearly and on the public record that, within the first six months of the next term of Government, Labor will review the additional workers compensation common law provisions introduced by the coalition in the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996. In the interim, this Government will closely monitor and evaluate the impact of these provisions as experience comes to hand. By this time sufficient experience should be available for a comprehensive analysis to be undertaken.

This package is part of a well-planned and structured process to reform Queensland's workers compensation system. This Bill introduces the first step in this process. From 1 July this year, workers' access to compensation will improve. From 1 July 2000 more workers will have access to compensation, and in the year 2001, the next phase commences. Such an approach is financially prudent and nothing short of what is expected from a responsible Government. I can assure the House that the changes being introduced to the WorkCover system are financially sound.

In line with this Government's philosophy of openness and accountability, I have arranged for an actuarial briefing of key stakeholders on the costings of the proposed reforms on 31 March 1999. The projected cost of the package has been actuarially estimated to be in the range of \$17.35m to \$20.25m per annum, which will be more than offset by improved premium collection compliance.

While not included in this Bill, compliance must be mentioned as it is a fundamental part of the workers compensation package. Poor compliance means that some employers are paying artificially high premiums because others are not paying their fair share, and worker benefits are held at levels that reflect premium income. Two key strategies are being developed to address non-compliance. The first is an internal WorkCover strategy, while the second is the proposed activity-based premium collection model for the building and

construction industry. This is an Australia first proposal, which will be further developed in consultation with the industry.

I turn now to the highlights of this Bill. The Bill contains a number of amendments to the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996 which will improve access for workers. This is balanced against reduced premiums for employers and the need to continue the growth of the workers compensation scheme to full funding. The definition of "injury" will change so that workers will be compensated if the injury arises out of or in the course of employment if the employment is a significant contributing factor to the injury. This means that a strong link between injury and employment will still need to exist before an injury is compensable. It is proposed that this will be the case for all injuries occurring on or after 1 July 1999.

The current definition, which requires that employment must be "the major significant factor causing the injury", has proven to be harsh as it excludes some workers from receiving the compensation they should be entitled to. This has particularly been the case for work-related aggravations. The definition of "injury" will therefore also clarify that an aggravation of a pre-existing injury, disease or medical condition, regardless of whether the original injury was work-related or not, will be compensable to the extent of the aggravation only.

The definition of "worker" will be changed so that all people who work under a contract of service, regardless of their tax paying status, will be eligible for workers compensation. To assist decision makers in determining whether a contract of service exists, administrative guidelines will be developed by the department and WorkCover Queensland. For further clarification, the schedule to the Bill contains provisions that declare certain groups as workers or employers. Under the existing definition of "worker", significant groups of workers, such as those paying tax under PPS while working under a contract of service, are excluded from compensation. They must seek their own personal injury insurance at their own cost.

The legislation also lends itself to unscrupulous employers forcing workers into PPS tax arrangements so they do not have to pay workers compensation premiums. Employers can also be exposed to common law damages for negligence for those workers who have been excluded from coverage. This was not the case prior to the WorkCover Queensland Act. The amended definition of "worker" will address these difficulties. This

amendment will apply to all injuries occurring on or after 1 July 2000. Similarly, employers' premiums will be assessed on the basis of the revised definition of "worker" after this time.

To complement the amendments to both the definitions of "injury" and "worker", I will request WorkCover to undertake comprehensive training of staff on how to fairly interpret the legislation and apply it consistently. WorkCover will also be requested to require self-insurers to do this. Administrative guidelines will be developed by the department and WorkCover to assist in this regard.

The third major aspect of the Bill is the strengthening of the criteria for self-insurers to include performance requirements in addition to the existing prudential requirements. The Bill provides for the relevant criteria to be met in full before WorkCover approves a self-insurance application. Self-insurers will now be required to have an occupational health and safety certificate from the Division of Workplace Health and Safety accompanying their self-insurance application.

The revised objects of the Act also recognise the need for the workers compensation scheme to encourage improved workplace health and safety performance by employers. For employers in the general workers compensation pool, this is encouraged through the premium rating system. Similarly, employers moving to self-insurance will be required to demonstrate that they have proper and adequate occupational health and safety management systems to ensure that workplace accidents are minimised.

Self-insurers will also be required to assume total liability for all their workers' claims incurred prior to the issue of their self-insurance licence. This liability will be actuarially assessed and the self-insurer will receive payout by WorkCover Queensland. To ensure the payout is fair, while not specifically stated in the legislation WorkCover will consult the self-insurer on the amount. It must be recognised that self-insurers are insurers just like WorkCover and therefore take on all the associated risks and benefits.

A new applicant employer, single or group, will also need to have more than 2,000 workers in Queensland to meet the application criteria. As self-insurers are running an insurance business with liabilities, risks, claims management responsibilities, etc., the Government considers that employers need to be of such a size to carry the infrastructure and costs associated with running an insurance business.

The Bill also stipulates that self-insurers must manage their own claims and not allow them to be undertaken by a third party. There will be an exception for classification group employers or for emergency relief purposes. This reflects the current policy already being applied by the WorkCover Queensland Board. One of the key features of self-insurance is that it provides incentives for employers to provide better claims management as claims costs are borne directly by the self-insurer.

These new criteria will take effect from 3 March:

All existing licences will remain in place. However, these licence holders will need to meet the strengthened criteria when renewing their licence, except for the increase in the number of workers.

Applications received and currently being considered by WorkCover but not yet approved will be assessed for their initial licence on the existing criteria. However they cannot take out third party claims management. On renewal of these licences, the strengthened criteria will apply except for the increased number of workers.

All new applications will be subject to all the strengthened criteria.

These amendments will improve security of benefits for workers and employers in self-insurance schemes. If injuries and their associated costs are not reduced, the risk to a self-insurer's ongoing viability and ability to provide benefits to workers increases.

The Bill will ensure that only those companies with a proven excellent workplace safety record qualify for a licence. This is consistent with this Government's long-term support for accident prevention strategies.

Another important part of the Bill is a provision for workers and employers to have decisions reviewed and appealed. In 1997 the Statutory Review Branch was introduced to provide a non-legalistic and more timely approach for dispute resolution, without removing the right to go to court. It also gave workers of self-insurers an opportunity to have disputes resolved without them having to take their employer to court. Prior to this there was no avenue of review available other than the court system.

Unfortunately, the Government has received ongoing criticism about the perceived lack of independence and transparency of the current review system. This Bill addresses these concerns by providing for:

changes to WorkCover's internal decision making processes;

an increase in the time for applying for review from 28 days to three months with the provision for extension;

WorkCover to establish a review unit separate from their commercial insurance functions; and

the establishment of the WorkCover Review Council.

The role of this council will be to monitor and evaluate the processes associated with the review unit and medical assessment tribunals and to report to the WorkCover Board on these. However the Review Council will have no powers to intervene in the day-to-day decision making of these bodies. This new process will apply to decisions made on or after 1 July 1999. As currently exists, an aggrieved person must go through the review process before proceeding to court. These changes will result in a more independent and transparent system for everyone.

Importantly, the package addresses premium issues for employers. The 10% surcharge on employer premiums will be abolished from 1 July 1999 under proposed amendments to the WorkCover Queensland regulation. However, the surcharge will remain at a reduced rate for self-insurers until they assume liability for all of their existing claims.

The dropping of the surcharge will ease the burden on employers, particularly in light of the increases in premiums some employers will face due to the transition to full experience-based rating introduced by the coalition Government. This increase in premiums some face is of course entirely as a result of the coalition's introduction of the experience based rating system and is in no way a consequence of the reforms being introduced by our Government.

The Bill will abolish self-rating. Self-rating creates an inequity for employers as it provides an opportunity for certain employers to lower their premiums at the expense of others. Registration for self-raters will cease from 1 July 1999 unless the self-rater chooses to apply for a self-insurance licence.

The WorkCover Queensland Board recommended a decrease in the level of solvency required for full funding from 30% to 20%. This is in addition to the 15% prudential margin. Following further advice from the State Actuary, the Government has accepted the recommendation, and proposed amendments to the WorkCover Queensland regulation will make provision for this.

The Bill also contains a number of other amendments which are administrative in nature and will clarify the intent of the existing legislation. An additional provision will provide a technical amendment which clarifies that the courts need to consider all evidence when determining the probability of future economic loss, not medical evidence only. This amendment does reflect the intent of the original wording of the Kennedy report.

This Bill goes a long way to addressing the inequities of the current system. The Bill will benefit both workers and employers and provide both with the benefits and protection they should be entitled to. It will give Queensland the best and fairest workers compensation system in Australia. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Santoro, adjourned.

COMMUNITY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (11.47 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984 and the Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (11.48 a.m.): I move—

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

I am pleased to introduce the Community Services Legislation Amendment Bill 1999. This Bill amends both the Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984 and the Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984, which provide for the establishment and operation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils. These councils are equivalent to local

governments established under the Local Government Act 1993 and provide local government to 31 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities across Queensland.

This Bill will address a number of deficiencies in the community services Acts. Provisions to improve the financial accountability of Aboriginal and Islander councils are a major focus of the Bill. The current provisions in the community services Acts concerning intervention by the State in the affairs of Aboriginal and Island councils do not reflect the imperatives of due process and natural justice. As a remedy, the Bill contains comprehensive provisions based upon those in the Local Government Act 1993 which relate to the intervention by the State in local governments.

The intervention by the State provisions of the Bill also contain provisions which provide for the appointment of financial controllers to Aboriginal and Island councils. The adoption of such provisions was recommended by the Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts in its Report 42, entitled *Aboriginal Councils and Torres Strait Island Councils: Review of Financial Reporting Requirements*.

Financial controllers to be appointed by the Governor in Council will be a mechanism, available to the State, to impose controls over expenditure by Aboriginal or Island councils that are, or may be, at risk of insolvency. This will enable the State to assist Aboriginal and Island councils to regain financial security and so reduce the possibility of dissolution. A financial controller will have the power to revoke or suspend a resolution or order of a council but this power will only be exercised in limited circumstances. The financial controller must reasonably believe that the resolution or order will result in expenditure which has not been provided for in the council's budget, or will result in the wrongful expenditure of grant moneys, or will cause the council to become insolvent. A financial controller will also be able to undertake administrative duties as directed by the Minister or at the request of the Aboriginal or Island council.

The existing provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 which allow the Governor in Council to revoke or suspend a resolution or order of a local government have been used as the basis for the amendment. There is currently no power in the Community Services Acts to make legally enforceable accounting standards. The existing accounting standards are useful as a guide only. The Bill proposes that the Minister have the power to make accounting standards to enhance

financial accountability in Aboriginal and Island councils. The Bill will enable accounting standards to be made as subordinate legislation which will define the principles of financial management and accountability to be observed by councils. The proposed Bill will provide a simpler financial management framework for Aboriginal and Island councils by allowing them to amend annual budgets rather than having to declare all non-budgeted expenditure as emergent or extraordinary. A council's budget will be able to be amended to compensate for unforeseen expenditure provided the amended budget remains balanced. The proposal mirrors a provision of the Local Government Act 1993 that allows local governments to amend budgets.

In addition to initiatives to improve financial accountability the Bill contains provisions which simplify the establishment of Aboriginal and Island councils. The Bill simply allows for a regulation to declare a part of the State to be a council area and that where such a declaration is made, that area must have an Aboriginal or Island council. The Bill also clarifies the terminology used by describing the area for which an Aboriginal or Island council has local government jurisdiction as simply a "council area". This will address the ambiguous nature of the various terms used to describe a council's area in the existing legislation.

I am pleased to say that these provisions will have the further effect of enabling the establishment of an Aboriginal council at Old Mapoon. The community of Old Mapoon has long sought Aboriginal council status and their eventual achievement of this goal will be a significant milestone in the reconciliation process.

The provisions will also allow the extension of Aboriginal and Island council areas including the extension of various Island council areas in the Torres Strait to include islands that are currently nominally within the Torres Shire but in practice are not under any local government jurisdiction. Such transfers of responsibility are supported by the Torres Shire Council. The Bill ensures that existing council areas and their respective Aboriginal and Island councils will be preserved through transitional provisions in the Bill. In the Community Services (Torres Strait) Act 1984 the Bill changes the name of the Tamwoy representative to the Island Co-ordinating Council. Tamwoy is a suburb of Thursday Island which is afforded representation on the Island Co-ordinating Council along with the chairpersons of the 17 Island councils. Since the Second World War the Torres Strait Island community has expanded from Tamwoy to

encompass a further four localities on the northern side of Thursday Island. The residents believe the term "Tamwoy" is too narrow a definition for the five communities involved, hence the proposal to substitute Tamwoy with Tamwoy, Rosehill, Aplin, Waiben, Quarantine (TRAWQ) communities.

The Community Services Legislation Amendment Bill 1999 will significantly improve the legislative framework for Aboriginal and Island councils. It will both result in improved financial accountability and progress the cause of reconciliation in Queensland. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Davidson, adjourned.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 24 March (see p. 782).

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (11.55 a.m.): I am pleased to speak in support of this Bill before the House today. I do so as a member of this Parliament who, when he was first elected, joined the then Corrective Services Minister, the Honourable Glen Milliner, as a member of his legislative committee. I had the opportunity, as a member of that committee, to visit a number of prisons within this State. I feel that anyone who would say that prisoners get it good and that they live in hotel or motel-style accommodation has not visited prisons. I believe that they are quite chilling places. Certainly, in my experience, they are not places that I would want to frequent on a regular basis.

There are a couple of aspects of this Bill on which I would like to comment. After listening to the debate so far, I do not believe that these issues have been raised; however, I believe that it is important to emphasise them. One in particular is the fact that the Minister has given a commitment that there will be no job losses. That is extremely important, particularly when one considers that we are abolishing the Corrective Services Commission and the Government owned corporation Queensland Corrections, and their boards. I note that the Minister has gone out of his way to speak to a large number of staff throughout the State to assure them that their jobs are secure. At times, we have not been good at talking to the people who work for the Government. When changes such as this are being made, and in order for there to be a fairly smooth transition without any great

upheavals, we need to be able to take with us the people who work for us. That the Minister has gone out of his way to do that and to talk to the staff will go a long way towards ensuring that the transition to the new Government department will be reasonably smooth. That is a plus.

The other issue that I wish to raise is the report that was brought down by Frank Peach and his team, who undertook fairly extensive discussions with staff about how they felt that the system should change. I am sure that the fact that Frank Peach actually sat down and listened to the staff and talked to them about the changes that needed to be made helped them in their deliberations to ensure that the model that members have before them today in this debate will be a model that will last for some time and will serve this Government very, very well.

I recall vividly that in 1993 when I was visiting prisons throughout this State, the prison population—and I can only go on approximate figures—was some 2,100 people. Some six years later, we have approximately 4,900 prisoners. That growth rate of something like 130% is quite extraordinary. It puts quite a strain on Governments in terms of finding the necessary finances to ensure that we are able to build prisons and accommodate prisoners in a proper way.

Members who were in the Chamber during the debate last night heard the rhetoric of members opposite on this subject. If members opposite had their way and we threw away the key every time we put a prisoner in jail, I think that, within a very short time, we would probably be looking at something like 10,000 prisoners. I do not know how the system would cope with that. As we all know, costs continue to rise. As a result of our tax revenue base, we struggle to find the money to build our new prisons and accommodate prisoners. The Minister has been able to convince Treasury and members of the Government that the new prisons are needed.

I note that a private member's Bill relating to fine defaulters was introduced into the House today. I understand that the Attorney-General has made a public statement and indicated that he will be bringing forward some proposals in relation to fine defaulters. That is long overdue. Those proposals will be very welcome, because they will reduce the pressure on our prison system. I will leave my comments on the fine defaulter issue until the debate on that private member's Bill.

As the Minister pointed out in his second-reading speech, under the old structure he

was kept at arm's length from the decision-making processes, but at the same time the citizens of this State would hold him accountable for what might or might not have happened. The Minister had to try to run the system with both hands tied behind his back. The changes in this legislation will assist the Minister in that regard. At the end of the day, the buck stops with the Minister. He is the person who is accountable to the citizens of this State for what happens in the corrections system. The amendments in this legislation provide him with the power to run the system in the way that the Government would like it to be run.

Clause 5 of the Bill provides a head of power for the management of the maximum security prisons. That is very, very important. In his second-reading speech, the Minister pointed out that it should not be underestimated what difficult prisoners the people in maximum security prisons are and how difficult they can be in terms of disruption of prison life. The Minister has pointed out that a number of them have tried to escape on not one occasion but on several occasions. They have caused bodily harm to and even tried to kill other prisoners. Dealing with those people is not easy. To try to build facilities and to ensure that those prisoners are kept separate from other prisoners is not an easy task while trying to ensure that they are treated in a humane way.

Clause 5 allows the chief executive to make some decisions in relation to isolating maximum security prisoners. I have always been a great supporter of the work done around 1993 when prisoners helped in the clean-up operation after the Charleville floods. Prison outreach centres were spread around rural and regional areas throughout Queensland. The former Corrective Services Minister and I had discussions with representatives of various councils who were keen to have that sort of facility in their region. Last evening, I was talking to a principal of a school in central Queensland who used low-risk prisoners to do a lot of work around the school. If we can have those sorts of facilities for low-risk prisoners in the regional areas, prisoners could do more community work. Obviously, that would help their rehabilitation.

The drafting of this legislation has been difficult. I believe it will serve both this Government and this State well in the future. I support the Bill.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, the Honourable

Tom Barton, for this forward-thinking legislation which seeks to abolish the Queensland Corrective Services Commission and the Government owned corporation Queensland Corrections. As a member of two community advisory committees for Sir David Longland prison and Moreton A/Moreton B prisons, I am committed to assisting in strengthening the links between the community and the prison system, to establish a better understanding of what prisons are about and to draw the Government's attention to the positives and negatives of the corrective services system.

Regular meetings with the staff of these prisons have allowed me to gain a better insight into prison life and the day-to-day running of the prisons. A number of difficulties that the community advisory committees—CACs—have encountered have revolved around their inability to advise on corrective services matters. Many suggestions have been made over the years by the CACs, but it appeared to be too difficult to overcome bureaucratic red tape, access staffing for any project or get a decision made. I was part of the Moreton A/B committee for at least eight months before I finally received formal written approval from the department to be on the committee.

Many initiatives such as bookbinding and wood-turning have been suggested, but the structure of the prison system fails to allow these initiatives to happen easily. Hardworking staff in the prisons were feeling a sense of insecurity in regard to their careers, wondering how much more of the department would be corporatised. They wondered whether valuable prisoner programs would suffer further financial cuts. Prisoner frustration and unrest existed because of the uncertainty associated with their applications for parole. That was linked to the unavailability of the appropriate prisoner programs. No wonder Abbott was able to escape so easily from the Sir David Longland maximum security prison: morale would have been at an all-time low; the information gleaned through the intelligence networks did not seep through to prison decision makers; and staff were not adequately trained to cope with such an escape attempt.

The Corrective Services Legislation Amendment Bill will return corrective services to a Government department. Queensland Corrections—Q Corr—will become a commercialised unit to operate correctional facilities within the department. The Minister has guaranteed that no permanent staff at QCSC or Q Corr will lose their jobs when the restructure occurs following the review. The report is a clear reaffirmation of the role of the

public sector where the need for Government accountability for services is a high priority. Prisons are, and should remain, the responsibility of an elected Government, which is directly accountable to the people of Queensland for their operation and management. Corporatisation and commissions only serve to distance Governments from their responsibilities.

The advent of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission led to a feeling of less certainty in regard to reduced conditions of employment for employees when compared with their Public Service counterparts. The reform agenda of the prisons system was not properly funded and the necessary infrastructure in the face of rising prison numbers was not put in place to ensure its success. That undermined the real objectives of the prison system, which is required to protect the community from harmful offenders and to rehabilitate offenders while incarcerated so that they may then re-enter the community as reformed citizens less likely to reoffend.

The CACs are convinced that prisoners need to be kept occupied and that the community is able to provide more jobs and industries and the teaching of job skills within the system. Ongoing community input is certainly seen by the Minister as an essential component of the operation of a prison. However, effective community interest and input can be achieved without the cost of a board and the administrative burden of preparing papers for the board.

The Corrective Services Advisory Council will provide high level input and community feedback and the Minister—not the chairman of the board—is publicly regarded as the person ultimately accountable for the efficiency of the corrective services system. The organisational structure to be put in place will allow the Minister to be more accessible from all levels of the department. In turn, the Minister will have a more hands-on approach to the operation of the corrective services system.

The Minister must be aware of community opinion in relation to the siting of prisons, particularly where they affect people's living conditions. The prison precinct at Wacol is a perfect example of this. This reserve was allocated as prison land over 40 years ago, but in more recent years residential development has occurred close to the site. There was public uproar when the former Government declared that it was going to build new prisons within 500 metres of the back yards of Riverhills residents.

After much discussion and negotiation, the Government decided to build the large SEQ 1 prisons further away and out of the sight of locals. The Concerned Residents Against More Prisons—CRAMP—group agreed to the new site on the condition that no more prisons be built on the precinct and that an older prison, Moreton A, be demolished. They were concerned about the proliferation of prisons and the increasing number of prisoners so close to residences and primary schools. The feeling was that if a break-out or riot occurred in the "city of prisons" it would be more difficult for police to control and the safety of residents would be at risk. The Beattie Government has kept its promise and commitment not to build more prisons in the area. This is thanks to the close and frequent consultation that the Minister, the member for Waterford, has undertaken with myself and the CRAMP group. He has already shown that he will not ignore the concerns of the community.

There are other issues of concern to the community in relation to drug and alcohol abuse and the perception that approximately 85% of prisoners are in jail due to drug and alcohol related circumstances. Corrective services authorities are taking action to stifle drug and alcohol abuse within the prison system. However, there remains the issue of prevention.

The Beattie Government has set up a Crime Prevention Task Force. I believe that by concentrating efforts on the drug and alcohol social problem; this task force will go a long way towards combating crime and freeing up the prison system. This will take many years to achieve and, in the meantime, the prisons are clogging up. However, the member for Yeronga's initiative in setting up a register for dealing with fine defaulters should decrease the numbers of prisoners in the system. More than a quarter of all the people admitted to Queensland prisons are fine defaulters.

The sentence management system also needs to be reviewed. It appears that there are too many levels of bureaucracy, too much paperwork, and too much difficulty involved with sentence management. We need to find a more effective way of getting eligible people through the net as quickly as possible to alleviate clogging in the system. Perhaps more qualified people and extra resources are needed to process prisoners more quickly. This will free up more prison beds sooner.

The Corrective Services Legislation Amendment Bill is surely a courageous step, and one which will ensure job security for prison workers, make operations more efficient

and effective, and allow the Minister to maintain a hands-on approach to prison reform. It will provide more consideration to community and social issues affecting prisons and prisoners. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (12.14 p.m.): It is my pleasure to speak on the Corrective Services Legislation Amendment Bill. Before I commence, I wish to recapitulate on some of the statements made by honourable members opposite. We heard that the coalition was only good for sacking boards, allowing escapes from prisons, and letting prisoners out of jail for fun runs. I must remind members opposite that they should not be so bold or so proud of Labor's track record with respect to prisons and the sacking of boards because that would certainly be a case of the pot calling the kettle black. Speak in haste and repent at leisure!

As a former employee of the Queensland Police Service, and as someone who has a decent memory, I recall the bad old days of the revolving door prisons, minimum sentencing and the social worker path down which Corrective Services was being fast-tracked. That occurred under a Labor administration. Too many times as a police officer I was called upon to search for or chase down escapees from the old Woodford Prison after motor vehicles had been stolen during the escape. Caboolture police were called in to assist and to set up road blocks and chase down the escapees. On one occasion some four or five prisoners escaped in one hit from that prison. The only board that I have seen sacked since I have been in this Parliament was the fire board, and that action was taken by the Government's Emergency Services Minister.

I must personally thank the Minister, his staff and representatives of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission for the full briefing that they gave me and my staff in respect of the philosophy and ethos behind this legislation. This was done on short notice and I thank the Minister for his commitment to the passage of this legislation. This certainly allowed me to be more conversant with the finer points of the return of the QCSC and Q Corr to a department.

The purpose of the Bill is to restructure the Queensland Corrective Services Commission and its board and replace it with a department under the new Corrective Services Act. I am extremely grateful for the assurances I was given that no staff would lose their jobs during this restructure, as this was one of my

major concerns. After all, this is a Government that is committed to jobs. The ethos behind this, as it was explained to me, is to enable the Minister to have a more hands-on practical and directional role within the framework of the new department, giving him essentially more control over his own Ministry in Corrective Services.

The first section of this Bill, which relates to the maximum security unit at the Woodford correctional facility and which allows for the isolation and detention of maximum security prisoners, has been a long time coming. Like most people, I was under the wrong impression that the general managers of prisons—the old prison superintendents—had supreme control within their own facility and when someone was playing up—when they were bad or committed further offences whilst in jail—prisoners were further punished and could be isolated and that further action could also be taken against them for the breaches that they committed under the prison regulations. Unfortunately, it appears that there are currently no legislative powers or provisions allowing for the separation of maximum security prisoners from other prisoners within a Corrective Services facility. This Bill provides for this very situation and backs up the powers that general managers should have in their own facilities.

The maximum security unit at the Woodford correctional facility—the only MSU in Queensland at present—houses 20 prisoners. We have been assured that two other MSUs are in the process of being built. This will make another 40 beds available for hardened and violent prisoners. One must bear in mind that, as the member for Lytton has already told us, there are approximately 4,790 prisoners in custody. In that case, this facility is available to adequately punish only one in every 240 prisoners. The new facilities will cut this down to one in 80 should the need arise. We certainly hope that the need does not arise.

Prison superintendents, or general managers, used to make the rules in their own facilities, especially relating to the control, isolation and punishment of prisoners. They controlled their prisons. In this politically correct, namby-pamby era of softly, softly social worker type, feather-duster punishment, it is pleasing to see a Minister stand up to the litigation demon. In these days of prisoners' rights, litigation, prisoner support groups, social psychologists, and the expanding shadow of the United Nations human rights agreements, it is a wonder that we have any prisons at all. I cannot get over the recent case of the famous five—Abbott and his friends—attempting to

divest themselves of their much deserved solitary confinement.

Again I must point out that the 20 who are feeling what is supposed to be the horrendous touch of isolation are people who are violent, who are predisposed towards violence against prison officers, who are escapees, who are conspirators to escape, and who rape or murder inside the facility. There are no Mahatma Gandhis or Jim Pearces in this lot—no saints, no martyrs at all. We have heard from solicitors and the media hype about black holes and sweatboxes. I could even hear the squeak of the rats and the cockroaches around Steve McQueen as I remembered the movie, *Papillon*, and I had the vision of the sweat dripping from Paul Newman in the hole out in the bayous of Louisiana in *Cool Hand Luke* as these solicitors and the media spoke. However, we do not have these black holes any more. There is no Boggo Road black hole and sometimes I think that is more the pity.

Let me describe some of the abject horror that these poor 20 prisoners have to endure in isolation. They will have single-cell accommodation, natural lighting from windows—they can see outside—and access to prison programs, computer courses and education. They will have books, magazines, television, three meals a day, two hours of exercise in the yard, access to medical help and a thorough medical and psychiatric examination on entering the MSU and every 28 days after that. Is it not any wonder that at present there are no waiting lists for this facility as there are in our hospitals? This is hardly what I or any other person in Queensland would call maximum security solitary confinement and an extreme form of punishment for those prisoners who are so bad, so violent, so untrustworthy or so dedicated to escape that they must be further punished or ostracised from other persons in the prison community.

I concur with the Minister on this point in the Bill, but in relation to some of the points in the Peach report, we differ. For instance, we differ on recommendation 33 in chapter 3 of the Peach report, which relates to the Proactive Support Group. The abolition of this group appears to have come directly from left field and appears contrary to the sentiments expressed in the strong amendment about the MSU.

I shall outline some of the duties of the Proactive Support Group. It conducts security audits and represents views within correctional centres to ensure professional standards in all

facets of the audit. It monitors, assesses and reports on the effectiveness of each correctional centre's emergency procedures, with particular attention to the level of preparedness and capabilities of the centre and staff to respond to emergency situations. The Proactive Support Group also plans, coordinates, transfers, or escorts identified high-profile prisoners as directed. It plans, coordinates, oversees and implements random urine testing in correctional centres, ensuring professional standards in all facets of the testing process. The Proactive Support Group also plans, coordinates and conducts target searches of prisoners and areas within correctional centres as identified by the Proactive Intelligence Network or as directed by the general manager. It also plans, coordinates and conducts target searches, surveillance and interception of suspect visitors as identified by the Proactive Intelligent Network. Such visitors have been indicated as being a prime source of drugs coming into prisons. The Proactive Support Group also manages the provision of emergency procedures training as requested. In the event of an emergency, it responds rapidly and leads a team that will provide specialist—and I repeat, specialist—support to correctional centres. The Proactive Support Group also ensures that daily routines are effectively coordinated and that the team on duty remains as far as practicable in a state of preparedness for rapid deployment. As well, the Proactive Support Group maintains a high level of knowledge of the Corrective Services Acts and regulations, commission rules and general managers' rules, policy and procedures.

This group enjoyed a great rapport with and the confidence of the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Police Service Tactical Response Group. It had occasion to train with those groups. The Proactive Support Group conducted joint initiatives with the Queensland Police Service, including the Corrective Services Investigation Unit, the Drug Squad and the PSRT.

When the Minister looks back over the seven-year history of the QCSC, he would recognise the troubles that the new corrective services facilities at Woodford, Borallon and Wacol had just after they opened. If he is not expecting trouble with a capital T when SEQ1 and SEQW open, then he has already deluded himself. There will be trouble, and he has divested himself of the only first response group within Corrective Services trained for such trouble. This group could have handled any of these situations.

Already, this group has sent a warning message throughout prisons: no drugs; do not store illegal contraband or we will find it, or find you out; no ifs, buts or maybes, you will be found. This has seen a reduction in drug overdoses already in these facilities. So why stop something that appears to be having the desired effect? Why put to rest these random tests and random inspections of Corrective Services facilities when they were working and, indeed, were showing results? The Minister seems convinced that the placement of these highly trained officers within the audit and investigation units of the new department will still provide this much-needed service in a wider capacity. I certainly pray that he is correct.

We understand and appreciate the Minister's need to have a more finite control over his department and a more definitive role than he has at present with the fractured QCSC, Q Corr and the boards. The ethos behind this move has been explained, and I wait to see whether this strict and more finite control will indeed be a good thing. I wait to see whether this control can be maintained with credibility by the Minister.

The original intention of the Kennedy review was that the board would act as an independent committee to supervise the implementation of the recommendations of the review and ensure that the momentum for change and reform was not lost. However, it was found in the Peach report that the board did not drive the changes as was expected of it but it was merely reacting to external forces, especially those that impacted so dramatically upon it, including the 1988 commission of review, the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the 1993 Public Sector Management Commission review, and the 1997 Mengler commission of inquiry. I am sure that, under the guidance of the Minister, the department will react in a very similar way and come up with positive reforms in line with any further external forces.

I also note in the report, and I agree, that the public face of Corrective Services was always seen to be the director-general or the Minister. It was always the director-general or the Minister who had to front the media and its entourage of paparazzi to answer all of those nervy questions, especially those questions that were asked in relation to deaths in custody, murders, rapes, escapes and sometimes, as the member for Crows Nest will remember, when prisoners go on hunger strikes. Those prisoners tried to hold the Queensland public to ransom by saying that they were going to starve themselves. They

received the right response, which was that they could starve if they wanted to. I am sure that it was the director-general who was more likely to interface with the Minister over most matters due to the part-time nature of the old board and its members. I can see the Minister is really just formatting that which is in existence as these two bodies stand at present.

I hear from my colleagues on this side of the House that the inherent risk associated with this reform is the removal, or the lessening, of community input and the lessening of public scrutiny into corrective services. This will occur and, I am told, will occur only if Corrective Services becomes a closed shop, an island unto itself—something which I hope will not and should not occur. The hint of the Peach report is that Corrective Services does not work well with other external agencies or stakeholders, or at least does not work collaboratively with external agencies. The report goes on to say that it merely tolerates other stakeholders and even speaks of no stakeholder meetings for over two years. In this vein, I must point out that the Proactive Support Group was getting on exceptionally well with other stakeholders, including the Queensland Police Service and its agencies.

I look forward to no further troubles within Corrective Services and trust that the future trouble that may occur will be adequately and swiftly addressed by whatever body replaces the Proactive Support Group in the administration of the new-look department.

In closing, I commend the Minister for his strong stance in relation to the MSU. We will be supporting this Bill's passage through the House.

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (12.29 p.m.): I take part in this debate to place on the record the history of some of the things that occurred in 1988. As the Deputy Speaker will recall, at that time the prison system was not in good shape. It was under the control of a department until I was made the new Minister. That was the last job on earth that I thought I would ever get. Mike Ahern was the Premier at the time and I was hopeful of getting a Ministry. I thought it would be Lands, involving something really exciting like watching grass grow. I thought that that would be a nice start. When Ahern said, "I want you to do Corrective Services", I nearly fell off my chair. He said, "Do you want it or don't you? Take it or leave it; you please yourself." I said, "Yes, I'll take it."

Before I was sworn in as the Minister, I went inside a jail for the first time. I remember

Justice Einfeld and Brian Burdekin of the Human Rights Commission being in the Premier's office, expressing their concerns about something that they called the black hole. I had never heard of the black hole much except on television, so I decided to have a look. I had never been to Boggo Road either. When I went through that place, they put the lights out and did all sorts of things.

I came out of the jail and went to meet my departmental masters. Peter Jones was the departmental head. I forget the name of the other fellow, but he is a good bloke. Morale within the department was down. People in this place who talk about a rise in the morale in the prison system do not know what the word means. In any prison system anywhere in the State, country or world, morale will not be high at any time because it is a very difficult, demanding and depressing portfolio. Anyone who has worked within the portfolio—be it the current Minister or any other—knows only too well what I am talking about.

Obviously, people such as the member for Springwood, Mr Musgrove, have no experience whatsoever in the field. The member is very wet behind the ears when it comes to matters such as this, which one can gain a knowledge of only from experience and heeding the lessons of the past. That applies to both sides of the House. I did that. The member is an extremely impudent brat. It is a pity that some people do not take the time to understand difficult portfolios. I have had 10 years' experience in Government and in Opposition in the law and order portfolios, and I can tell honourable members that one never stops learning, and members from both sides of the House will never stop learning. Such portfolios provide a good learning curve as one sees all sides: the people in the prison system, those in the police system and the community. If one wants to learn something about people, that is not a bad place to start. As I said, morale within the department was shot. Of course, there are no votes in prisons, so no Government ever gave them much money.

I said to the departmental officers, "Okay, I am a brand new Minister and I would like some advice. The black hole: what do I do? Leave it open or close it?" This is typical Yes Minister stuff, and I did not blame them for it. Indeed, I felt sorry for them. They said, "If you close it, Minister, you will have a strike. The prison officers will walk out. If you leave it open, the prisoners will riot. Please yourself." I said, "Thanks for that." I went back to Ahern and I said, "The black hole is closed; I will make the decision myself", and it was closed. I

believe that that was the right decision, even though I know that the prison officers needed support.

The system was rotten. It was corrupt right the way through and had been for the past 20, 30 or 40 years. Something dramatic and drastic had to be done. I wanted a total review of the system. To do that, I had to find someone who would actually take on the job, and do it well. I needed someone who would do it thoroughly—who would tear the system to pieces, put the nuts and bolts everywhere, and then put it back together. Several people were suggested: retired Chief Justice Harry Gibbs, another retired judge from New South Wales Justice Moffitt, and Major General Stretton of Cyclone Tracy fame. I spoke to them all to see whether they had what it takes to do what we needed so desperately. Somebody—I forget who—suggested Jim Kennedy. I chatted to them all. I will not mention names, but I was told, "Jim Kennedy won't do; he's the wrong politics." I said, "Okay", and I talked to a few others. I came back to Jim and had another chat with him. Then I rang Ahern. I said, "Who makes the decision? Me or someone else?" To his credit he said, "You." I said, "Good. It's Kennedy", and it was.

The prison system benefited from the appointment of Jim Kennedy. I do not think Jim has come under too much criticism in this debate, and he should not. When he took on the job I said to him, "I know nothing about prisons", because I knew nothing at all. I said, "But it's fascinating and it grabs you. If you really want to do something of value and come out the other end knowing that you've been through the hoops and some fire, you will do this. Once you are in it, you won't want to get out of it." That is the way I felt then and I still do, after 10 years' experience. The portfolio is fascinating. Achieving something in that particular portfolio is probably the most difficult of all challenges. Jim took that challenge. He felt as I did.

Jim Kennedy wrote a very thorough report. I remember the skulduggery we engaged in to get his recommendations approved by Cabinet, because obviously they meant money. Cabinet was not inclined to issue too much money to prisons. We used every trick in the book and we were granted the money for the new commission. We decided that we had to move away from a department, because the department was in dire straits. We needed to distance the system from the Minister. We always knew that it would probably come around full circle one day, as it has today. That is quite okay,

because no system lasts or works forever. One has to keep moving it around.

Mr Palaszczuk: It worked then.

Mr COOPER: Yes, it was the right thing to do. I said to Jim, "Now you've taken the system apart and put it back together, you can run it for a while." He said, "Righto, I will." He did the same thing with Q Corr. He was the right man for the job. We certainly involved the community in the formation of the commission. Most people were chosen for their qualifications and the community was very well represented, as most people know. The system started to run well. Then we decided to close Boggo Road.

Probably the deepest impression that was made on me when I went to Boggo Road to look at the black hole was the sight of 600 people lying on cement in wire cages. I thought, "What a futile waste of humanity. Surely we can do better than this?" Therefore, one of our decisions was to close Boggo Road and raze it. We wanted to raze the culture of the prisoners, the officers and their families. Everyone was intertwined and intermingled, and it was extremely bad. Indeed, I was disappointed that I could not drive the bulldozer when it was first proposed that the jail be razed. The Labor Party came to power and, unfortunately, left the jail open and that culture spread into the other prison systems, which was tragic. We wanted to cut it off, to get rid of the culture totally and start afresh. It is a pity that the cancer spread to other parts of the prison system. However, that is history.

I acknowledge Jim Kennedy and his successor in Q Corr, Des Knight, who came in for some undeserved abuse from people on the other side of the House. That should never have happened, because Mr Knight is a fine person. He is an accountant and a friend of Jim Kennedy. He is totally dedicated and devoted. Such people do not deserve that sort of treatment. I place on the record that I totally support him and all the people who have served on the commission, especially those who served in the beginning. They have given their all to make the prison system more productive and useful, and to ensure that it turns out better people rather than making them worse. That was our dictum and desire, and we tried to achieve it. We want to ensure that that aim is continued, regardless of which party is in Government.

When we lost Government in 1989-90, Glen Milliner took over the prisons portfolio. I said to him, "Just keep following the Kennedy line and his recommendations. Keep trying to work them through. It always takes time. It

may take 10, 15 or 20 years. We will look back and see whether or not we have made any improvement, but it is worth trying." He did that until such time as his Government let him down, because he required funding. As I said, there are no votes in prisons and, therefore, that Government cut funding. That is when morale started to slip and escapes started to occur.

The member for Springwood said that there were a lot of escapes during our time in Government. What about the escapes that have occurred under Labor Governments? We literally had a revolving door prison system. I have referred many times to the fact that the system was akin to a zebra crossing. The sign read "Prisoners cross here". The age and class of prisoners did not matter; they were just out there. The drug problem was unbelievable. "Keep'em high, keep'em happy" was the management motto, especially at places such as Borallon. It was an absolute disgrace. When we came back into power, there needed to be a lot of tightening up. That caused some pain. It always causes pain when the system is tightened up. People will always—and they did—try to undermine the Minister. There were a lot of conspiracies at the time. It was pathetic stuff. I was most disgusted with the people at the management level.

I was recognised as being a hands-on Minister. I make no apology for that. I knew that we would get nothing done unless I took that approach. That is the way the system works. I had to get in and do it for myself, even to the point of being accused of interfering. I say: so what? The Public Service says that a good Minister is one who does nothing, gets out of the road, signs the papers and clears off, and that a bad or annoying Minister is the one who makes them work. I did make them work. I make no apology for that. We achieved a lot of good things. People should remember that. It could have been a hell of a lot worse.

I took down with me some of those people who would not do their job. I said, "If I have to stand in the firing line for this, you're going to stand in the firing line, too, and see what it is like." Prior to that time, there was no accountability and nothing mattered. Back in 1987 I had to board a plane at midnight following an escape in which five prisoners went over the top after tying sheets together. It was real Dad'n'Dave stuff. It was unbelievably pathetic. Sheets were dangling from the wall. It was the stuff of comic strips. I arrived at the scene at 2 o'clock in the morning. After I had carried out an inspection, the prison manager, who was still shuffling around in a pair of slippers with pompoms on them, wiped the

sleepy dust out of his eyes and said, "Can I go to bed now?" I said, "Yeah, you go to bed, pal. Stay there. I never want to see you again." Those were the sorts of people we were trying to deal with. They did not give a damn. I often found that the management, even in later years, looked after themselves pretty well. They always drove new shiny cars and had plenty of good gear.

Does the Minister remember the fact that the conditions and equipment of the escort group were a disgrace? As the Minister, I had to find out those things for myself. The Minister knows that I was the one who found out about that situation. We fixed up that problem very quickly. What on earth could be done when the management would not do their job? They ignored any instructions they were given. Some of those people are still there in the departments I have mentioned. The Minister should watch them, because they will tell him anything. Regardless of what the matter is about—be it about security matters, escapes from jails, riots at Woodford or whatever—they will tell him anything. It comes from those at the top.

The people at the bottom are the ones who will tell the Minister the truth. They were the people whom I had to work with. I had to have contacts in the lower ranks in every prison in the State. They used to tell me the truth. I would say, "I have just instigated this measure. I want to know whether this will be implemented. In a few weeks' time you can tell me." They were the ones who would tell me whether or not that had been done. That is the only way to work the system. I have had that experience; others can have it. I wish them good luck.

I wish to speak about the new jail at Wacol and the people called the Littles—little by name, little by nature. They are the people who delayed that program by nine months. They cost the taxpayers of this State hundreds of thousands of dollars to serve their own selfish ends as they schemed and connived to have that jail delayed. We obviously needed new jails and we were having to build them in order to fix up the overcrowding problem, which was our legacy from the Labor Government. In doing that, we were stymied by people along the way. I mention that instance in particular. How can it be that just a handful of people can hold the rest of this State to ransom? It cost the taxpayer hundreds of thousands of dollars for them to have their wicked way. They are a disgrace. I want that on the record. They caused us hell. They are totally and completely untrustworthy.

The former member for Mount Ommaney, Bob Harper, did a top job for his constituents and had to wear all of that dreadful abuse out there at the time. The clown, Peter Pyke, was out there in his silly looking coloured bow tie carrying on like an idiot. All honourable members—every single one of us—knows that he is an idiot. I want to get that on the record, too. I do not want to spend much time speaking about him, because he is simply not worth it.

Mr Palaszczuk: He is a good mate of mine. Mates can do no wrong.

Mr COOPER: Peter Pyke is a mate of Henry Palaszczuk. That is good. That is on the record, too.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): Order! The member for Crows Nest will address members by their correct title.

Mr COOPER: I am happy to do that. We are good mates. Am I allowed to call him "mate", or is that out, too? I managed to get in a little plug about some of the nasty things.

In relation to the good things, in the prison system of today there are about eight maximum security units. I certainly support the maximum security units that we had planned to go into these places so as to allow for better prison management and to provide places for the Brendan Abbots of this world. That escape could have happened under any Minister. That is the annoying aspect.

Under the departmental structure, the Minister was the first in line. That is fair. I do not mind that. A Minister has the responsibility and has to cop it on the chin. However, Jim Kennedy noted that it was always the Minister's fault in respect of every strike, escape or death in custody. With the creation of the commission, that responsibility was shifted to the chairman of the commission or the DG, who had to take the flak and let the Minister perform his or her role of providing the funds and policy. That was supposed to be the way it worked. However, people were always baying for blood when something went wrong. The media was the most at fault. They loved to get hold of someone they could put their foot on and rip about. In my latter time in the Ministry, I thought, "If that's going to be the case, we might as well go back to a departmental structure and be done with it. If we have to be totally responsible, we might as well have control."

Under the commission structure, everything had to be done by written direction, and the process was very slow. A board would meet once a month. Changes had to be made

after the escapes of Abbott and company, which involved new techniques using high-powered firearms to shoot into the jail from outside. That had never before been experienced in this State or nation. We had to devise new methods of controlling and handling that situation.

We were able to get the funds, but we then had to put in place various measures to try to make the prison system secure and to ensure the safety of staff. That took a long time. Board meetings would be held to decide whether this or that would be done. I thought, "We don't have time for that. We've got to get something done yesterday if we are going to fix these things." To that end, it was not their fault; it was the fault of the system. The system needs to be conducive to proper ministerial control and direction, because in circumstances such as those we have to move quickly. Riots could happen under any Minister, and it has happened under many of them. Shoot'em up style escapes could happen under this Minister, and I think he knows that. That is his problem now. I am glad it is not mine any more, although I would not have missed it for quids. The experience was fantastic for character building.

Ministers in the tough portfolios have to make decisions, wear the flak and be up front. When something goes wrong, they might as well take it full on the chin, because no-one else will. They have to deal with the issue and then put in place the measures needed to get it right. That will constantly present itself as a challenge. I commend that challenge to the Minister. Also, we understand where the Minister is coming from with respect to this legislation. We will see how it goes over time. Again, it may have to be changed back in 10 years' time. Nevertheless, in the meantime we wish the Minister well.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (12.48 p.m.): In speaking to the Corrective Services Legislation Amendment Bill, I wish to agree with many of the comments of the previous speaker. Firstly, I wish to comment on the improved powers for isolation in respect of maximum security prisoners. During a debate last night and on the Wednesday night of the previous sitting we were discussing truth in sentencing. The move to improve the provisions for isolating extremely violent criminals is one that the community supports 100%.

There has been some criticism that this is inhumane. That criticism usually does not refer to the inhumanity or the violence that the criminal has perpetrated. It usually refers to the

way in which the criminal is to be treated and demands for some dignity to be afforded to that person. Again, I reiterate that that person has given little thought to the dignity of the victim.

The feedback that I have received from the community has been very supportive. If a violent prisoner refuses to toe the line as far as the controls of incarceration are concerned, people are quite happy for greater controls to be placed on him. That does not mean that prisoners be treated as less than human, but I pass on to the Minister the comments that I have received that increased powers for isolation are supported generally in the community.

As the member for Crows Nest has said previously, when we debated this Bill back in 1997 there was a move to separate the role of the commission from the role of the Minister. Inevitably, as has been proven, if there is an incident in a correctional centre, the Minister carries the can. At the time I expressed some concern about what I perceived as a potential lack of accountability. At the time there were allegations that it was the first step in privatisation or, at best, corporatisation and that the Government of the day, particularly the Minister of the day, was unable to respond to community concerns.

In a lot of these issues, particularly the basic social issues, the community's only avenue of response to a situation about which they are aggrieved is to speak to the relevant Minister. When the distance was created between the Minister and the corrections commission, it is quite possible—and, indeed, I am sure that it did happen at times—that it was stated to a complainant that nothing could be done; that it was the role of the commission, and the Minister was limited in his or her ability to intervene. That is not what most electors want. They believe that the elected representative is there to be able to reflect their concerns, and they are frustrated at best if the response to their concerns is a disclaimer that the Minister elected and responsible for that portfolio cannot do anything about it. I see that responsibility shifting back, although I supported the change because it was the policy of the Government of the day. This is the policy of this Government of the day, but I believe it is more in line with community expectation. On that basis I certainly support that return, if you like, to a more direct stream of accountability to the relevant Minister.

The second issue that I wanted to refer to is that of accountability. In the changes in

1997 it was indicated that there would be an audit trail and an evaluation of the service provision. A press release in February stated—

"The President of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties, Ian Dearden, today described the recommendation of the Peach Commission of Inquiry into Correctives Services in Queensland, that the Queensland Corrective Services Commission and its Board be replaced by a department, as 'a retrograde step' which 'may lead to prisons in Queensland heading back into the bad old days prior to the Kennedy reforms'.

Mr Dearden went on to say 'It is QCCL's view (contrary to opinions expressed in the Peach Report) that the accountability mechanisms applied to Corrective Services in Queensland are completely inadequate and are unlikely to improve with the establishment of a new Department of Corrective Services.'

I would like the Minister to clarify what account trail he has in place and how that will be made transparent. Prisons are fine while they are operating efficiently, but once the morale of either the staff or the prisoners themselves deteriorates and things like riots and strikes occur, as the member for Crows Nest said, the community looks for a scalp. If the Minister has clear audit transparency, then there is an opportunity for him to show how the system has worked. I wonder what the Minister has in place to achieve that.

The other issue—and it is allied to my last question—is that clause 19 omits section 23, which provides that the commission is subject to the direction of the Minister. The power of ministerial direction derives from the Public Service Act of 1996. I am assuming—and I would just like it confirmed—that that direction would have to be in writing and tabled within a set period. That is the way that it is done in most cases currently. A Minister who issues a direction to another body in many instances must make that direction in writing and it must be tabled. I wonder whether that will apply in this situation.

I referred before to the fact that the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties talked about the system sliding backwards. One of the issues that was raised with me was the risk of the system being—and this is how it was worded to me—again dominated by union control. That was not raised with me because the role of unions is bad—it is not; unions play a very positive role in many institutions. However, I can recall some years ago now that prison officers went on strike and held the

State to ransom to try to achieve their goals—not necessarily defensible goals, but goals anyway. There was little option open to the Minister of the day but to capitulate in great measure. I wonder whether some safeguards are to be put in place to ensure that, whilst the union has an effective and appropriate role, it does not become dominant.

The Minister has said that, when sections 72 and 73 are omitted under clause 25 of this Bill, specific provisions will be inserted requiring a regular review of the operation of the Act. I wonder whether the Minister can tell me when that legislation will be brought into the House. Those are the main issues that I wanted to raise with the Minister. Again, considering the debate that we held previously about the Correctives Services Commission, I believe that the changes were put in place with good intent and in good spirit. These changes are this current Government's policy. I do wish it well. It is not a very easy area to administer. I do trust that the new accountabilities will prove to be successful.

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (12.56 p.m.), in reply: I certainly want to thank all of the participants in the debate who spoke yesterday and today for their contributions. I certainly want to thank very much the Government members who have spoken clearly and effectively in support of the Bill and the Government's prison reform agenda. I particularly want to name the members for Springwood, Mount Ommaney, Nudgee, Lytton and Sandgate. Of course, the member for Nudgee has always had a very firm view about corporatisation, and he expressed that very, very firmly. I also want to particularly thank the member for Lytton for the contribution that he made on the international treaty obligations, because that is a very important part of our response to concerns that have been raised about the maximum security unit, and I will go into that in a little more detail later.

At this point, while certain people are present, I also want to thank the Opposition members for their contributions to this debate. There were a few things said that I probably would have preferred had not been said. However, in the main their contributions have been very, very forthright—and I thank all of them—as have the contributions made by the Independents and by One Nation. It is very clear that there is support for this legislation. I know the term "will not oppose" is being used and I know some qualification has been put forward, but it is very heartening for me as the

Minister to see put forward what is effectively support for the legislation that we are proposing.

Before we break for lunch, I would also like to thank the previous Minister, Mr Cooper, for his contribution. I think many of the things that he said really go to the heart of what this portfolio is all about. I am certainly a supporter—and was a supporter at the time from outside the Parliament—of the Kennedy reforms. At that time I was the Assistant General Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council of Queensland. Prison officers sometimes got into trouble in circumstances in which I got involved at that stage. The Kennedy reforms were very, very important, and I want to congratulate the previous Minister on his role way back when he was first the Minister for Corrective Services in this State. I want to congratulate him for commissioning Jim Kennedy to put that report together and for then having the heart and the commitment to provide the funding to make sure that that did take place. That is where it all came from. I also thank him for his comments that maybe it was even recognised at that point that it may go the full circle. I think it has gone the full circle. I also believe that the report of Frank Peach and his team acknowledges the need for it to make that change.

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

Interruption.

PRIVILEGE

Subpoena Served on Member at Parliament House

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I wish to inform the House that earlier today counsel acting on my behalf attempted to seek leave to appear before the Supreme Court as amicus curia in the matter for which the member for Barambah had been subpoenaed. Counsel expressed my concerns and the concerns of the House as to the manner in which service of the subpoena had been effected.

Later, following a short adjournment, counsel for the plaintiff consented to the setting aside of the subpoena. Counsel for the plaintiff also stated that his client had not intended to interfere with the proceedings of the House. Her Honour Justice Atkinson ordered the subpoena to be set aside. The matter generally is, of course, still in the hands of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed.

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (2.31 p.m.): Before the luncheon recess I was speaking about the responses to the Bill made by many members of this Parliament yesterday and today. I expressed my appreciation for the fact that there is, in general, consent to the proposals we are putting forward, although of course some people have indicated that they will be watching the performance of this legislation in the years ahead very closely. That is their right, and of course we would expect them to do that.

I wish to thank the people who have been involved in this matter. I thank my personal staff, who have been very closely involved for quite some time now in the preparation of this legislation and in reviewing the report put together by Frank Peach and his team, entitled *Corrections in the Balance*. I also thank the implementation team, which is essentially comprised of Frank Peach and the team that prepared the report. They are now working as the implement unit for the report, of which this Bill is but one part. I certainly thank them very sincerely for all of the hard work they have put in and I thank departmental officers from the Corrective Services Commission and from Q Corr who have also played a role in getting this Bill to the Parliament today.

This Bill represents the first step. As several people have indicated in the course of the debate, we anticipate further reform both to the Corrective Services Act and the Corrective Services Administration Act later this year. Those two pieces of legislation will be merged into one and many of the other recommendations of what came to be known as the Peach report will be implemented. There are many outstanding issues. Some have been outstanding for quite some years. We will be working through that further review. Indeed, quite a lot of progress has been made already and there will be a second raft of legislation to complete the reform process.

This Bill establishes the department itself. It abolishes the commission and the Government owned corporation Q Corr. The new department will be in place in early May. From there we will complete that implementation and complete the review of the outstanding recommendations and a number of other outstanding issues to do with corrective services that have been around for

some time. We will come back before this Parliament at that time.

I stress that, yet again, we are seeking to have a better corrective services system in this State. It is not a question of turning back the clock, of simply going back to a departmental structure. Establishing a department does not mean that we will revert to the way things were done prior to the Kennedy report and the Kennedy reforms that were initiated by Russell Cooper when he was the first Corrective Services Minister in this State.

I have indicated that I was a fan of Kennedy's reforms. I have known Jim Kennedy for over 20 years. I served on a major board with him for three of those years. I served on the Queensland Investment Corporation board, of which Jim Kennedy is still the chairman. Jim Kennedy is someone whom I know very well and have worked very closely with in a range of areas for quite some time. His reforms were absolutely necessary at that time, but now we have come full circle to the point where, if we are to have greater accountability, we certainly need to establish a department.

Of course, many of Kennedy's reforms were still being put in place when Labor came to office in late 1989. There has been massive change in terms of improved community involvement, increased professionalism of corrections in this State, better training and better rehabilitation of offenders. It is all about making sure we give back to the community a better person after that person has spent a period in a correctional centre. That is what we are all about today also. If we do not achieve that, if we do not continue to go forward, then we may slip back into the abyss. Certainly that is not on my agenda as the current Minister and it is not on the agenda of this Government.

I will work my way through some of the comments that have been made during the course of the debate, because it might assist us when we come to considering the individual clauses if some of the questions have been answered. The member for Gladstone raised a number of issues and raised a concern about the accountability trail. The Queensland Council for Civil Liberties had questioned whether re-establishing a department would mean less accountability. I make it very clear that this proposal and the proposals being put in place as a result of the review do mean considerable extra resources for audit areas. There are currently 28 existing accountability mechanisms and 14 public sector mechanisms. Ten of those public sector

mechanisms are internal and four are external oversight mechanisms. These will be retained. That is a recommendation of the review designed to improve the effectiveness of existing accountability mechanisms by strengthening the links that exist between them. It aims to reduce bureaucracy by reducing the number of separate boards, corporate services and agencies.

I also make the point that freedom of information exists and will be retained. That was not the case when there was last a department in place. The Ombudsman has the capacity to review prisoners' concerns. It is our intention to also allow the CJC to investigate issues to do with the privately operated prisons, not just the State owned and operated prisons. There are inspectors who can check issues. We are changing the status of official visitors from one where they simply report back to general managers to one where official visitor reports will go directly to the director-general of the department. We will have a greatly enhanced audit capacity and contract management.

One of the other major effects of establishing a department—particularly removing the Government owned corporation structure—is that the department will be much more accountable to this Parliament through the Budget Estimates process, because a lot of the commercial-in-confidence provisions that apply to a Government owned corporation will no longer apply. So there are many measures which ensure that accountability will in fact increase as a result of this legislation. Judicial review is also available. Judicial review was certainly not available to inmates of correctional facilities when there was last a department in place—over 10 years ago. The accountability mechanisms and the accountability trail will be most significant as a result of this reform.

The member for Gladstone also raised the issue of ministerial directions. Certainly clause 19 of this Bill does omit the provision that allows the Minister to give written directions to the current commission. If we are taking the commission out of existence, in effect there is no need for the Minister to be able to give it written directions because there will be nothing to give written directions to. The new department will be subject to the Public Service Act 1996, which provides for Ministers to direct director-generals. Section 54 states—

"The chief executive of a department is subject to the directions of the departmental Minister in managing the department."

That is pretty much a key to what we are talking about.

This morning in the House, Russell Cooper, the previous Minister, spoke about being a hands-on Minister. He certainly was—and got a lot of criticism for being an interfering Minister. It is my style to be a hands-on Minister as well. And I believe that it is much more effective if, in fact, a Minister is openly able to give directions rather than having to rely on written directions and all the associated delays about which the previous Minister spoke this morning.

The member for Gladstone also raised the issue of the risk of the department becoming controlled by unions. Everybody knows my background. I came up through the union movement in this State.

Mr Swarten: And you did very well at it, too.

Mr BARTON: I thank the honourable member for that. I believe that I did, too. There is no risk of the unions having more impact than they otherwise would have, because it is a department rather than a statutory commission or a GOC. It is my view that unions have a proper role to play and that they can play an effective role. I have an open arrangement with the unions in terms of giving them a proper say and a proper input into the role of corrections in this State. But at the end of the day, it is the Government that must direct the policy and the operations of corrections in this State. Whereas we respect the unions' input and their role, they certainly will not be controlling the department. There is no greater risk in this arrangement than there is in the current one.

In common with other members, the member for Gladstone raised the issue of review of the Act. This will be addressed formally later this year when we bring back legislation to amalgamate the existing legislation and to address a number of outstanding issues. That is one recommendation that I have already made up my mind about, and I do not mind advising this Parliament that I consider the five-year review periods that have happened during the 10 years that the Kennedy reforms were in place to be effective and appropriate in terms of timing. I anticipate that, when I come back with that legislation, we will be indicating a five-year review of the legislation at that point. Of course, that might change in the meantime, but that is our current thinking, and I have no reason to believe that it will, of necessity, change.

Other members raised issues during this debate. The member for Caboolture raised the issue of the PSG. I want to re-stress that we believed that the PSG, in its current form—and the Peach review identified this—was not the most appropriate way in which to use those resources. In our view, we will be utilising those resources—those people and their skills—in a much more effective way across the prisons system. They are very valuable in terms of their audits training. However, I do want to correct one thing. The major improvements that we have been able to achieve in getting drugs out of our prisons have not primarily come about because of the PSG but because of the efforts of the general manager's task force and the training and resourcing that we have applied over the past nine months. So the PSG's staff and skills will be maintained, but in a different form, not as the separate, discrete unit which they are currently. I thank the member for Caboolture for his indication of support for this legislation.

I have probably paid enough tributes to Russell Cooper for the role that he played. However, I thank him for his goodwill and best wishes in terms of where we will go with this legislation. I was rather pleased when he indicated that he believes that this probably is an appropriate time for the circle to have completed its full turn and that it is time to go back to a department. Of course, in relation to many of the other comments that the member made—some I would agree with, some I would not agree with. He certainly had some frustrating times as Minister in this portfolio—some tough times—but also made some big achievements, and we aim to go on to even bigger and better things.

Concern was raised by a number of members about the community input. I want to make it very clear that, in abolishing the commission and Q Corr, and because they had boards that were appointed from the community and those boards are going, that does not mean that there will be a reduction in community input into corrections. It is my intention to continue to have the regular stakeholder meetings that the commission has conducted in recent years. Of course, the advisory council that I will appoint is aimed to broadly represent stakeholder interests. It is not supposed to be a meeting of stakeholders, because that is quite different. At a meeting of stakeholders, everybody comes along with their particular issues to push on behalf of their organisations. I want an advisory council which, in a broad way, will work a little like a board does to thrash out what are the best solutions, or what are the issues that I need to

be made aware of in corrections—not just from the point of view of ethnic groups, ATSI groups, management-type people, or people with management skills or industrial relations backgrounds or human resources related backgrounds. I want them to come along as a single unit to look at those broad issues. Of course, community input will still be important. But I stress again that we will still be maintaining the bigger meetings—the regular meetings—of all stakeholders, where everybody can come along and push their particular organisation's point of view as a very important part of how we make sure that corrections in this State maintain a close link to the community. The community corrections boards—in effect the parole boards—will not be changed as a result of this. So those decisions will still be made by people appointed from within the community and who have a community viewpoint.

Questions were also raised about jobs. We gave a very clear indication—both Frank Peach and myself—when the review report was released that, as a result of this, no-one would be losing their job. It may well be that some people will end up with a different job from what they had before. That is inevitable. But we have two organisations that were, in effect, formed 18 months ago when one organisation was taken apart. It is really just a matter of putting those two organisations back together—but in a much more effective manner—to create an organisation that we believe will be more efficient.

I have said very clearly, both in my public statements and in this Parliament, that everybody will be offered a job, although it may be that at the end of the day some people are not happy with the job that they are offered. The Bill contains provisions so that, particularly in the case of contracted officers, if they are unable to negotiate a position that is acceptable to them, then we would be prepared to negotiate with them to, in effect, buy out their contracts. I am hoping that there will not be any or many examples of that being necessary, but the Bill provides for that to occur if, in fact, we are unable to fit square pegs into round holes. If we end up with the odd square peg that simply cannot be accommodated—or accommodated in a way that is acceptable to that person—then we would be prepared to negotiate out their contracts. But everybody will be offered a job in the new system.

Questions were raised about the cost of the department. We have indicated that we believe that the new department can be put into effect in a cost-neutral way. But that does

not mean that there will not be some costs. Of course, if we have to have new letterheads and new signage then, yes, costs will be involved. But in terms of the overall costs of the new department over a period of one year, we believe that there will be no additional cost to Government to do it this way compared with how it is being done now. We are doing things like maintaining the name of Queensland Corrections for the commercial operating body that will run the State's prisons from within the department so that we do not have to duplicate the cost of things as simple as uniforms and logos. Queensland Corrections is now a well-known name. It has standing in the community. It has standing interstate and internationally. So those types of costs can be minimised. Obviously, while there will be some costs associated with changing back to a department, the overall costs to Government will not be increased.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's report made some recommendations that drew to the attention of this Parliament the fact that the Parliament should be aware of what we are doing. I table a copy of the letter that was forwarded yesterday to the chairperson of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. I will not read it, because it is fairly detailed. But several issues did—I will not say "concern", but members of the committee certainly did raise some questions with me as the Minister. They did raise with me whether or not we had properly considered, in our international treaty obligations, the preparations for the provisions on the maximum security unit.

The maximum security unit is designed to house the intractable prisoners, the worst of the worst, to ensure that we do not have incidents in this State such as occurred at Silverwater this morning where a helicopter managed to lift a prisoner out of the facility. We need to ensure that those people can be housed and controlled in a proper environment. I notice that some unkind people in the media have indicated that it is another black hole. I will not give members the direct comparisons. This is no black hole in terms of the Boggo Road black hole that was referred to this morning by the previous Minister. This is a facility that is purpose designed and purpose built to hold intractable prisoners.

A Government member interjected.

Mr BARTON: No, Minister, they are not exactly there for shoplifting.

Those are people who have had multiple escapes, have murdered—in some cases murdered multiple times—have murdered other prisoners, have assaulted prison officers

and cannot be made to behave in the normal system. As a Government we are adamant and as a Minister I am adamant that, regardless of the best efforts of the Prisoners Legal Service, those people will stay precisely where they are: in the maximum security unit.

When drafting this Bill, we had our international treaty obligations checked out very thoroughly. We believe that we meet our obligations under each and every one of those with perhaps one tiny exception. That tiny exception is that, under a particular international treaty, inmates of correctional facilities must be given the right to work. We are not about to let those possums out of the maximum security unit to mix with other prisoners in prison industries, because the experience of the past indicates that they may bash, murder or escape. In one small aspect we may be found a little wanting, but in every other way, we are head and shoulders above all our international obligations with regard to the imprisonment of inmates and with regard to correctional facilities.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee also asked whether or not the appeal mechanisms that we have in place for prisoners detained for subsequent six-month periods or ongoing six-month periods should be put in place up front. We believe that when dealing with people of the nature of those in the maximum security unit currently or those who may in future be put in it or the other two maximum security units that are under construction currently at other correctional facilities, prison management needs to be able to make instant decisions. They do not need to be tied up in appeal processes while they are trying to maintain the security of the prison, other inmates, officers and the community. We did give some consideration to whether there could be an appeal process after prisoners have been placed in the MSU. I have come down against providing that, because prisoners have a capacity to seek judicial review. They have the capacity to have the official visitor consider their case. When the Peach review is implemented, the official visitor will be reporting directly to the director-general and not to the general manager of the prison. That is a separate review process. Of course, prisoners also have access to the Ombudsman. The Government understands the concerns of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. However, we believe that we have considered the issue thoroughly. We are very happy with the provisions and we ask the Parliament to accept that view.

Another issue raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee was that abolishing the Corrective Services Commission and Q Corr may disadvantage the board members who may have an expectation that they were appointed for a period and that they have a right to the earnings for that period. It is our understanding that board members have no such expectation. In fact, it is not uncommon when Governments change—although the Beattie Government certainly did not do this—to see wholesale sackings of boards. Before I came into this Parliament, I was a member of a number of Government boards. I always understood that what the Minister gave, the Minister had the right to take away at any point. Those positions are appointments through the Executive Council on the basis of the recommendation of the Minister. I understand why the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has raised that with us. I advise the Parliament that it is our view—a very strongly held one—that no such expectation exists, nor would it be appropriate for it to exist. We believe that there will not be a problem with that provision. We do not believe it is correct to pay people who are not performing the work for which they are being paid, simply because of an expectation. Those positions are not the members' main jobs; they are positions on boards for which the members get paid appropriate fees. It is not their main source of income.

I thank everybody for their contribution to this debate. This is very important legislation. I think the shadow Minister indicated in his opening comments that this was one of the most important Bills to come before this Parliament for a while. I agree with him. This legislation is the equivalent of the legislation enacting the Kennedy reforms that was put through by Russell Cooper 10 years ago. We believe that we are going forwards not backwards. We believe that it is very good legislation. I am very heartened by the fact that nobody who spoke in the second-reading debate indicated any opposition to the Bill itself. It has received very good support, particularly from former Environment Minister Brian Littleproud. I was heartened by his comments. There must be a club of former Environment Ministers in the Parliament. I am only too happy to answer any questions that members may have at the Committee stage. I hope that I have answered the questions that were raised during the debate. I commend the Bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP)
(Minister for Police and Corrective Services) in
charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 15, as read, agreed to.

Clause 16—

Mr HORAN (2.58 p.m.): Clause 16 sets out the functions of the chief executive who, subject to the Minister, must decide policy for the administration, management and control of corrective services. I was going to say that that is the only place the Minister is mentioned in this legislation. However, the Minister referred to section 54 of the Public Service legislation which provides that the Minister has the right to give direction. I am fairly satisfied with that.

Throughout this legislation, the word "Commissioner" has been replaced by the words "chief executive". The legislation for the SOCOG has an interesting provision for Ministers wanting to get their hands on the levers. Under that legislation, the wording of the ministerial control states that the authority is in the exercise of its functions subject to the control and direction of the Minister. That is not too different from section 54.

Mr BARTON: That is essentially the case. It is no different from any other department. The same provisions that applied to the honourable member when he was Health Minister will apply in this case. Without trying to belabour the point, in general terms the director-general runs the department subject to the direction of the Minister. As the honourable member is aware, the existing provisions give the Minister very little input at all. The commission runs the department and develops policy. If the Minister wants to intervene he has to give written directions. As the previous Minister indicated this morning, that can take some time. It gets even messier if we get down to Q Corr to the GOCs that operate under contract to the commission.

If the Minister tries to have some influence on an operational area, this situation can kill the Minister or the Government. The Minister really has no way in. But when things come unstuck, the Minister's door is the first door that everyone knocks on. Perhaps there has been a little overemphasis on my wanting to get my hands on the levers. I simply want to be a capable Minister for Corrective Services in this State. I believe any subsequent Minister should have the same capacity to give policy direction and, where necessary—and I hope very infrequently—operational directions to a department.

Clause 16, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 17 and 18, as read, agreed to.

Clause 19—

Mr HORAN (3.02 p.m.): This matter was answered on the previous clause.

Clause 19, as read, agreed to.

Clause 20, as read, agreed to.

Clause 21—

Mr HORAN (3.02 p.m.): Clause 21 deals with the advisory council. I ask the Minister to comment on a couple of things. I think I said in my speech that I would not like to see this legislation being a toothless tiger. One of the things the coalition is watching is the community input into corrections to see that the standard is maintained. I would like to hear what the Minister is thinking of in regard to appointments and the types of areas that will be represented. The Minister might be able to tell us which professions or working areas will be represented on the advisory council.

Members of the council will be appointed directly by the Minister with the result that there is no Executive Council involvement. The Minister simply puts out a media release. It really has come down to a very simple process where the Minister makes the announcement. I would like to hear the Minister's thinking on that matter.

We see from clause 27(4) that the Minister certainly has his hands on the lever. The clause reads—

"The Minister may at any time end the appointment of a member for any reason or none."

The Minister is able to let the trapdoor go if someone is not up to scratch. I am not being overcritical. The Minister wants to choose an advisory council that he believes will give him the best advice. He wants an advisory council that will improve the whole situation. If the Minister is given advice by someone and he does not want to abide by that advice, he can cancel that person's appointment.

Mr BARTON: I should indicate that this is a fairly standard clause that is drafted into a great deal of legislation concerning the appointment of advisory boards. This is not something that has been dreamt up by me to give me absolute control. Yes, it gives me total control over who is appointed and whether they stay. Anyone who has worked with me, alongside me, or opposed to me would know that I am someone who is prepared to listen to advice that I have to hear as opposed to what I want to hear. This is very much the type of advisory council that I want to appoint. The

legislation talks about the types of expertise required for membership of the council.

I know that several of the honourable member's colleagues have raised with me the point that the legislation does not pick up ethnic groups or women. I can assure the House that if I do not appoint enough women to this advisory council, I will be in a fair bit of trouble with my colleagues. I am sure they are not going to let me get away with not appointing an appropriate number of women to the council. I will be adamant about appointing women. If people look at the appointments I have made to my personal staff, appointments I made to my staff when I was General Secretary at the Trades and Labor Council of Queensland, and appointments that have been made to other bodies of which I have been chairman or a director, they will see that I am always prepared to make sure that women who have the capacity get the positions. That policy has got me offside with a few of my male mates on occasions when they have missed out on positions.

I intend to make sure that we get a good spread of appointees. It is absolutely crucial that we have the ATSIC groups well represented because the ATSIC groups are so over-represented in our prison populations. So, although the Government did not spell out ethnic groups or women in this legislation, we have spelt out that I want a mix of people with business backgrounds, legal backgrounds, advocacy capacity, employee relations, ATSIC, Corrective Services officers and employees and the like. I want to ensure that we get direct advice from employee representatives so that we are aware of what the people in the field—whether in community corrections or in the secure custodial areas—are thinking.

I made a comment in my reply a little while ago that I do not see this as being primarily a stakeholder group. It will be broadly representative of stakeholders. When we have stakeholder meetings people come along and, for want of a better term, push their own barrows. The people are there to represent a union and they come along with their union agenda. If they come along to represent ATSIC groups, they tend to come along with their own agenda. If they come along to represent advocacy groups, they tend to come along with their organisation's agenda.

On this advisory council I want people who are prepared to bend a little, to work together, and to take into account the views of other people. If I am seeking advice on a tough issue, I am hoping that we can get a

blend across that broad range of experiences which is capable of giving me the best advice on how my department and I should step off on those issues.

I indicated that it is our intention—and this is another recommendation in Frank Peach's report—that we maintain the regular meetings of stakeholder groups. These tend to be meetings that are almost as big as Ben Hur. Quite a considerable number of stakeholder groups are involved in corrections in this State. I understand that the meetings are held twice a year. They are very significant and very costly meetings to stage. I would anticipate that the individual stakeholder groups would come along to those meetings and I welcome them pushing their own barrows. If the representative groups and the stakeholder groups want to see me as Minister about issues that concern them, I have no doubt that they will be seeking meetings—as they are now—and getting those meetings, even though they might not be able to get to me on five minutes' notice.

The Government will be making sure that the community links back to corrections are maintained. Appointments were made to the commission by coalition Governments and by Labor Governments. We saw quite a mix of people who were prepared to accept a broader responsibility and not simply the focus of their own personal background. I have served on advisory boards under previous Governments. I was appointed to some advisory boards by previous coalition Governments prior to the Goss era. It will not be necessary to write reports, but I expect that all proceedings would be minuted. The minutes would come to me accompanied by any firm recommendations that are made. I hope that I would also be able to attend some of those meetings, because I see them as an advisory council capable of giving me the best advice to handle corrections in the most sensitive and effective way.

Clause 21, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 22 to 26, as read, agreed to.

Clause 27—

Mr HORAN (3.10 p.m.): In new section 83(2)(a), under the heading "Director-general of Corrective Services" the following seems fairly unusual—

"... becomes a public service officer, other than the chief executive."

That subclause also appears in the provisions relating to the dissolution of Queensland Corrections. Obviously, it gives the Minister the right, if necessary, to move on the chief

executive. That is the way it reads to me. It seems fairly unusual wording to put into the legislation. I would like to hear the Minister's comment on that point.

Also, in relation to subdivision 3, which relates to the dissolution of Queensland Corrections, could the Minister tell us what business unit or model is envisaged? As the Minister would remember, during the debate I said that there was not any model to put in place for the business unit. I would like to know how it is going to operate.

Mr BARTON: The provision relating to the director-general is necessary because the director-general of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission is not a director-general in the sense of directors-general of other Government departments. The Queensland Corrective Services Commission is a statutory body, not a Government department.

That provision could be read as a mechanism to move an existing director-general on, but it is necessary to have that provision in the legislation because, even if it was intended to maintain the current director-general of the commission into the new department, there cannot be an automatic transfer across. Applicants would have to be called for the position, because the current director-general is not employed under the usual Public Service guidelines for the employment of a director-general.

Mr Horan: Everybody else is transferred then.

Mr BARTON: I think that the member would find that the same provision applies to other contracted employees. The legislation has to contain such a provision if a person is occupying that position, because the director-general of Corrective Services is not a director-general employed under the usual Government provisions. That person is appointed by the board, not by the Minister. So there would have to be such a provision to accord with that circumstance.

I am not going to get into a debate about this matter. I know that there was some speculation, and it even came up during the debate on this Bill, that various people were going to be the director-general. There is no intention to do that. Barry Apsey is the director-general, but he is employed by the board, not by the Government as a whole. So it was necessary for that provision to be put into the legislation.

Mr Horan: So in other words, you are saying that they become a Public Service

officer but they do not necessarily become chief executive.

Mr BARTON: Yes, that could well be. I am reluctant to talk about individuals other than to say that I have the highest respect for Barry Apsey as the current Director-General of Corrective Services in this State. He has been doing an excellent job. However, there is no guarantee that Barry Apsey could be offered the position of director-general of the new department. It may well be that someone else would be appointed, but he would be offered an appropriate job, or what would hopefully be an appropriate job. He may choose not to take that job. He would have the capacity to negotiate out of his contract.

Mr Horan: Is that a matter for the consideration of the business unit?

Mr BARTON: The business unit. As I pointed out before, this legislation could best be described as shell legislation. It takes the commission out of existence, it takes Q Corr out of existence and it creates a department. In terms of the type of business unit that would come into play, I am not in a position to give the member the complete details of that now. There are other business units in Governments such as Q-Fleet and Goprint. At this point, the implementation unit, which is headed by Frank Peach who also chaired the review, is working through these issues. We are in the process of negotiating with Treasury and also having a good look at our own requirements as to the precise details of how that business unit will be constructed.

There will be a business unit because, as the member will recall from the report, there is a commitment to purchaser/provider models. However, we want to have the business unit within the department, but discrete within the department—still Queensland Corrections, or Q Corr, capable of being controlled by the director-general or, if necessary, by the Minister—still working in a purchaser/provider role. If the member has any further questions on that issue, I am happy to try to answer them, but at this point I cannot give him the exact model.

Mr Horan: You will do it in the next piece of legislation?

Mr BARTON: It probably will not be in the next piece of legislation, because that will be part of the structure that we will be putting into place. If passed, this legislation gives us the capacity to form the department. We are already working through how we merge Q Corr and the old QCSC. Hopefully, we will be able to do that very rapidly once this legislation is passed and proclaimed. We are aiming for

early May to be able to do that. Of course, even by early May, everybody may still be in their positions and still performing their jobs. We will bring the new structure progressively into place over the months from there. I would not want to give an indication that this structure will be in the next raft of legislation, because I would anticipate that we will be doing that administratively in the intervening period.

Clause 27, as read, agreed to.

Clause 28, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Barton, by leave, read a third time.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Film and Television Industry

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (3.18 p.m.), by leave: On 15 March, I was proud to share the stage with Greg Coote and Jeff Hayes and congratulate them on choosing to locate TV productions worth at least \$100m in Queensland. I shared that stage with the Attorney-General and Minister for The Arts, Matt Foley. They were announcing their slate for the next 12 months or so. They were effusive in their praise of Queensland as a go-ahead State in which they planned to produce five television series, with much of the production being on the Gold Coast. The five series are Flipper series 4, Amazon, The Lost World, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Beastmaster.

It is estimated that these productions will create more than 2,000 jobs in Queensland. In addition, Mr Coote and Mr Hayes said that they "try whenever possible to use the fabulous facilities of the Warner Roadshow Movie World Studios and the can-do approach that Queenslanders bring to the table".

This morning in question time, a National Party member representing the Gold Coast sought to denigrate Mr Coote and Mr Hayes by suggesting that the filming of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the Lost World and Flipper had started in 1998. The announcement on 15 March related to television series. All those familiar with the television industry would know that a pilot is not a series. Indeed, many pilots do not become television series.

The production of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde that the member for Broadwater referred to

was a pilot and not the series that is due to comprise 22 episodes. The production of the Lost World that the member for Broadwater referred to was a pilot and not the series that is due to start on 26 April this year. The production of Flipper that the member for Broadwater referred to as commencing on 8 May 1998 was series 3, not series 4 which is confirmed for production in 1999.

I did not mislead the Parliament as the member alleged. It was the member for Broadwater who, in his desperation to score a cheap political point at the expense of the film industry, misled the House. The member for Broadwater should apologise immediately to Greg Coote and Jeff Hayes.

CHILD PROTECTION BILL

Resumption of Committee

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) in charge of the Bill.

Resumed from 11 March (see p. 579).

Clause 187—

Mr BEANLAND (3.21 p.m.): I am pleased to get back to the Bill. For a moment, I thought it was going to be left to lie on the table for another two or three weeks while the House is in recess. This is terribly important legislation.

Clause 187 deals with restrictions on reporting certain court proceedings. This is a very important provision as it inhibits certain matters from being reported in the media, and that is good. In fact, all of Part 5 of the Bill relates to confidentiality. There has been controversy about some aspects of the confidentiality clauses of the legislation, but I believe that such clauses are in the best interests of children. After all, we have had confidentiality laws in relation to these matters for some time. From legal advice that I have been given I understand that in more recent times loopholes have been found in some sections of the Act. I am sure that the Minister has taken great care in drafting all sections relating to confidentiality to close those loopholes.

Clause 187 deals with restricting the reporting of certain court proceedings and prohibiting the publishing of any details or material—whether it be a name or whatever—that could identify a child now or in the future. We are not only talking about protecting a child's identity now; we are talking about protecting their identity into the future. It is possible that a person could be identified

once they have reached adulthood and are going about their normal day-to-day activities. I am sure that if any member had particular issues raised when he or she was young, he or she would not want those matters raised in adulthood, because others can use that sort of information in all sorts of ways.

Whilst some would argue that it could be beneficial to identify people in order that we can weed out and gain access to those who might abuse young people, I do not believe that that particular argument carries weight. Therefore, as we have retained confidentiality in other child protection legislation, it is good to see it retained in this legislation.

Clause 187, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 188 to 200, as read, agreed to.

Clause 201—

Ms BLIGH: (3.24 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 112, lines 24 and 25, 'care provider'—

omit, insert—

'foster carer'."

This amendment will have the effect of changing the use of the words "care provider" to "foster carer" for reasons outlined in previous amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 201, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 202 and 203, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Ms BLIGH (3.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 113, after line 18—

insert—

'Exemption from expiry of Children's Services Regulation 1966

'203A. Despite the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, part 7, the Children's Services Regulation 1966 does not expire at the end of 30 June 1999³ but remains in force until the earliest of the following, when it ceases to have effect—

- (a) the commencement of section 194;⁴
- (b) the end of 31 December 1999;
- (c) the repeal or expiry of the regulation, other than under the part or as mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b).'

³ The Children's Services Regulation 1966 was exempted from expiry under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, part 7 (Staged automatic expiry of subordinate legislation), for the period

ending at midnight on 30 June 1999—see the Statutory Instruments Regulation 1992, section 5.

4 Section 194 (Repeal of Children's Services Act 1965)"

This amendment inserts clause 203A. The purpose of this amendment is to allow the existing regulation of the Children's Services Act 1965 to continue beyond 30 June 1999. At the moment, under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992 the regulation will expire on 30 June this year. It is proposed that the regulation should continue in force until the Child Protection Bill is proclaimed. As a safeguard, this amendment allows that if the Bill is not proclaimed until 31 December 1999, the regulation will expire on that date. The Committee has already agreed to the amendment to clause 2 of the Bill whereby proposed section 203A will commence on the date of assent to the Bill. That is, it will come into effect immediately and not wait until proclamation.

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 203A, as read, agreed to.

Clause 204, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 1—

Mr BEANLAND (3.26 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 114, line 9, after 'safe'—

insert—

'and stable'."

I move this amendment for a fairly simple and straightforward reason: a very important part of the rights of children is to ensure that they have a stable living environment. Stability of life is very important when raising young people. Unfortunately, it is not always the case. For children who move under the department or the chief executive's control, stability often becomes a major issue. It is an issue that I am sure the Minister is well aware of. We receive a lot of complaints about it on a very regular basis, with some justification, I think.

Problems in this area have been occurring for a long period. No doubt, some cases are beyond control and others are not. Nevertheless, stability is very important and young people ought to be able to look forward to it. Quite often, children have to be moved from an unstable home life and they are placed in the care of the department or the chief executive officer, where they may still face instability. I often hear that the lack of stability in their lives actually decreases as they are passed from home to home, and they

experience greater instability than if they had remained with their parent or parents. This becomes a major issue as the department tries to get those young people back on the rails by settling them in very harmonious and comfortable situations in which they can look forward to a proper home life. Such a situation will not exist in conjunction with instability.

It is all very well to stipulate that children must have a safe living environment, but part of that is providing a stable living environment. I believe very strongly that stability is a most important part of this matter. I placed it in the charter of rights for a child in care. One of those rights is "to be provided with a safe living environment". It is appropriate that stability be included there.

Ms BLIGH: We support the insertion of the words "and stable". In drafting the Bill it was our view that the use of the word "safe" was sufficiently broad to embrace a number of concepts, including the concept of stability. But I have no concern about having it added for the sake of clarity.

Mr BEANLAND: I thank the Minister for accepting the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr BEANLAND: I move the following amendment—

"At page 114, lines 27 and 28—
omit, insert—

'(i) to be appropriately educated having regard to the child's age and development;'. "

Currently, paragraph (i) of the Bill is worded—

"(i) to have access to education appropriate to the child's age and development; "

This amendment seeks to broaden the provision from simply giving children the right to have access to education to giving them the right to be appropriately educated having regard to their age and development. I believe the current words are meaningless. In respect of children up to 15 years of age, access to education is covered under the Education Act. A child should be able to expect to be educated appropriately having regard to its age and development. Those two elements are very important.

If a child has some sort of developmental impairment, that child will obviously be educated to a different standard or in a different manner. Everyone's situation is different. We need to be catering for that. That is the reason I have come up with this wording.

I am sure we all agree that education is important for all children, particularly for those who have experienced a great deal of instability in their life. A good, sound education is often the only thing that they have to look forward to and the only thing that can, hopefully, assist them in their development into adulthood. I commend this amendment. I believe it goes a long way towards putting some meaning into paragraph (i) of the charter.

Ms BLIGH: Although I understand the motives of the member for Indooroopilly in moving this amendment, I do not believe that it is appropriate. The effect of introducing these words would be to replace the current proposal, which is to ensure that the child has access, to one that actually imposes an obligation to ensure that the child is appropriately educated.

I have a number of concerns about the amendment in the form being proposed by the member for Indooroopilly. Firstly, I think it has overtones that there may be some way of compelling a child to access the educational opportunities made available to them, and some element of compulsion. I think we need to remember what the charter of rights is all about. The charter of rights is clearly spelt out in the preamble as a set of obligations imposed on the State. What the State can do is provide access to an opportunity. The compulsion to get children to school on a daily basis is something that can be enforced only by those people who have the daily care of the child and, in many cases, that would be a foster carer. In this charter it is not our intention to impose obligations on foster carers. We believe that is a process that ought to be managed separately. I would be loath to confuse the purpose of the charter by introducing the notion that we can in some way enforce through this mechanism children's attendance at school. That is something that the department needs to take seriously, but it is a mechanism that is different from this charter.

The other rights that are spelt out in the charter go to the question of what it is that the State can provide. What the State can do is provide the service and access to it. For example, paragraph (h) of the charter states that it is a right of the child to have access to dental, medical and related treatment. Paragraph (j) states that it is the right of the child to have access to job training opportunities. I think this has been cast in those terms deliberately, because it is a charter that puts an obligation on the State. In my view, the words are appropriate.

Again, the amendment introduces the concept of somehow making the child accept responsibility. This is not the appropriate part of the Bill for that to occur. The member for Indooroopilly stated that, as it is currently worded, it appeared meaningless. I beg to differ. I suggest he refer to the Seen and Heard report of the Law Reform Commission and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission published last year, which demonstrated tragically that children in the care of Government departments in States all around Australia have significantly poorer educational outcomes and are much more likely to drop out of the mainstream school system than children who are not in the care of the department. It may be that we have to look at different forms of education that pick up the needs of those children and ensure that they have access to them. As I said, the daily business of getting those children off to school is something that the State is not able to do.

I suggest also to the member for Indooroopilly that to the many past residents of institutions in Queensland the notion of the State being obliged to provide access to education and to ensure that that access is monitored and enforced is not something that is meaningless. Many of the people who have come to see me have said that, although as individuals they may not have been subject to abuse or neglect, they graduated from these institutions without the ability, in many cases, to read, write or add up and that they regarded that as an act of neglect on the part of the State because the institutions in which they resided were not monitored adequately by the State at that time. I do not think the clause as currently drafted is in any way meaningless to the people it is intended to affect. The words proposed by the member for Indooroopilly are unacceptable.

Mr BEANLAND: I thank the Minister for her words in support of my amendment. I wish to highlight some of the matters about which she spoke. Firstly, there is no compulsion on the child. Far from it, my amendment is worded "to be appropriately educated having regard to the child's age and development". The compulsion is on the department. I accept that there is an obligation on the department, but not on the child. We cannot compel a child to be appropriately educated. The Minister and I both know that. It is a frivolous, fallacious argument.

There has to be an obligation on the chief executive officer of the department. That is what this amendment is all about. The Minister mentioned that in the past many children in

homes did not have access to education and had problems with reading and writing. Simply having access to education does not give one the ability to read and write. If we are just going to say that they can have access to education, that will not take us any further. This amendment will mean that there is an obligation on the chief executive officer to provide appropriate education to assist them with the ability to read and write. We are talking about literacy and numeracy. The Minister's amendment does not say that at all; it merely states something that is already in the legislation.

If these children have not had access to education in the past, there has obviously been a breakdown within the Education Act. I cannot remember when the provisions came in that relate to children under 15 years of age, but I think they have been in the legislation for a long time. Under the Education Act, the department has had the ability to impose obligations upon the institutions to ensure that children have access to education.

Sadly, the Minister's paragraph (i) does no more than what exists currently. I am saying to the chief executive officer of the department, "There is an obligation on you to not just ensure that children have access to education but also that it be meaningful; and that children have the ability to be educated appropriately." We cannot force a child of any age to be educated. If they do not want to learn, we cannot force them to do so. This amendment is not about forcing them but is about saying, "We will ensure that you are educated to the appropriate level", bearing in mind their age and development.

I reject totally that we are trying to put some sort of responsibility on the child. I accept that this will put some more responsibility on the chief executive officer and the department. Many of these children have little else of benefit to them. A lot of them live in unstable environments. Education is one of the things that they have to look forward to. I will be very disappointed if the Minister does not see fit to accept this amendment, which I think is a very important one as far as this charter of rights is concerned.

Amendment negatived.

Mr BEANLAND: I move the following amendment—

"At page 115, line 5, 'education.'—

omit, insert—

'education;

(l) to receive help, encouragement and support to facilitate the child's

development into responsible adulthood.'."

This amendment relates to Schedule 1 of the Bill. I moved this amendment because I have moved a similar amendment elsewhere in this legislation. I think it is a very important area at which to look at making amendments. After all, this is the Charter of Rights for a Child in Care. We are now talking about the charter itself. The Minister refused to accept similar amendments in relation to the child being entitled to receive services to facilitate their development into responsible adulthood under Principles for Administration of the Act. The Minister did accept an amendment to another provision in relation to the legislation which related to the chief executive's functions under the Act. As far as the statement of care is concerned, the Minister again refused to accept this particular amendment and argued against the amendments in relation to both of those provisions.

I believe that this amendment is very relevant indeed. It sets out that there is an obligation on the chief executive officer to ensure that, under a charter of rights, children receive help, encouragement and support to facilitate their maturity as they develop into responsible adulthood. If we are going to make this particular paragraph meaningful, those words need to be placed in there. After all, it is important that as young people, who are perhaps taken into the department's care as babies, move through into responsible adulthood, encouragement and support needs to be given to them.

Paragraph (k) provides for help with housing, access to income support and training and education. I am not sure what the cost of that is envisaged to be, but I want to move on from that. I turn now to my amendment that will help children mature into responsible adults. The Minister refused to accept similar amendments on the other two points I made, the first of which was in relation to the Principles for Administration. I reflected upon the points that she raised at that time. She said that it was not the appropriate provision in which to list the services that children and families must receive. It is a bit like her argument in relation to education. At the end of the day, in relation to this she is really arguing to support it.

On reflecting upon the Minister's arguments for not accepting this particular amendment elsewhere, I think I see trends coming through that she does not want to accept an obligation on the department. While we want to say, "Yes, they can have access to

this or that or something else", there is no obligation in any shape or form on the department to ensure that this occurs. I think that this is a great shame. One of the great problems we have with young people is ensuring that they do receive appropriate development assistance as they move into adulthood. I am sure that all members in the Chamber would agree. Too often today we find that young people reach adulthood and have not received as youths that type of development assistance that they need in order to mature. They do not receive that type of support that they need so that, when they do turn 18 years of age, they can and are able to accept their role in society as responsible adults. I look forward to the Minister's accepting this amendment.

Ms BLIGH: Again, the proposal of the shadow Minister is not acceptable for a range of reasons. Again, he is seeking to include into the charter an emphasis on the child becoming a responsible adult, rather than the purpose that the charter was designed for, and that was to protect the child's needs. I am not opposed, nor is the Government opposed, to the general concept of a child receiving help to make the difficult and often challenging transition from childhood to adulthood. It is just that we have a much broader concept of what that is. Making the transition from childhood to adulthood certainly includes ultimately accepting responsibility for one's actions, but it also includes many, many other developmental facets.

In my view the amendment is unnecessary and repetitious. It is a repetition of what is included in paragraph (k). It adds nothing to the matters already contained in that paragraph, which reads—

"... to receive appropriate help with the transition from being a child in care to independence."

It then goes on to list some examples—

"... including, for example, help about housing, access to income support and training and education."

That is not intended to be an exhaustive list, and I think that that is clear from the way that it is worded.

In common with the shadow Minister, I have also reflected on some of the speeches made by the coalition and other members of the Chamber on this debate in the interim. I have to say that the emphasis that the member for Indooroopilly has continued to put on this question of making children take responsibility reflects, in my view, an obsession

that he has. I was very struck throughout the debate with how many times people on the other side of this Chamber used words such as "making children responsible", "controlling children" and "disciplining children". I was struck by the fact that they were hardly used at all by speakers on this side of the Chamber.

I had my staff do a bit of a word count. It is interesting to see that members of the coalition used words such as "children taking responsibility for their actions", "controlling children" or "disciplining children" on no fewer than 52 occasions, which stands in stark contrast to the fact that they used the word "protection" on only 23 occasions. So they were doubly concerned with controlling and disciplining children than they were with protecting them.

The shadow Minister has accused me on a number of occasions of making ideological points, and no doubt there is an ideological difference between the sides of the Chamber. It is also illustrated by the fact that people on this side of the Chamber used the word "protection" on 89 occasions, compared with 26 of the other words I mentioned. I think it mostly reflects that people on this side of the Chamber know what the Bill is that we are debating. This Bill is the Child Protection Bill. It is not the child discipline Bill, the child control Bill or the child responsibility Bill. It is the single Bill—child protection.

If the shadow Minister believes that making children take responsibility for their actions is something that can be accomplished by legislation, let him bring in a private member's Bill called the child responsibility Bill. But this is not the Bill on which to be debating this matter. His attempts to further include this notion into a part of the Bill that goes centrally to the needs of children is, as I said at the outset of his debating this point, frankly offensive. Any suggestion that it be included in a charter of rights is most offensive because it directly links the access of children to having their needs met—their needs for things such as dental and medical care—to somehow being able to take responsibility for their actions. It is not supported by the Government.

Mr BEANLAND: I see that the Minister is now getting nasty towards me in relation to this because I am starting to quote some of her provisions back to her. I can understand that, because the Minister has failed. On Tuesday when we came into this place, we could have expected this Bill to be debated, but we had the gambling Bill. Gambling was more important than children's protection. Of course,

we then had to go on to prisons. They were more important. But we finally got there. Junior Minister and all, she finally got there.

Mr Sullivan: Who spoke on prisons?

Mr BEANLAND: I do not know what that interjection meant, but I certainly did not. I thought the member for Chermshire had done enough damage to the Government in the last couple of days. He should be very careful before saying any more. He has done enough damage by himself.

No amount of red herrings thrown in by the Minister can get over the problem the Government faces. The Minister says, "We are about child protection." Let us look at this charter of rights. It contains a whole host of items that I could argue do not really relate to the narrow definition of child protection, but I accept that it is appropriate to have them in there, as I believe it is appropriate to include this provision. I am not saying for a moment that children have to take responsibility for all their actions, because we are talking about children of a range of ages—from maybe only one or two days right through to 18.

This amendment states very clearly "to receive help, encouragement and support to facilitate the child's development into responsible adulthood". I am not sure what the Minister is trying to run away from, but I would have thought it was a fairly straightforward clause. The Minister should not screw her face up like that. This clause is not trying to insert some other meaning. It does require, perhaps, some responsibility on the part of the Minister and the department. Perhaps it requires some responsibility on the part of the department and the chief executive officer because, as I have said before, at the end of the day we want to ensure that as these young people mature into adulthood they have had help, encouragement and support to facilitate their development. When these people turn 18 they are treated as responsible adults. Whether or not they accept those responsibilities, they are adults. That is something we have to accept.

A child in care should come to expect that what is contained in this clause has to be provided. Again, whether or not they want to accept them is another matter. We all know the difficulty of getting young people to accept some of these things. I am sure that the Minister will have that same problem with other items covered in this charter. I do not deny that, but that does not mean we should not include this provision. It ought to be included. Exactly what is expected by the department and by the children themselves will be clear and up front. Children should be able to see

that they can expect help and encouragement in reaching maturity.

Ms BLIGH: I do not think there is a need to go any further into my reasons for opposing this proposal. My reasons are well documented and are on the record in relation to its appearance not only here but also in other sections of the Bill.

I draw the attention of the Chamber to the fact that the transition from care to adulthood is one that is very difficult for all of the children in our care. It is something that I think has been long neglected by the department in the past, due to a lack of resources. I inform the Chamber that one of the first things I did on coming to the Ministry was to seek priority in the Budget for an allocation of half a million dollars for a specific transition-from-care service. It was the first of its kind in Queensland and it is in the process of being implemented.

The file of every child aged between 15 and 17 in our care is currently being audited and plans are now being put in place to ensure that every child who leaves our care from now on will have an exit plan. I hope any concerns the member for Indooroopilly might have about how we assist kids to exit our care are allayed by that information.

Mr BEANLAND: I thank the Minister for those few comments. I remain at a loss to understand why the Government is not supporting this amendment. The Minister says that the Government will look at and do these sorts of things. That is fine. Let us put it into this charter of rights. Or will it be as the Minister indicated to me previously in relation to the education issue—that for some reason, even though the Education Act requires children to go to school, some students in institutions or elsewhere do not go to school? I am at a loss to understand why that could be. Again, I think this is very straightforward. If that is going to happen in relation to the department, then surely the Government should be prepared to accept it and insert this clause to assist young people as they mature into adulthood.

Question—That Mr Beanland's amendment be agreed to—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 39—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dalglish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

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

Pair: Goss, Fenlon

Resolved in the **negative**.

Mr GRICE: Under Standing Order 115, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. A little while ago, the Premier made a ministerial statement. I did not hear all of it, so I give notice that I may have to answer it further at some other time.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! The matter raised by the member does not appear to be a matter of privilege. In any event, the matter is not a matter arising in the Committee and cannot be raised in the Committee. It should be raised in the House.

Mr GRICE: I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 2—

Ms BLIGH (4.02 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 116, the line after line 13, '(section 83(3))'—

omit, insert—

'(section 83(3A))'."

The purpose of this amendment is to correct an inaccurate reference to clause 83(3A).

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 3, as read, agreed to.

Schedule 4—

Ms BLIGH (4.03 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 132, lines 23 and 24—

omit.

"At page 132, after line 25—

insert—

' "approved foster carer" means a person who holds a certificate of approval as an approved foster carer.'

"At page 133, line 3, 'care provider'—
omit, insert—
'foster carer'."

Each of these amendments will have the effect of changing the use of the words "care provider" in Schedule 4 to "foster carer" for reasons outlined previously in the Committee's considerations.

Amendments agreed to.

Schedule 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

PRIVILEGE

Queensland Film and Television Industry

Mr GRICE (Broadwater—NPA) (4.05 p.m.): Under Standing Order 115, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. Earlier this afternoon, the Premier made a ministerial statement. I heard part of it and give notice that I may have to reply to what I will find out later about it. But I would certainly like to reply briefly to some of the things raised by the Premier.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! This does not appear to be a matter of privilege. There will be an opportunity for the member to raise this later.

Mr GRICE: I suggest that it is a matter of privilege, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am advised that the honourable member can raise this matter as a personal explanation at an appropriate time.

INTEGRATED PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

Resumed from 19 November (see p. 3469).

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (4.07 p.m.): The Integrated Planning Act was enacted in 1997 by the former Minister for Local Government and Planning, Mrs Di McCauley. She advised the House that there would be a number of consequential amendments to the original Act, and we have some of those here today. I am pleased that the Government is adhering to the timetable set for consequential amendments, and I thank the Minister for his attention to this matter.

I note that the Minister mentioned in his second-reading speech that the essential components of the Integrated Planning Act are the same as those proposed by the former Goss Government in what was known as the Planning, Environment and Development Assessment Bill, better known as the PEDABill. I note that the Minister is keen to point out the similarities of the IPA and PEDABill. Although many of the initial building blocks are the same, it would be remiss of me not to point out the essential difference between the two, that is, that the IPA was passed as legislation by the Parliament under the coalition Government, and the controversies that surrounded the PEDABill are now long forgotten and filed away.

Mr Mackenroth: That's because you made them controversies.

Mr HOBBS: That is not right. The member did not get it right. I must say that it was not a bad effort, but he did not get it right.

This legislation seeks to meet three objectives, the first being to implement the integrated development assessment system, IDAS, created under the Integrated Planning Act 1997 for the development related approval mechanism in section 40 of the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994. Secondly, it seeks to remove redundant development assessment processes from the Stock Act 1915 to clarify aspects of the intended operation of the IPA and correct minor errors in the text.

The amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act seek to remove the processes whereby local governments obtain approvals of the Department of Main Roads before approving certain subdivisions, rezonings or development of land. In summary, the intent of the amendment is to enable similar powers under the IPA. I note that in the Minister's second-reading speech the amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act have been drafted in the light of feedback received from key external stakeholders. The Explanatory Notes state that internal stakeholders consulted have indicated their agreement with the proposed amendments. I hope that all departments are supportive of these amendments, as it would be a most unfortunate situation for local governments across-the-board in Queensland if this was not the case. I hope the Minister will comment on exactly which internal stakeholders were consulted. I note that the regulations supporting this amendment are still to be resolved. I asked the Minister to detail any progression in relation to those regulations. Just as it is important to have

correct legislation, it is equally important to have correct regulations that implement the intent of the legislation.

It is no wonder that amendments were required to the Stock Act. In summary, since 1989 this is what a licensed cattle feedlot operator has had to contend with: in 1989 a licence was required under the Stock Act; in 1996 licence holders had to be re-licensed under the EPA; in 1998 the licensing provisions of the EPA were integrated with the IDAS; and in 1999 the Stock Act was amended by repealing provisions concerning the licensing of feedlots.

I have no doubt that representatives of the larger cattle feedlots are aware of the progression of the EPA and the Stock Act and have acted accordingly. Unfortunately, when cattle feedlots are mentioned the image is of large feedlots such as Bottle Tree near Chinchilla or Wyalla near Texas that cater for thousands of cattle. However, this is not a true picture of the industry. It must not be forgotten that these are not the only feedlots in Queensland. Many farmers have licences for small cattle feedlots for maybe 10 to 100 head of cattle. The fact that these licences exist adds value to the farming enterprise and allows farming diversity—something which farmers are encouraged to pursue in the current climate of depressed commodity prices.

I ask the Minister to clarify the following aspects of the Explanatory Notes and his second-reading speech. The Explanatory Notes General Outline states that the objectives of the Bill are to remove a redundant development assessment process from the Stock Act 1915. Part 3 of the Explanatory Notes refers to the amendment of the Stock Act 1915 and also refers to the omission of sections 28A to 281. Clause 17 omits sections about the licensing of cattle feedlots. These provisions were made redundant by the environmental regime in the EPA. That Act has required the re-licensing of cattle feedlot operators since July 1996.

I note that the Minister in his second-reading speech stated that the licences that will remain in place under the Stock Act will be automatically terminated upon the repeal of those provisions. If the development assessment process is redundant—which means that it is a surplus or duplicate process—why has the Minister stated that licences will be automatically terminated? Should not any existing licences be dealt with by the EPA Act and the process under that Act and not automatically terminated? What is the

Government doing with these licences that are still rightfully owned by Queenslanders?

I would appreciate the Minister dealing in his summing-up with how many licences are expected to be automatically terminated upon the repeal and what consultation his department, the Department of Primary Industries and the FeedLot Advisory Committee have had with the licence holders affected. I believe it would be irresponsible of the Government not to inform any licence holder affected. It is not appropriate that a licence holder should wake up to find out after the event that he or she no longer has a licence. I would appreciate it if the Minister would clarify these issues in his reply.

I want to refer to the IPA. The modification of a number of sections of the IPA seeks to clarify the operation of those sections and improve the efficiency of IDAS. As the Minister has already stated, these amendments are proposed to address the operating difficulties in an effort to avoid the development of major problems in the future. I am pleased that local government can have confidence that even minor difficulties will be addressed in a timely manner. Although some of these amendments are retrospective, it would appear to be the most sensible solution which will provide certainty and leave no doubt that the permits are lawful. I look forward to the Minister's comments in relation to the issues that I have raised. I had limited time to go through the proposed amendments. However, from what I can see, it appears as if they are appropriate. I suppose time will tell. I support the Bill before the House.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (4.15 p.m.): I want to say a few words in relation to the Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill because I believe it shows some commonsense. It is good to see some common ground between both sides of politics. It is rare that we see that situation in this House. It is something for which we should all strive. The people of Queensland get very sick of the lack of cooperation and agreement in politics.

Back in the 1980s I was Minister for Tourism, National Parks, Sport and the Arts. At that time I flagged a system along these lines and acted on it to some extent. That was an attempt to work out with industry and people involved in development in this State the areas of Queensland in which they were interested. For instance, we went to the Mining Council and we said, "You flag all your areas of interest. Tell us the areas that you feel may be of interest to you in the long term and we will

mark those onto areas where we have interests concerning national parks." We asked the tourist industry to tell us of areas where they were interested in establishing resorts. We asked CSR to tell us the areas where it had an interest in growing macadamias and other major plantations. Our idea was to mark out these areas and thus relieve us of some hassles which may come to light in the future.

We had developers coming along and suggesting that they would establish major undertakings which would result in tremendous development and job creation in Queensland. As a result of our flagging system we would be able to allow some fast-tracking of development. I guess one could say that the current Integrated Planning Act is aimed at doing the same sort of thing.

I believe the Minister is an eminently practical person. I have always found him to be a man of commonsense. One could go to this Minister and ask him something and he would say yes or no. One always knew where one stood with this Minister. I am pleased to see this legislation before the Parliament. We have to look hard at the legislation. Some balancing has to take place.

Today I attended with a deputation to the Minister where this very issue was discussed. I believe this legislation is a step in the right direction. It is vital that our local authorities be able to carry out their role. The Waggamba Shire Council undertook a flood plain study. The study took a long time and cost some \$2m. It is the most advanced and technically interesting study of this type that has been undertaken anywhere in Australia, if not in the world.

The Waggamba Shire Council is able to predict the course of floods. There is a map on the wall of the shire council chamber which shows where major floods have gone through the shire. As the flood moves through the shire it is possible to see what areas are inundated. All this information is on computer. If people want to put in levee banks the council is able to say, "If you do this, we believe this area will be affected." The council can say, "Yes, that will be fine" or, "No, if you do that, it will have a bad effect on other people." We have to look at these things and work in with this legislation.

As I said, I tried to introduce something in the 1980s which would make people's lives easier. In the past we had to run the gauntlet of so many different departments in order to get something done. That stopped a lot of development in Queensland. This type of thing occurred under both coalition and Labor

Governments. At last it is good to see some agreement. I support the Bill.

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) (4.20 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support for the amendments to the Integrated Planning Act. One thing that I would say to the Opposition spokesperson is that, in relation to PEDA and IPA, I have never tried to take credit one way or the other for the legislation. It was a joint effort. In the two and a half years that Di McCauley was the Minister for Local Government and Planning, I worked with her on segments of this legislation in terms of talking to her about it, giving her my views and hearing what her Government's views were. It is not a case of anyone taking credit for actually getting the legislation into the House. It is a fact that the legislation started when I was the Minister and, in terms of being introduced into the Parliament, the legislation finished whilst Di McCauley was the Minister.

I think that it is better planning for all of Queensland. The job that we, the Opposition spokesperson and I, now have is to ensure that it works. That is going to require not just these amendments but some further amendments over the next couple of years. However, everyone in Queensland will benefit if we make the legislation work and work properly.

The Opposition spokesperson raised an issue in relation to the Stock Act. Under the provisions of this legislation, no-one loses a permit. The permits stay. However, they are being shifted from the Stock Act because they have become redundant in relation to that legislation, and they are going under the Environmental Protection Act. We will be picking up the assessment under IDAS through the IPA. So that is what is happening. No-one loses out; it is just an administrative change in the way in which they are being handled, and the amendments effect that change.

The member for Cunningham raised the issue of levee banks. This week, I have met with two councils that have concerns about levee banks in their shires. I think that the major concerns are not to do with IPA but with the amendments that were made in 1993 when the Local Government Act came into being, where we took away from councils the right to make decisions without immunity from prosecution. So if a council makes a decision, legal action is able to be taken against it by individuals. That has created a problem.

Decisions on levies are now being assessed under the IPA. I think that the whole issue needs to be looked at. I gave both councils that I met with this week a commitment that, in terms of the Local Government Act and the Integrated Planning Act, I will look at how approvals are given and how they are able to operate and control levee banks within their council areas. So we will do that.

I thank members for their support. It is important that these amendments are passed today, as provisions come into place on 30 March.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.23 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, lines 7 to 13—

omit, insert—

'2.(1) Sections 4, 8, 11, 12, 13(2), 13(3), 20, 24A and 24B, and parts 3 and 5 commence on assent.

'(2) Section 9A and part 2A commence, or are taken to have commenced, on 30 March 1999.

'(3) Sections 7 and 13(1) are taken to have commenced on 19 November 1998.

'(4) Sections 3, 5 and 9 are taken to have commenced on 30 March 1998.

'(5) The remaining provisions commence on a day to be fixed by proclamation.'"

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.24 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 5, lines 9 to 16—

omit, insert—

'6.(1) Section 3.5.35(1)(a)—

omit, insert—

'(a) for development that is inconsistent with—

(i) the form or scale of development under the planning scheme, having regard to the provisions of the planning scheme about infrastructure; or

(ii) the timing for infrastructure under the planning scheme; and'.

'(2) Section 3.5.35(1)(c), 'any'—

omit.

'(3) Section 3.5.35—

insert—

'(2A) If the development mentioned in subsection (1)(a) is development for residential (including rural residential) purposes, the development is inconsistent with the timing for infrastructure under the planning scheme only if—

(a) the planning scheme includes a benchmark development sequence; and

(b) all or part of the premises is not in the first stage for development shown in the benchmark development sequence.'"

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 7 and 8, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, after line 3—

insert—

'Amendment of s 5.1.7 (Fixing a charge for an item not included in plan)

'8A.(1) Section 5.1.7(2)(b)—

omit, insert—

'(b) for a development infrastructure item—

(i) that is a part of a network for which the local government is able to levy an infrastructure charge; and

(ii) the provision of which the local government considers is a minor departure from the infrastructure charges plan; and'."

'(2) Section 5.1.7(2)(c)(i), 'a similar network' to 'plan'—

omit, insert—

'the network'."

'(3) Section 5.1.7(3), 'and amend'—

omit, insert—

'and, if necessary, amend'."

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 8A, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 6, after line 27—

insert—

'Amendment of s 6.1.35C (Applications requiring referral coordination)

'9A. Section 6.1.35C(4), '1999'—

omit, insert—

'2000'.'. "

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 9A, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 7, lines 4 to 13—

omit, insert—

'Provisions applying for State controlled roads

'6.1.54.(1) Subsections (2) to (6) apply if the local government has a transitional planning scheme for its area.

'(2) Subsection (3) applies if the chief executive is a concurrence agency for a development application in the area with a jurisdiction about State-controlled roads.

'(3) Despite sections 3.5.32(1) and 3.5.35, the chief executive may tell the assessment manager that a road condition must be attached to a development approval for the development application.

'(4) Subsections (5) and (6) apply if the chief executive is an advice agency for a development application in the area with a jurisdiction about State-controlled roads.

'(5) The chief executive may make an information request for the development application and for sections 3.3.5 to 3.3.14, the chief executive is taken to be a concurrence agency for the application.

'(6) Despite sections 3.5.32(1) and 3.5.35, the chief executive may recommend the assessment manager attach a road condition to a development approval for the development application.

'(7) Despite section 3.5.35(2A), if a planning scheme does not include a benchmark development sequence, the chief executive may, for development that is inconsistent with the timing for

infrastructure under the planning scheme—

(a) if the chief executive is a concurrence agency for a development application in the area with a jurisdiction about State-controlled roads—tell the assessment manager to impose a condition to mitigate the cost impacts of the development; or

(b) if the chief executive is an advice agency for a development application in the area with a jurisdiction about State-controlled roads—recommend the assessment manager attach a condition to mitigate the cost impacts of the development.

'(8) In this section—

"chief executive" means the chief executive administering the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994.

"road condition" means a condition that could have been imposed under the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, section 40(3) immediately before the commencement of this section.

"State-controlled road" see Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, schedule 3.¹.

¹ Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, schedule 3 (Dictionary)—

"State-controlled road" means a road or land, or part of a road or land, declared under section 23 to be a State-controlled road, and, for chapter 5, part 5, division 2, subdivision 2, see section 50.'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 7, after line 13—

insert—

'Amendment of sch 1 (Process for making or amending planning schemes)

'10A. Schedule 1, part 1, section 4—

insert—

'(2A) In subsection (1)(b)—

"infrastructure" includes the following—

(a) the extent and location of proposed infrastructure, having regard to existing infrastructure networks, their capacities and thresholds for augmentation;

(b) when infrastructure is proposed to be provided.'."

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 10A, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 9, after line 3—

insert—

'PART 2A—AMENDMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1993

'Act amended in pt 2A

'13A. This part amends the Local Government Act 1993.

'Amendment of s 938 (Regulation of levee banks etc.)

'13B. Section 938(1), 'A local government'—

omit, insert—

'Subject to section 854, a local government'.

'Omission of ch 13, pt 5, div 5

'13C. Chapter 13, part 5, division 5—

omit.'."

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 13A, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 24, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr MACKENROTH (4.25 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 11, after line 23—

insert—

'24A. Amendment of s 233 (Continuation of certain by-laws and provisions of Harbours Act)

'24A. Section 233(9), '1 July 1999'—

omit, insert—

'31 December 2000'.

24B. Amendment of s 236 (Continuation of certain provisions of Harbours Act requiring approval for certain matters)

24B. Section 236(8), '5 years after it commences'—

omit, insert—

'on 31 December 1999'.'."

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 24A, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 27, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, by leave, read a third time.

MOTOR ACCIDENT INSURANCE AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 9 March (see p. 338).

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.27 p.m.): At the outset, I indicate that the Opposition supports the Bill. From my reading of the Bill, its objectives are commendable and it deserves the support of everyone in the House.

The objectives are fairly straightforward. Firstly, it is to give an option to motorists to take out a six-monthly insurance policy rather than the standard 12-month insurance policy. These days, most consumers are getting used to the idea of having options of monthly, quarterly or six-monthly insurance bills for house or contents insurance and things such as that. I think that is a move in the appropriate direction.

Of course, it will mean some rise in the cost of an insurance policy if it is taken out for six months rather than for 12 months. However, that is consistent with other kinds of policies that consumers take out and simply reflects the fact that the insurance companies do not have the money for as long and, therefore, in an actuarial sense the cost of a six-monthly insurance policy is going to cost proportionately more than a 12-month insurance policy. That is standard practice. Today, I think that most consumers are aware of the implications of having a shorter-term policy than a year-long policy.

Secondly, the Bill makes provision for the payment of compulsory third party premium rates other than once a financial year. It is appropriate that that be allowed, and we support it.

Yesterday, I spoke to the Insurance Commissioner about a technical issue. I understand that following that discussion the Treasurer will be introducing a minor amendment to reflect some administrative arrangements and issues that will be simply smoother under a slightly revised clause 6. I am sure that the Treasurer will address that issue briefly at the Committee stage. The Insurance Commissioner appreciated the amendment that I suggested, as did the Treasurer.

The third objective is the enhancement of the independence and the credibility of the

premium-setting process, which, at times, becomes a political issue. It is appropriate that we have as transparent a process as possible. Each side of politics should be committed to making sure that motorists are aware of the potential CTP policy costs, that that is done in a regular way and that there is no political interference in the premium-setting process. Anything that enhances the credibility and the transparency of that process ought to be applauded.

The next objective is again a technical one. While we support it, in some respects we are surprised that it has taken this long to come about. It relates to unregistered cars not being able to be moved in a safe fashion. One wonders how we can go so long through this process and suddenly it comes out that this is a particular—

Mr Hamill: Sixty-three years, at least.

Dr WATSON: That is right. It suddenly comes up as a problem, yet it obviously should be resolved and we support that. The last issue is the technical amendment that we also support. We support the Bill.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (4.32 p.m.): I support the legislation. Once again it shows that we can agree on things that are commonsense. I believe that in this day and age it is important that people who have cash flow problems can pay such things as their CTP and registration on a six-monthly basis. That will be a big help to a lot of people, even though it will cost them some money. However, as the shadow Minister rightly said, everyone understands that. It is part of life today. I support that issue wholeheartedly.

If a driver is pulled over and he or she turns out to be uninsured or unregistered, everyone says, "Shock, horror, isn't that terrible?" However, there but for the grace of God go I. On a couple of occasions I have discovered that I have been driving even though my licence has expired. I had to race into the police station and say, "Quick, I've been driving around for three days with my licence overdue." I have not driven an unregistered vehicle, although I have discovered on a weekend that my vehicle was not registered. The registration was due on the Saturday and I should have paid it on the Friday but I did not. I had to get my wife to run in on the Monday and reregister that vehicle. I was only one step removed from going out on the road and being pulled over or, worse still, having an accident in an unregistered vehicle. One can be pulled over when one has forgotten purely and simply—not for any criminal reason—to register a vehicle or renew

a licence. That can happen in the best regulated families.

This amendment will allow the authorities to direct people to take an unregistered vehicle to a safe place. To me, that is eminently sensible. It is a nonsense to think that because someone is pulled up in an unregistered car, they will park that vehicle on the side of the road and leave it there to be stripped. The driver might have their young kids with them and be in some dreadful area where there are hoons running around covering the place in graffiti, and they could be scared of being attacked. Let us not forget Sharron Phillips. There has been a very real need for commonsense to prevail in this area. A permit that allows a driver to take their vehicle to a designated point and park it until it is registered is fair enough. To me, that is commonsense. All too rarely in Government, both State and Federal, do we see enough commonsense. I applaud that. It is very good to see and the Bill has my wholehearted support.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (4.35 p.m.), in reply: I thank members for participating in this debate, although it is not much of a debate as they all seem to be agreeing, patting each other on the back and saying what a good measure has been put forward in the Bill. As I indicated in my second-reading speech, the Bill provides greater flexibility for the motoring public. It enables them to pay their motor vehicle registration and compulsory third-party insurance premium by instalment. That is good. Importantly, it overcomes the sort of issue that we grappled with last year when the Insurance Commissioner's recommendations were not acted upon by the outgoing coalition Government prior to 1 July.

Dr Watson: Or the previous Government before that.

Mr HAMILL: I make a correction for the record: I can only assume that the member for Moggill is referring to 1996 when the Insurance Commissioner's report was received by the then Treasurer, the Honourable Keith De Lacy. Minister De Lacy actually sent some further inquiries to the Insurance Commissioner in relation to the recommendations, as he was entitled to do. The matter could have been properly addressed by the end of April to have effect from 1 July. That is very different from the situation where a Government deliberately and irresponsibly sat on a report, because that allowed the funds to be left in something of a parlous position, not being actuarially sound. That is not a responsible thing to do. This

legislation will safeguard against that sort of a political tactic in the future. However, I do not want to dwell on that any more. I am prepared to let bygones be bygones. I simply tell the member for Moggill: I do not forget.

At the Committee stage I will move an amendment to address a point that was raised by the member for Moggill. As the member knows, I am always very consultative on these matters and I thank him for his suggestion. That amendment should have been circulated by now, and I am sure it will find favour.

There has been a bit of comment in the media about the current round of assessment on the appropriate premium. As is often the case at this time of year, parties are very keen to pursue their particular interests. The interests that are being pursued are those of the insurers who underwrite the scheme. Many people would be surprised to know that some of the bids or what I can only describe as ambit claims are suggesting premium increases of up to \$80. Most motorists in the State would blanch at the thought of having to pay an additional \$80 on top of their existing compulsory third-party premium. I am presently discussing that with the Insurance Commissioner. I assure the House that I will abide by the very legislative amendments that I am putting in place, which will circumscribe my freedom of action in relation to progressing the compulsory third-party premium adjustment for this year.

The fund is under considerable pressure, with record levels of claims being made against it. There are some in the community who do very well out of trying to drum up claims against the insurers. I am referring to a freewheeling band of legal eagles who are swooping on the Motor Accident Insurance Commission. They would say that they are acting in the interests of their clients, that is, enabling people who have sustained injury to gain fair compensation. What they are not saying is that they are swooping on the Motor Accident Insurance Commission and are also doing very nicely out of it for themselves. The current practice of some legal practitioners of touting for business is not helping either the scheme or the motorist, who at the end of the day is having to pay the premium, which goes not only towards compensating people for injuries but also towards paying the legal fees that are being generated by those who are trying to expand their practice at the expense of the Motor Accident Insurance Commission.

I wish to express my concern at the development within the legal profession of the principle of charging clients only if they win. At

the end of the day, we know who is paying, and that is the motoring public as a whole. That is something that we need to take a very close look at in the future. On that none too happy note, I thank all members for their support of this measure. I trust that it will bring substantial benefits to the motoring public of Queensland.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP)
(Treasurer) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr HAMILL (4.42 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 5, line 14, after 'period'—

insert—

', of not less than 4 months,'."

This Bill enables some reassessment of an appropriate premium during the 12-month period. Under the current framework of the Act there can be no adjustment within the 12-month period. At times, that has resulted in severe premium adjustments occurring, for example, if the actuary did not get the figures right and the crystal ball was not producing the right outcomes.

The amendment that I am proposing safeguards against the situation of there being a reappraisal of the premium close to the time when it has to be determined again under the Act, that is, effective from 1 July. This amendment will prevent the interval between those two events being too narrow. This a fairly simple amendment. It is a matter that the Opposition spokesperson raised with the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, and I believe it will be generally supported.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

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

REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 19 November 1998 (see p. 3462).

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (4.46 p.m.): In speaking to the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I indicate that the Opposition will be supporting this legislation. There are three key aspects to this Bill and some incidental aspects. The first key aspect is the amendment to the Debits Tax Act 1990 to reflect changes brought about by the updating of the financial system to provide non-bank financial institutions with cheque-drawing facilities. The second aspect of the Bill which is significant is the amendment to the Fuel Subsidy Act 1997 to address certain administrative and operational issues following the High Court's decision to invalidate State franchise fees, and the Commonwealth's stepping in to collect such fees on behalf of the States. The third significant aspect is the amendment to the Stamp Act 1894 to account for certain avoidance opportunities that have arisen because of some court decisions in both Queensland and Victoria.

I will address very briefly those three aspects, starting with the amendment to the Debits Tax Act 1990. Most members would recall the very successful financial institutions scheme which used the Queensland legislation as template legislation to cover non-bank financial institutions. In spite of the success of that scheme, which was Australiawide but, as I said, based upon the template legislation of Queensland, it was felt that the financial system could be improved if we had a common financial system covering both bank and non-bank financial institutions. The previous Government made a submission on behalf of Queensland to the Wallis inquiry. In that submission, we supported the movement towards integrated financial requirements and an integrated regulatory system for bank and non-bank financial institutions. The shadow Treasurer at the time also indicated his support for moving towards a deregulatory framework.

It is important to know what we as a State put forward. I will summarise five points from our submission to the financial system inquiry. Firstly, we stated that financial institutions that provide similar products or services should be required to meet similar prudential guidelines. Secondly, we stated that the administration and supervision of financial institutions should be flexible and capable of readily adapting to changing financial markets. Thirdly, we stated that artificial restrictions to competition should be removed between institutions offering similar products and services and that comply with similar prudential requirements. Fourthly, we stated that institutions having a similar

corporate framework should comply with similar administrative arrangements. Fifthly, we stated that building societies and credit unions should be able to retain their nature and character as they choose and that market forces should ultimately determine their commercial survival.

Further, we stated that legislation should provide for entry to and exit from the market as well as conversion to one structure or another. We were arguing—and as I said the then shadow Treasurer and current Treasurer supported this—that in respect of these competitive markets there should be equivalence between the traditional banking institutions and the non-banking institutions, particularly building societies and credit unions, in respect of which there had been a significant rise in number. We argued that they should be put on a level playing field. Part of that level playing field, of course, involves the issue of taxation.

Customers of credit unions and building societies are now going to enjoy the added flexibility that comes from financial deregulation—particularly the ability to be able to cash cheques. This amendment is to be moved to ensure that, in order to have these new financial institutions operate on a level playing field, their cheque account facilities should also be subject to State debit taxes. That was always the intention. The financial institutions concerned always understood that that was going to be the recommendation; that was going to be the outcome of a deregulated system and of providing the building societies and the credit unions with the opportunity for expanding their range of services. So the expansion of the range of services came with the acceptance that the debits tax would be applied to those institutions. This Bill before the House completes that process.

The second aspect which, as I said, was important was the fuel tax subsidy amendments. I must admit that I am still amazed when I think about the High Court decision in this area. I am amazed, of course, that the High Court did not have the wit to read the term "excise duties" in the Constitution narrowly, rather than putting the States and the Commonwealth through I think a fairly unnecessary, cumbersome legislative process. I am particularly amazed about that for a couple of reasons. First of all, we all know that, because of international competition, excise duties which were mainly of an import variety were being phased out between countries. The real situation is that the Commonwealth was getting out of these kinds of things.

Why it was not possible for the High Court to read the concept of excise duties narrowly and leave the States in exactly the same situation as they were prior to its decision I think is amazing, particularly when one sees other decisions by the High Court in which it can find non-existent rights in terms of rights actually written in the Constitution, but imply rights to resolve some defamation cases. It is unfortunate, but the result was that a more complicated taxing arrangement has come about. It has not changed one iota the amount of tax which is levied nor necessarily who is bearing the tax, but it has increased the complexity of the tax collection process and has particularly increased the complexity of reimbursing the States for the taxes they were previously collecting.

The other unfortunate thing about it—and I am sure the Treasurer agrees with this statement—is that the result, of course, was an exacerbation of the vertical fiscal imbalance problem.

Mr Hamill: An even greater imbalance.

Dr WATSON: An even greater imbalance. The rise of vertical fiscal imbalance has now a long history. It was started principally in the late twenties with some changes to the Constitution with respect to the Loans Council. It was really exacerbated by the Acts that were passed by the Commonwealth Parliament during the Second World War. Under the war powers provision of the Constitution, four tax Acts were passed that essentially removed the State's ability to apply income taxes at that time and transferred it to the Federal Government. But most importantly, of course, it also transferred all the public servants, which turned out to be the killer in the longer term, from the State Public Service to the Federal Public Service.

Even though each of these four Acts were declared sequentially unconstitutional—the last one in 1949—the High Court would not force the now Commonwealth public servants back to the States. It said, "While the States can get back into income tax, you have to re-establish all of all your Public Service to get back into it." At that stage a deal was done between the States and the Commonwealth to have a bit of a tax sharing arrangement. Victoria tried to overcome that. I think that happened back in the early eighties or late seventies.

Mr Hamill: There was also an attempt in about the mid fifties.

Dr WATSON: Yes, they did. They did something in about the early fifties. I think it was about 1954—the member is right about

that—and then, of course, back in the eighties. That is right. That reminded me of the fact that that was a previous attempt. Because of the cost of actually establishing the Public Service again in Victoria and I guess the argy-bargy between the States and the Commonwealth, the States were further compensated at that time.

Mr Hamill: The High Court ruled that the Commonwealth tax was the first charge.

Dr WATSON: It did.

Mr Hamill: That's what really killed it.

Dr WATSON: It was the first charge, but the States could have at that stage imposed something.

The issue, of course, was that that increased the vertical fiscal imbalance, and the recent High Court decision with respect to franchise fees just simply added to that yet again. I think that was pretty unfortunate, particularly, as I said, with respect to the fuel excise and other franchise duties. It clearly came at a time when the Commonwealth was getting out of those types of things. It has not had any effect in terms of the type of taxes applied. All it has done is complicated the administrative mechanisms for getting the tax from those who are taxed to the States. At any rate, there is nothing we can do about that. It is worthy from time to time to remind people of the effect of some of these High Court decisions in a practical kind of way and the impact they have on the States and Governments of all political persuasions.

The third aspect of the Bill relates to changes which have to be made to the Stamp Act following some decisions that were made in both the Queensland and Victorian Supreme Courts. I have to thank Melissa Daly from the OSR for the briefing in the Treasurer's office. It is not that I did not follow some of the things, but I was surprised by the extent of the impact of a couple of the court decisions. I was particularly surprised about the——

Mr Purcell: David!

Dr WATSON: I have 48 minutes to go. I note that the member for Bulimba can actually wave his hands.

Mr Braddy: And chew gum at the same time.

Dr WATSON: Yes.

I was surprised by the extent of the buy-back that was occurring. I asked Melissa to give me some advice on the extent of that in public companies. While I can understand the buy-backs occurring in private companies and closely held companies, I was surprised that it

was actually having a significant impact in terms of broadly dispersed, widely held public companies. She told me that one of them had been the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. Having said that, I notice that earlier in the week the same issue was in the business pages of the Courier-Mail. I guess if I had paid more attention to the impact on stamp duty when the issue first came up, I would have understood perhaps—

Mr Hamill interjected.

Dr WATSON: No. It is just that when we read these things we forget about the possible impact in relation to things such as the Stamp Act. Having received advice from Melissa Daly and the office of the Treasurer, I can now understand the potential future impact.

I did company law when the idea of public companies buying back their shares was not only unusual but also illegal. When I went to the United States, I found that it was actually a common phenomenon and I had to relearn the Corporations Law and how it applied there. Obviously, with changing financial markets and so on it is becoming more widespread here. The Opposition understands the necessity for each of the changes. We support those changes and we commend the Bill to the House.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (5 p.m.): The amendments contained in the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 1998 are largely administrative and affect three Acts—the Debits Tax Act 1990, the Fuel Subsidy Act 1997 and the Stamp Act 1894. The changes to the Debits Tax Act 1990 are in response to the Wallis report. This report emerged from the Commonwealth Government's financial system inquiry aimed at improving the performance of the financial system through greater competition.

The report recommended that the Commonwealth Government amend the Cheques and Payments Orders Act 1986 to allow building societies and credit unions to issue their own cheques from 1 December 1998. As a consequence, amendments are necessary to Queensland's Debits Tax Act 1990 to place all financial institutions on an equal footing by ensuring that cheques issued by non-bank financial institutions are also liable for debits tax from the date that the Commonwealth amendments have effect. Non-bank financial institutions have been advised of these amendments and are aware of their liabilities in relation to debits tax changes.

A number of amendments are also being made to the Fuel Subsidy Act 1997 to give

retrospective effect to existing administrative arrangements which ensure the effective operation of the subsidy scheme. The State Government, in response to the 1997 High Court decision, introduced the fuel subsidy scheme. That decision invalidated State licensing fees. The Fuel Subsidy Act provides for the payment of subsidies equivalent to the fuel surcharge levied by the Commonwealth. The changes outlined in this Bill reduce red tape and minimise costs for fuel consumers and the Office of State Revenue, which administers the scheme.

These amendments ensure that any person who sells fuel, other than under a net sale, is required to extend the implied terms of trade to the buyer. By being entitled to defer the payment of the Commonwealth fuel surcharge component to their suppliers, distributors of fuel will not be financially disadvantaged by the scheme. The amendments also extend the operation of the off-road diesel consumers scheme to allow retail quantities of diesel to be used for on-road purposes in limited circumstances. This will particularly assist primary producers who use small quantities of diesel in their on-road vehicles by reducing administrative obligations.

The third Act to be amended by this Bill is the Stamp Act of 1894. The amendments to this Act prevent avoidance of stamp duty on the issue of unit trusts, following a recent Queensland Court of Appeal decision in *Thakral Fidelity Pty Ltd v. Commissioner of Stamp Duties*; prevent avoidance of conveyance duty in commercial subsale situations, following a recent Queensland Court of Appeal decision in *Barob Pty Ltd v. Commissioner of Stamp Duties*; ensure that share buybacks continue to attract stamp duty, as was the case prior to a Victorian Court of Appeal decision in *Coles Myer Ltd v. Commissioner of State Revenue (Victoria)*; and ensure that duty is not payable on the transfer of Suncorp-Metway Exchanging Instalment Notes Series 2. That public offer document referred to the intention to provide the exemption.

The amendments outlined make a number of important changes to Queensland's revenue legislation to address particular anomalies that have arisen. Taxation is a complex policy area. It is a policy area that affects all of our lives, both economically and socially. It is crucial, therefore, that Governments are responsible when they make changes to the taxation regime, because the consequences can be significant. This truth is particularly pertinent when discussing the Howard Government's new 10% tax on

everything—the GST. Members of this House are well aware that our Treasurer has been locked in battle with the Commonwealth over the implications for Queensland and Queensland industry of the implementation of a GST. If the Opposition in this State had any intestinal fortitude, it would fight this tax.

Dr WATSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. With all due respect, the GST is not relevant to this Bill.

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

Mr BRISKEY: As the lowest taxed State in Australia, Queensland is in a unique position. Unfortunately, it now seems that we will be penalised for that. Under the Federal Government's tax reform proposal, all GST revenue will be distributed to the States—

Dr WATSON: With all due respect—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Is this a point of order or a statement?

Dr WATSON: It is a point of order. I ask the member to state which section of the Bill refers to the GST.

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

Mr BRISKEY: I will be brief because I know that this is embarrassing for the Opposition. The Opposition has not fought its Federal colleagues in relation to the rip-off of \$465m that Queensland will suffer because of the introduction of the GST. Those opposite know that Queensland is the lowest taxed State in Australia and they will not do a thing to fight their Federal colleagues and stand up for Queensland. It is about time that they did.

As I said, under the Federal Government's tax reform proposal, all GST revenue will be distributed to the States. In return, the States will abolish numerous State taxes such as FID, bed taxes, debit taxes and stamp duties on commercial transactions. The bottom line for the State as a whole is that, if the current proposals are adopted, we will be short-changed by \$465m and indirect taxes in this State will rise by 25%. Because of that new GST on everything, indirect taxes per capita will fall by 11% in New South Wales. This is because Queensland, as the low tax State, is subsidising the removal of taxes such as financial institutions duty and bed taxes in other States—taxes we do not levy.

Under the Howard Government's new tax on everything, money raised by the GST in Queensland will not stay in Queensland. It will flow to New South Wales and Victoria to fund the removal of taxes in those States. In other

words, we get high taxes and zero benefits. This situation is not an equitable outcome and the Treasurer has made Queensland's position clear. The Beattie Government will not sign up to the new tax deal that means Queensland faces a 25% increase in taxes per head of population. As the Treasurer told the Australian Financial Review, our taxes are going up, and we are not getting that revenue back. I support the Treasurer's strong position and all the work he is doing to ensure Queensland gets a fair deal.

I also support the Government's proposal to the Commonwealth to retain the extra \$465m and use it to cut stamp duty on business property conveyancing and boost spending on key areas such as health and education. If the Opposition in this House cared about Queensland business, it would support us in trying to keep this \$465m that will be ripped off and it would support the Queensland business community and use that \$465m to cut stamp duty on business property conveyancing.

This proposal will remove yet another tax yoke from business at all levels and create growth and flow-on jobs. Stamp duty on conveyancing of business property is worth about \$300m a year and has been identified by business leaders as one of the major hindrances to business growth in Australia. The Commonwealth Government has indicated that it wants these taxes on business phased out under its tax package, anyway. What the Treasurer is saying is that if Queensland is given a fair deal—a fair deal that this Opposition should support—we will deliver and deliver quickly. We will deliver for business and we will deliver for job seekers.

An important point to note when discussing changes to taxation legislation, and particularly the impact of the Howard Government's 10% new tax on everything, is that it further weakens the State's ability to control its own tax revenue. It leaves Queensland even more beholden to handouts from Canberra. The GST directly challenges Queensland's capacity to raise revenue through gaming. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, I have responsibility for gaming policy in this State. I am, therefore, acutely aware of the problems that the introduction of the GST represents in this policy area. The Queensland Government raises 10% of its State revenue through gambling taxes. In 1997-98, this represented \$543m. The contribution of gambling taxes to Queensland's revenue has grown 49% in the five years from 1992-93 to 1997-98. The growth rate is more dramatic on a national

scale, where all State and Territory revenue from gambling grew by 70% from \$2.2 billion to \$3.8 billion in the five years from 1992-93 to 1997-98.

Gambling taxes have become an important source of revenue for State Governments. The Commonwealth Government, however, is expecting State Governments to reduce their gambling taxes to offset the impact of a 10% GST on gambling. This would have a direct impact on State Governments' fiscal flexibility. The Queensland Government currently varies its gambling tax rates for a range of reasons, including the nature and purpose of the gaming venue. The GST will reduce the Queensland Government's ability to adjust its gambling tax rates to meet specific policy objectives. It will also impact on the level of money directed to community benefit funds. The Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund receives 8.5% of the gaming machine tax collected. If State taxes are reduced correspondingly with the introduction of the GST, then the amount allocated to the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund will be correspondingly reduced, potentially putting further demands on the State's Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The indirect impacts of a GST on the gaming industry are also significant. It is expected that administrative costs for sites will increase. Michael Hudson, the General Manager of the Queensland Hotels Association, has estimated that one person for up to two days a week would be needed for record-keeping duties. This will obviously vary from site to site, but the additional costs may be significant and this may, in turn, impact on site viability. Another important consideration for clubs and hotels is the impact of the GST on expenditure patterns of those who purchase their goods and services. To the extent that low-income groups will be adversely affected by the GST—and low-income groups are disproportionately represented as purchasers of goods and services from clubs and hotels—then the impact on clubs and hotels may be adverse. I have significant concerns about the impact of this tax on the State's economy.

Taxation is not a popular topic, but if Governments are to provide society with a level of services that Australians have come to expect, Governments must have a consistent revenue stream. But—and this is an important point—these revenue streams must also be equitable and socially responsible. The Howard Government's new 10% tax on everything is

not equitable and has a detrimental impact on Queensland. Queenslanders, however, can be confident that the Beattie Government will continue to press for an equitable outcome, and particularly the need for Queensland to be compensated for the introduction of this new tax.

Unfortunately—and unfortunately for Queenslanders—the Queensland Government does not have the full support of the Opposition when it comes to fighting for Queensland's rights. On that score, members opposite are beholden to their Federal masters. As I said, it is outrageous that this Queensland Opposition will not support the Queensland Government's fight with the Federal Government, which is trying to short-change this State by \$465m. Members opposite should be out there supporting their Federal Government Queensland members in their fight against being short-changed by that amount of money.

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (5.14 p.m.), in reply: I thank both members for the vigour in which they approached the debate this afternoon. For a Bill upon which there seems to be unanimity, there seemed to be a good degree of passion in their contributions, particularly that of my Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Cleveland. I am not going to take up the time of the House for too long in this reply. I thank the member for Moggill for his support of the Bill. These measures are important. Many of them are relatively minor and of an administrative machinery nature. However, some are vital in terms of marking out and preserving the State's revenue base. There is one point that I think brings the contributions of both the member for Moggill and the member for Cleveland together, that is, the importance of the State's revenue base and the very important point of vertical fiscal imbalance.

I know that the member for Moggill was endeavouring to pour scorn upon my Parliamentary Secretary when he quite legitimately raised his concerns as to the impact of the goods and services tax in Queensland. This is very, very relevant to this Bill because, with the advent of the goods and services tax, the bank account debits tax is supposed to be no more. With the goods and services tax, the administrative arrangements with the Fuel Subsidy Act would become no more. With the goods and services tax, large slices of the Stamp Act are to become no more. However, I cannot say the same for land tax and payroll tax.

One thing that is very certain, though, is that the goods and services tax does nothing to address the issue of vertical fiscal imbalance. Despite all the coalition propaganda, the goods and services tax is a Federal tax which will be set by the Federal Government. There is no opportunity for any variation across the States and Territories. That is a shame. Regardless of what we feel about the goods and services tax, some of the autonomy that we have is being further removed, and that is a matter for concern. I think that even the member for Moggill would concede that point. I just wish that the member for Moggill would stand up, like the Federal member for Fairfax, and give a bit of support to this Government as we argue the case for Queensland with respect to the distribution of any proposed goods and services tax revenue.

Repeatedly, the member for Moggill was saying something like, "You didn't win the October election. You didn't win the October election." The issue here is that if the Federal Government is going to say that we are going to have a goods and services tax, then all we ask is that the formula that is to be used for the distribution of those funds is used right from day one. That is not too much to ask for. All we are asking for is our fair share under the very formula which Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer have outlined. So it is not a case here of whether we like the GST or whether we loathe the GST. This is about equity and fairness. We are not asking for any more than what should be our legitimate share under the mechanism. And we are not going to be blackmailed by the member for Moggill, either.

We have made our opposition to the GST abundantly clear in every forum. We are not going to be hypocrites. We are not going to be blackmailed into accepting the GST. But we accept that, if there is to be a GST, and if the Federal Government gave us our fair share and guaranteed that, then at the end of the day we would not have much that we could argue about. That is the situation. We made it clear that we would sign on to a distribution arrangement if the distribution arrangement was fair. The New South Wales Government has not endorsed a GST. In fact, the New South Wales Government added its name in opposition to the GST. The argument here is one about the fairness and equity of the distribution arrangements.

There has been general support for the Bill. I am pleased about that. These important measures need to be enacted.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 49, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

EXPLOSIVES BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 10 November 1998 (see p. 2847).

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (5.21 p.m.): It feels like this Bill has had more false starts than the Olympic track team. This Bill was introduced in November last year. However, it has finally been brought on for debate, although we will not get far this afternoon. The Opposition will not be opposing this Bill. As the Minister stated in his second-reading speech, the review of this Bill commenced in 1993 by the then Labor Government and continued through the period of the coalition Government in 1996-98, with the legislation being introduced eventually in November 1998. The Bill replaces the existing Explosives Act 1952 and the amendments moved in the interim period until the introduction of this Explosives Bill 1998. It is very important to have legislation that covers all aspects of explosives to ensure the safety of the total community, to have in place deterrents against undesirable elements in the community purchasing that material, and to enable the police to search persons and vehicles for illegal carriage of explosive material. That is very important, especially in relation to the carriage of explosive material from interstate.

We have witnessed many horrific happenings here in Australia and elsewhere in the world from certain elements who have been able to access dangerous explosives to commit felonies, including devastating destruction and even murder. The Internet poses another problem, because some sites demonstrate and promote how to make homemade bombs. The increased use of letter and parcel bombs by individuals with a grudge against the system puts people at risk of permanent injury and also puts their lives at risk.

Explosives include a wide range of materials, including blasting explosives, which is the bulk of the 250,000 tonne of explosives

used per annum. That is a huge amount of explosives. Blasting explosives are extensively used by mining companies and the construction industry, who, at all times, have very strict regulations placed on the use of those materials whether it be by employees of a company or by contractors. I have witnessed many times blasting at mines, both open-cut and underground. I have nothing but praise for the safety and security measures taken at all times. I had the pleasure of opening the ICI plant near the Blair Athol mine. In common with the people who were with me, I was very impressed with the safety regulations that have to be observed. They are followed to the letter.

The Bill also puts an emphasis on other materials, including fireworks, ammunition, reloading powders, flares and even toys and party novelties with explosive devices. It is a shame that we have to legislate to regulate the selling of certain toys such as party novelties. I know that society has changed considerably over the past couple of decades. People appear to have different values towards the use of any sort of explosive material. I mentioned earlier that the Internet promotes homemade bombs. People can access the ingredients for those bombs, so we have to regulate the sale of those items, which is a shame. I well remember—as I am sure other older members would remember—the great Guy Fawkes nights we used to have. I cannot recollect the serious injuries over many years.

Mr Purcell: What sort of injuries?

Mr MITCHELL: The member for Bulimba would remember those nights. We would prepare the wood for at least a couple of weeks and stock up on our big fireworks.

Mr Purcell: We used to drag rubbish from neighbour's yards into our own.

Mr MITCHELL: That is right. It helped the environment by getting rid of a lot of rubbish. We would use Dad's old oily clothes to make the Guy Fawkes. We remember it well. We would have a little bit of practice. We would throw a few rows of tom thumbs here and there for a warm up. We were always very safe in the way we handled fireworks in those days. Things have changed and other elements have to be taken into account in legislation. Those were great times. This legislation is all about protecting society from those people who cannot handle that type of material and from the loonies who are running around Queensland, Australia and the rest of the world. However, I believe the great percentage

of people are very responsible in the use of fireworks, on which restrictions are placed, and in most cases in the use of ammunition and reloading powders. Mining and construction companies are very well aware of the dangers and stick to the regulations very well.

Considering that the review took some five and a half years, I found it surprising that there were no submissions calling for any major changes to the current format and control mechanisms in the existing explosives legislation. Perhaps in his reply the Minister can respond to the concerns of a couple of the retailers to whom I spoke. They hoped that this Bill would not generate more paperwork. I assured them that it would not and that this Bill was just bringing everything together. From my reading of the Bill, I do not think it will create more paperwork. That was their main concern in relation to the products that they sell. They also hoped that no more licensing fees would be introduced in this Bill. I believe that that is not the intent of this Bill; its aim is to bring everything together. I gave those retailers a commitment in that regard and explained that they were covered by the firearms and weapons legislation. They seemed pretty happy with that, although they did not get a chance to read a lot of the material. They were happy with the consultation. Most of the retailers received information and were involved in the consultation process in relation to most aspects of explosives, which was very well received.

I am pleased with the current situation in relation to carrying explosives. I have had a couple of people say to me that they hope that there is no change to the controls on the transporting of petrol. I do not believe that is the case. Those are the only queries that I have received in relation to transporting explosives. I have not had much to do with the transport of heavy explosives.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee has raised some concerns in relation to the drafting of the legislation. I believe the Minister has answered most of the queries and is willing to undertake certain amendments to the Bill to conform with certain requests of the committee. It is good that we can work it out between us so we get it right as we go along. I agree with the Minister in relation to clause 135. To maintain an incentive for compliance and to provide a fair deterrent factor, we should not consider watering down the penalty points. People have to understand that we are dealing with very dangerous material in this legislation. We need to have legislation that will cover all aspects. I believe the Minister has

answered those issues in his response to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee.

I have had a few inquiries in relation to clause 135. Is it generally the case that the Governor in Council can make regulations without the matter coming back to the Parliament? Some retailers were somewhat concerned about that matter. Some people are concerned that if a misdemeanour occurs in one situation it might reflect on people maintaining the regulations without consultation with regard to any changes. People have asked whether clause 135(2)(f) covers all explosives.

Time expired.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mitchell, adjourned.

RAINWATER TANKS

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND)
(5.30 p.m.): I move—

"That this House calls on the State Government to investigate and, if possible, make provision in this year's budget for a rainwater tank rebate program to encourage water conservation."

Rainwater tanks could solve one of the most difficult problems we have in this State today, and that is providing water to our ever-increasing population. We live in one of the driest continents in the world and water is our most precious commodity. Every day we are washing, flushing and pouring millions of litres of water away. That is right, millions of litres of water go literally down the drain and out to sea—wasted.

I have been informed that the average Queenslander uses about 635 litres of water every day. As our population increases so too does our need for water. In order to keep up with this demand we are forced to construct new dams, and these in turn have a devastating effect on our environment and on the people living downstream.

If we have learnt anything over the years it is that we must preserve and protect what we have. To counteract the population growth and the consequent strain it is putting on our water supply systems we must look to alternatives. This is particularly the case in my own electorate of Nicklin, one of the fastest growing areas in the State.

Demand for water is high and water tanks could alleviate that demand. If every household had its own water tank I believe we would not need to build more dams. What we

need to do is to encourage people to install water tanks and I believe that the way to do this is via the hip-pocket nerve. We must offer people an incentive to install a tank—something that would make it worthwhile—and we could incorporate this with an advertising campaign pointing out the advantages of having a tank.

Rainwater tanks have numerous benefits: they reduce water rates paid to local authorities; they reduce the need for new dams and storage systems; they alleviate and reduce flood damage by reducing the volume of water entering stormwater systems in urban areas; they provide extra water for firefighting; and they decrease a householder's dependence on town water.

In the past, the greatest obstacle to rainwater tanks was one of health and water quality. The argument was that lead and other pollutants from cars and industry settled on the roofs of buildings with tanks and contaminated the water making it unsafe for human consumption. Experts say that generally the quality of tank water is much less than that of reticulated town water.

Tank water quality can be affected by many things including: atmospheric pollution, animal droppings, roofing materials and paints, trapped insects and small animals, decaying leaves, dust and pollution on roofs and installation procedures. The advice is that people drinking tank water usually develop a form of immunity because the various micro floras and fauna counteract the bacteria in the water. But people, particularly those with low immunity, visiting homes using tank water may have problems.

There are, however, effective methods of improving the quality of tank water, including water that is contaminated with harmful bacteria. This can be done by using a range of methods including disinfecting with chlorine. I have been informed that, once done, routine chlorination is generally unnecessary. But a sure way of knowing that disinfection has been achieved and the necessary free residual chlorine level is present is by testing the water with a suitable chlorine test kit. I have been informed that the same test kits used to test chlorine levels in swimming pools are acceptable.

Previously, the only barriers to debris and pollutants entering rainwater tanks were a simple fly screen mesh and perhaps a drop of kerosene. Today, there is a range of appliances on the market, including water diverters, tank sack filters and many others that are able to significantly reduce the level of

debris and pollutants entering the tanks. I have here today an example of a water diverter and a tank filter, which is the piece that is hanging down. I have been informed that Mr Speaker has agreed to set up a display in the grounds so that interested members can examine the appliance and the sack filter if they so desire.

I have been further informed that the diverter plays a part in preventing quickly dissolved chemicals which have collected on the roof from getting into the tank. The filter, which is like a synthetic bag, fits over the inlet of the tank and prevents any debris from entering the tank. In relation to the demonstrated sack filter, I am informed that it has filtered approximately 200,000 litres of water. I make this available for members to look at. Members can see that there is some debris inside and they can appreciate how effective the filter is. I have been informed that these filters will remove particles down to 10 microns in size: in other words, that is smaller than what the human eye can see.

We talk about pollutants in our rainwater tanks. Last year, Sydney suffered one of the worst water pollution episodes in this country's history. Many hundreds of residents were infected when the city's water supply became polluted. Since then, there has been a huge rise in sales of bottled water and many Sydney residents have opted for a return to water tanks. In South Australia, a recent survey found that more than 42% of all households used rainwater for drinking. Even in the metropolitan areas the rate was 25.6%.

In Australia generally, 12.6% of all households use rainwater tanks. Naturally, the figure is higher in country and farming areas. My own Shire of Maroochy has led the way over the past years by encouraging its ratepayers to install water tanks by offering rebate incentives which range from \$20 to a maximum \$250 for each tank. There is another side to the argument. When Maroochy Shire introduced water meters, water consumption dived rapidly. This can be attributed to the hip-pocket nerve.

This backs my argument that the way to encourage water conservation through the provision of tanks is to give a cash incentive. Make it easy for people. There will always be some people who, for whatever reasons, do not want to use tank water for drinking or cooking. They could still use tank water for other household purposes such as washing, flushing and for the garden. All I am asking is that the Government investigate the advantages of offering an incentive to people

to install rainwater tanks and, if possible, make provision in this year's Budget for a rainwater tank rebate program.

We, as responsible leaders, should be encouraging people to install water tanks because it is a win-win scenario for both the State and for the people who live in it. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr ROBERTSON (Sunnybank—ALP) (5.37 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I second the motion moved by the member for Nicklin and congratulate him on bringing to this Parliament an idea which has attracted the support of members from all sides of politics. It is a measure of the member for Nicklin's commitment to the environment that he uses this place to bring members of all parties together to discuss an idea which will, in my view, be of enormous benefit to Queenslanders, no matter where they live.

Pollsters will tell us that the most important issues in the minds of voters are crime, health and education. They claim that the environment is of declining relevance among large sections of the community. As a result, politicians need to concentrate on those issues in order to reflect the wishes of the people. It is a view that I have always treated with a healthy cynicism and suspicion because it suggests that politicians, as representatives of the community, have no role to play in leading important debates. It suggests that we do not have a proactive role to play in shaping community opinion through education on vital issues affecting our city or town, our State or our nation. It suggests that a politician's role is simply to respond to so-called hot button issues.

No-one can disagree that the environment is one of the most important issues facing our country today. In the late 1980s and early 1990s it rated as one of the top three issues in the community, but pollsters tell us that that is no longer the case. As a result, the substantial gains in educating the community and enlisting their support around slogans such as "think global, act local" have, in my opinion, stalled.

In order to maintain that support and involvement, we need to provide the community with the tools to maintain their level of consciousness and activity on environmental issues. Participation by the community in household recycling continues at high levels, driven largely by young people who want to do something about protecting their local environment and the fact that as a result of local government recycling schemes it

is convenient for people to maintain their participation.

Similarly, the use of solar power in hot water systems continues to rise steadily and the level of interest in innovations such as energy efficient housing design suggests that the community's thirst for new ideas to contribute to environmental sustainability has not abated; it has not been a passing fad. As representatives of the community, we have a responsibility to nurture that enthusiasm. Tonight's motion moved by the member for Nicklin is a positive initiative to achieve such an outcome.

Of course, for this initiative to be put into effect, a number of issues have to be addressed. These include a range of important health-related matters, particularly in relation to the quality of rainwater in urban areas. However, as the member for Nicklin has demonstrated so capably tonight, we are extremely innovative people. Those issues have been and will continue to be addressed by our own resourcefulness. Currently, there are numerous products on the market and research and product development continues to ensure that we can offer incentives for the community to participate in water conservation programs in both urban and rural environments without threatening health standards.

One matter about which I would take a minor issue with the member for Nicklin is his assurances about the use of chlorine. In fact, some constituents in my own electorate of Sunnybank have developed technology whereby the use of chlorine to purify water is no longer necessary. That technology has wide application, particularly in community swimming pools. Through this affordable technology, chlorine is no longer needed to be used to purify the water in pools. Of course, that technology has myriad other applications, even in the area of purification of rainwater.

There are many less obvious benefits to schemes such as those suggested in the motion moved by the member for Nicklin. The obvious benefits are environmental, but there are also economic benefits. Too often, innovative technologies fail in Australia because of the relatively small size of the domestic market. Yet Australians have an enviable record in the development of new technologies, particularly in the area of environmental management and protection. By increasing the domestic market share of products which have an environmental benefit, companies involved in the development and sale of such products achieve production

levels which allow them to attain the critical mass necessary to allow the exploration of export opportunities at internationally competitive prices. There are sufficient export opportunities in environmental technology and services on Queensland's doorstep, and the challenges faced by many of our neighbouring countries in providing water to their populations are immense. I support the motion.

Time expired.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.42 p.m.): I think that it goes without saying to all honourable members of this Parliament that water is our most valuable commodity. It is also a commodity that we tend to misuse, overuse and take for granted. The coalition will be supporting the motion moved by the honourable member for Nicklin. We believe that it certainly has merits. I would like to outline some of those merits and some of the other things that we could do to ensure that we conserve our water and use our water better.

However, I would like to comment on a couple of issues that were raised by the member for Nicklin. He indicated quite clearly and concisely that if we put in place a rainwater tank rebate scheme, that would mean that we would not have to build any more dams. Although I believe that that scheme would certainly have an impact on our need to build dams, I do not believe that it would do away with the necessity to build a dam from time to time. As I indicated previously, I think that it would at least reduce the frequency at which we would have to respond to our increasing water use.

It is fair to say that a lot of the water that is used is used on our gardens, is used to wash our cars and is used for other domestic purposes, which is not necessarily the best way to use it. Nevertheless, by encouraging households around Queensland to make more use of rainwater—a commodity which falls out of the sky, runs off our roofs and down the gutter into the streams and rivers—we could certainly do a lot for our environment.

I would like to indicate that I do not necessarily agree completely with the member's comment about the major impact of dams on downstream environments. There is no doubt that any dam, any water storage which is built, has an impact in some way. That is for sure. However, I think that it is fair to say to the honourable member for Nicklin that, over the past few years we have learned how to manage those impacts. That is something that we are doing far better than we have

previously. Our environmental impact assessments and our social impact assessments that we put in place before we go ahead with the construction of new water storages make sure that we are aware of the downstream impacts and that we take that into consideration.

Many of us in this place would have grown up with a rainwater tank. At home, I have a tank that holds 15,000 gallons, which is about 60,000 or 70,000 litres of rainwater storage. That is my major water supply. I think it is probably fair to say that many people in the community would not appreciate what it is like for five people to use the same bathwater. That is something that I grew up with. Of course, being the eldest, I was always the last one to use the bath and did not necessarily get to use clean water. From time to time, it is something we still do at home. It is our way of conserving water.

I believe that something that comes easily is taken for granted. Most people turn on a tap and leave it running while they are brushing their teeth or combing their hair. Not long ago when I was the Minister for Natural Resources and I had this very important area in my portfolio, I saw some figures that indicated that in many places the average amount of water that was used for a shower was 200 litres. That is 44 gallons. That is an unbelievable amount of water.

We have to encourage people to conserve water. I think that what the member for Nicklin is doing with this motion is a step in the right direction. If people respected and understood the need to conserve water—went out and tapped on the tank every day and knew how much water they had—I think that they would probably use that commodity far more wisely. It is a practice that rural people have been engaging in for years and years.

I would like to pose a couple of questions, and they are issues to be considered by the member for Nicklin and the Government as they go ahead with this motion, which will be passed. Does the motion apply generally Queensland-wide? Is it going to apply in areas that currently rely upon a reticulated water supply or to an area that has a diminishing supply of water and is faced with the consequence of having to build new infrastructure at some time in the future? They are issues that I think that we have to consider because, no doubt, that would have major implications right across the State. The question is: do we apply it to those areas that have a reticulated water supply or do we apply

it across Queensland? That is one matter that has not been raised tonight.

There are some things that we have to do in conjunction with the motion, such as encourage the use of dual flush toilets and low-volume showers, turning off our sprinklers and not letting our chlorinated water, our treated water or any water run down into the gutter and into our rivers and streams and then out into the ocean. Waterwise programs have been absolutely fantastic. Water metres have been invaluable in discouraging people from wasting water. I also think that waste water reuse is something that we in this State have to really get into.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (5.47 p.m.): I am very pleased to contribute to this debate and support the motion moved by the honourable member for Nicklin. As the previous speaker, Mr Springborg, properly pointed out, there are a range of issues that the Government and the community need to deal with to address the issue of how well we manage the water cycle right from the way in which we harness water resources through to the way in which we use it and to the way in which we dispose of it as waste water; whether we dispose of it or whether we reuse it or make other uses of it once it has been used the first time. The whole water cycle needs to be taken into account.

The history of water resource assessment has been about how we harness surplus water in rivers, mostly through large-scale infrastructure. Increasingly, identifying locations for such infrastructure is becoming difficult both from environmental and resource access perspectives. I think that it is fair to say that the best sites for the location of large-scale infrastructure in the State have largely already been harnessed.

From the mining industry's perspective, in a global sense the easiest, most accessible minerals and resources have already been captured and each new mine must go either deeper or further into remote locations and thus becomes more expensive. Similarly, in the construction of water infrastructure, right across this dry continent we are faced with a situation in which each new element of large-scale infrastructure is becoming increasingly difficult in a practical sense and more expensive in a financial sense. That means that we have to be much smarter about how we access and use water resources.

One of the things that the proposition put up by the member for Nicklin would impact on

is reticulated water, because that is the highest cost water in the State. In terms of how strategic we need to be, it is my view that we need to start where the water is most expensive, because that is where the greatest gains of this kind of investment would be captured. One would start in those areas where the cost of delivering water is the highest. One would provide incentives for people to use the untreated water that is caught in rain tanks. Lots of people in rural areas use it for everything already, including drinking, and do so in an entirely healthy way.

Mr Springborg: It never hurt me much.

Mr WELFORD: Absolutely, and with good reason. The history of the reticulated water supply—and, indeed, the history of reticulated waste water and sewage treatment systems—has been driven by concerns for the health of the community. The original rationale for having centralised engineered systems for the management of water and waste water centred around the health implications.

It is true that one of the benefits of a centralised system is that each individual household has to take less responsibility for the health implications of how we manage our water resources. We get water from a tap and we intuitively rely on the centralised system to provide us with a healthy resource. However, people in rural areas who have rain tanks know that they have to carry some responsibility for making sure that the tanks are kept clean and that the water that they have access to is healthy enough to use. In a sense, the centralised engineered systems have made us lazy. We do not pay too much regard to the quality of the water, because we assume that Governments will look after water quality. We assume that Governments will look after us when we flush waste down the sewer and we do not turn our minds to the implications of doing that.

This proposal is a good one and the Government will certainly give some consideration to it. I congratulate the member for Nicklin for stealing my bright ideas and unveiling them far earlier than I would have preferred. Nevertheless, it is a very sensible proposition. At the very least, it gives people in areas with reticulated water supply and expensive infrastructure the option of using that water for non-drinking purposes.

Time expired.

Mr KNUTH (Burdekin—IND) (5.53 p.m.): I congratulate the member for Nicklin for his speech on the importance of rainwater tanks in our society. To be honest, I was writing a speech on the same matter—

A Government member: Of course you were!

Mr KNUTH: The member for Nicklin will vouch for that. It is coincidental that the member for Nicklin rated the issue of water tanks as highly as myself.

For the last 20 years there has been a move to discourage the use of water tanks, based on the fear that they are mosquito breeding sanctuaries that will be contaminated by pest droppings and so on. Whether there is much truth behind those fears can be debated, as the member for Nicklin pointed out. However, with the current use of filtration systems, which the member for Nicklin has on display in the House, there is absolutely no reason to discourage the use of water tanks in our fine State.

Anyone living on the land will testify to the importance of remote water storage. Many rural people who cannot access town water could not imagine living without rainwater tanks. They are a necessity to any person living in a rural community. I do not wish to be pessimistic, but with the uncertainties of the millennium bug, possible power disruptions, cyclones and earthquakes, Queenslanders should be encouraged to purchase rainwater tanks in case such emergencies transpire. In times of calamity, tanks provide an essential commodity that otherwise would not be guaranteed because of power failure or burst water pipes. In times of hostility, an enemy knows that by knocking out power and water supplies, the opposition can be brought to its knees in weeks. I am not saying that any of this is going to happen, but we must be eternally vigilant in any case.

Rainwater tanks are a commodity that we can rely on in times of need. To some members in this House that may seem trivial, as they may have had the good fortune of having town water available to them all their lives. However, many people in our fine State live in rural and cyclone-risk areas where local council or State Government water supply is not provided. It is ironic that areas such as north Queensland, which can receive up to 25,000 millimetres of rainfall a year, still rely on town water. The fact is that rainwater tanks are a good, commonsense resource and a reliable backup in the event of a disaster.

I believe it is the Government's responsibility to encourage the use of rainwater tanks within the community through possible tax incentives, subsidies and so on. Water tanks are manufactured in Australia and are made of the best quality polyurethane.

I agree with the member for Warwick on the dam issue. The member for Nicklin must appreciate that dams are also used for horticultural and agricultural irrigation and for stock. Dams are an important issue for this country and are a must for the expansion of both the horticultural and agricultural industries.

I support the motion of the member for Nicklin on water tanks. It is a good, commonsense proposal and, once again, I congratulate him for addressing such an important issue for our State.

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (5.56 p.m.): I also congratulate the member for Nicklin. I note that success often has many fathers, while failure—

A Government member interjected.

Mr MUSGROVE: No, I was not thinking of it, but I note that success has many fathers and failure is often born an orphan. I accept the member for Burdekin's assurances that he was also thinking of it.

Mr Mickel: We were thinking of it in Logan.

Mr MUSGROVE: We are always thinking of water in Logan. I reflect for a brief moment that we are having a big debate about water in Logan. I am not sure that the proposal put forward by our council is the best one. That debate stems from the fact that water is our rarest resource.

If a rebate scheme was introduced, I can see its potential applicability to our urban populations. In country Queensland and, indeed, country Australia, water tanks are fairly common.

Mr Mickel: They make them in Crestmead, too, you know.

Mr MUSGROVE: Yes, they make them in Logan City, but I do not think too many are used in Logan City. The biggest gains potentially could be made in our urban areas in terms of reducing our reliance on the centralised provision of water infrastructure.

Of course, the issue of dams is a problem. In relation to the comments made by some members, I note that the construction of dams is necessary, but if one changes the hydrology of a catchment one also changes its ecology and economy. Not all of those things change for the better. There is always a cost involved. If those costs can be averted, that would be a good thing.

This proposal is only one part of a total water conservation system that would need to be implemented throughout households and

farms in this great State. In the medium term, one could not save the quantum of water that we in this arid continent need solely through this measure, but it would certainly be a step in the right direction.

The member for Burdekin raised the issue of our national defence. He said that water tanks could be in some way part of a total defence system. I am not sure that that is the case. If it were, we would need to provide everything locally—food, water, power. We would all be living on little communes and growing our own food. I take the member's point, but I am not sure that it is really relevant.

A Government member: You'd have to bury them underground.

Mr MUSGROVE: The tanks would have to be buried underground. They could be used for other things when they were not full of water.

Mr Mickel: Pillboxes.

Mr MUSGROVE: Yes, in case the big one drops. I congratulate the member for Nicklin.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

CYPRESS INDUSTRY, WESTERN QUEENSLAND

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That this Parliament unequivocally reject any attempt to destroy the western Queensland cypress industry by the application of National Competition Policy principles; and

Further, that this House provide a guarantee to that industry that no action will be initiated or allowed which will cost timber workers their jobs, employers their businesses and rural towns their future."

The nefarious National Competition Policy has once again reared its ugly head in regional Queensland. In Saturday's Courier-Mail we learned that the State bureaucrats in this jobs, jobs, jobs Labor Government have decided that the current system of cypress forest allocation to millers in western Queensland breaches the Trade Practices Act and—surprise, surprise—does not comply with the National Competition Policy. So what?

If we want to allocate our cypress milling rights to locals in order to provide 2,000 jobs in western Queensland, we should be able to do so in spite of the National Competition Policy. We are the Parliament of the State of Queensland and we are sovereign, not

Canberra. Whoever can grasp that concept will govern this State for a very long time. Our most important function as members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland is to create jobs for our constituents, and it goes without saying that we must prevent the destruction of existing jobs by crazy economic policies such as these.

I agree with the Premier that the National Competition Policy has to be changed or, better still, thrown out. It is up to us to force Canberra to do that. Is it not strange that most of the damage resulting from National Competition Policy is inflicted on the bush, yet the Labor Party is leading the charge while the Federal coalition sits twiddling its thumbs, completely ignoring the Queensland Nationals?

Cypress is a native softwood species found in the more isolated areas of Queensland west of the Great Dividing Range. Of locally produced timber, approximately 44,000 cubic metres of sawn cypress is consumed by Queensland and the remainder is exported interstate or internationally. Cypress pine, along with native hoop pine and native hardwood, make up approximately 85% of Queensland produced and consumed sawn timber used by the Queensland construction industry. It is reported that the cypress industry generates \$30m annually, providing almost \$3m in royalties to the Queensland Government. It employs approximately 2,000 people, supports a large number of families and keeps entire towns alive and functioning. Inglewood, Millmerran, Cecil Plains, Chinchilla, Miles, Taroom, Wandoan, Injune, Rome, Augathella, Mitchell, Mungallala, Dulacca North and Surat will all suffer terribly if we do not resist this economic tyranny.

For example, the timber industry supports 231 people of a population of 400 in the township of Injune. This town will be completely destroyed if we allow the cypress industry to be shut down. Collectively, the cypress industry pumps over \$30m into the economies of these towns each year. We will be getting only a lousy \$40m from Canberra this year for selling out the people of Queensland to the National Competition Policy. We will lose \$30m of that straightaway if we do not protect the cypress industry. Any benefit the Government receives in the form of higher royalties would be more than lost in supporting the 2,000 newly unemployed people and their families.

It should be obvious to all that no public benefit test is required in this instance. For the sake of 2,000 jobs, maintaining the status quo

is not only the best option but the only option. If we fail to protect this industry, property values will plummet, people will not be able to sell their houses or businesses, investment will dry up and credit will be harder to obtain. Shops will close and depopulation will occur in these already depressed western towns.

Although I was encouraged by the Premier's comments, I was disappointed to hear him trying to deflect the blame onto the Opposition for not making the Federal coalition change the National Competition Policy. It is the Premier's responsibility and duty, not the Opposition's, to defy Canberra when the circumstances warrant it, as they do now. It is the Premier who formed the Government, not the Opposition, and it is the Premier who must stick up for what is best for Queenslanders.

We must ask ourselves: why are we here? Is it to provide jobs, jobs, jobs for rural Queenslanders, or is it to satisfy some crackpot economic theory from Canberra? Do we want free trade or fair trade? We need to resist the Federal Government when it is wrong. The answer and the course of action we must pursue is obvious. On Tuesday the Premier announced very proudly that several new film industry deals in Queensland would generate about another 2,000 jobs. Whether these are actually new deals or not has been the subject of considerable debate this morning in the House. That is good, because those jobs will almost compensate for the 2,000 jobs that would be lost in western Queensland if the Government caves in to the economic gurus and reforms the cypress industry.

Unfortunately, the lost jobs in the timber industry are much more substantive than the maybe jobs in a fickle industry such as the film industry. We must stop the destruction of our primary and secondary industries. We must stop blindly following nutty theories when the evidence clearly shows that they are not working. Few people would not concede that the National Competition Policy is not working very well. What State, or country for that matter, has ever become wealthy from tourism or hospitality at the expense of its primary and manufacturing industries? Historically, primary industries have been the great wealth building industries and providers of secure employment in this country. They continue to be in decline and in their place are emerging part-time, low-skill, dead-end jobs on which it is not possible to raise a family or build a home.

The decline in our industrial and manufacturing bases has been caused by policies and decisions that have emanated

from Canberra. It has created the economic climate that causes social and personal tragedy and we have to clean up the mess. The Federal Government has buried us on the level playing field and we have to pick up the pieces. This is all the more reason why the Queensland Parliament must transcend party politics and fight together for the people of Queensland.

The western Queensland timber workers, and in fact Queensland families in all rural electorates, are depending on us to protect their way of life. They are depending on us to force the Federal Government to cease the vicious and ongoing assault on their industries, jobs and lifestyles. We already see the future of the native hardwood industry under severe threat due to the conservationists' hijacking of the regional forest agreements. We cannot afford to allow yet another timber industry to be destroyed by senseless economic rationalist policies such as the National Competition Policy.

Naturally, at the moment members representing rural electorates such as my electorate of Lockyer are constantly fielding calls from extremely concerned constituents who genuinely fear for their futures in the timber industry. Why should the jobs of our timber workers or any other jobs be sacrificed on the altar of free trade?

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (6.08 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I second the motion of the member for Lockyer. Similar to our approach to the GST, One Nation will be there with jackboots on when we get a chance to kick National Competition Policy to death, and we will do so at every available opportunity.

Over the past few decades the Queensland cypress harvest has been extremely stable, but is this stability about to change? In a report produced by the Department of Primary Industries in 1998 titled the Queensland Forest Industry, the effect of National Competition Policy is discussed. It states—

"The National Competition Principles Agreement between the Commonwealth and State governments requires all legislation containing restrictions on competition to be reviewed and only those restrictions found to be in the public interest retained. An audit of Queensland legislation found that the Forestry Act 1959 contains certain restrictive provisions. These are currently being assessed by DPI's Policy and Legal

Services Unit using a public benefit test process."

The obvious result of these reviews is the following suggestion, as reported in a Courier-Mail article on Saturday, 20 March, which stated—

"State departments, including Primary Industries, Environment and Treasury have contended that the current system of cypress forest allocations to millers in western Queensland is in breach of the Trade Practice Act and does not comply with National Competition Policy."

State departments are surely not established to send an industry broke by destroying livelihoods in the name of economic theory—economic theory whose own initial creator later admitted was destructive to Australian industry, an economic theory which has no substance or support in reality. Every industry that National Competition Policy touches ends up the same way. The small players are destroyed through an inability to compete, the large players take over, an oligopoly forms and unofficial collusion sees prices rise to a level that was never seen before the process began.

Who benefits? Certainly not the public; not the consumer; not the small operator, their families or their townships; and not the Government! The only beneficiaries are large businesses—bigger profits and less competition. We all know that big business pays less in taxes than small business and the PAYE taxpayer in the overall scheme of things, so the Government and the average citizen lose out yet again—increased unemployment, less contributors to tax revenue, increased welfare payments and, inevitably, higher prices.

The miraculous economic theory, National Competition Policy, does exactly what it is supposed to prevent from happening. It decreases competition; it encourages oligopolies and monopolies; it increases prices; it benefits large corporations that can achieve economies of scale and, like all economic theories, it clearly fails to take into account one very important factor—the people.

The cypress industry in Queensland is only one example of the damage which National Competition Policy is capable of, but this industry can be saved. Not only is it necessary for this Government and, indeed, this Parliament to ensure that this industry remains as it is and that these workers, families and communities are protected, it is also our job to put an end to the effects of National Competition Policy in our State. The

Premier quite clearly gave his assurances yesterday in this House that his Government is committed to the cypress pine industry. He acknowledged that it is the lifeblood of many Queensland regional towns. He promised that neither he nor his Government would ever put economic rationalism ahead of jobs.

Now it is time for the Premier to stand firm behind his word and to support this motion—not to water it down with amendments, but to support it in its entirety and to further act to reject Queensland's role in National Competition Policy. This motion is the perfect opportunity for the Premier to prove to the people of Queensland that he indeed actually runs this State. This Parliament unanimously supported the rejection of National Competition Policy in November last year and the Premier took this message to Canberra. Let us again unanimously support the rejection of National Competition Policy. Two thousand employees of this industry, their families and their communities deserve nothing less. I urge all members to support this motion.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP)
(Minister for Primary Industries) (6.13 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'Parliament' and insert—

'Endorses the State Government's commitment to deliver certainty and security to the Queensland cypress pine industry and further endorses the Government's commitment to jobs in rural and regional Queensland.' "

Let me reiterate one more time: this Government is committed to the cypress pine industry; this Government is committed to the industry 100%. Anyone who heard what the Premier said in this place on the matter yesterday could not argue otherwise. The Premier said—

"My Government is committed to the cypress pine industry. It is the lifeblood of many Queensland regional towns. I endorse the public position taken by the Minister for Primary Industries."

My position is perfectly clear. I refer to the Courier-Mail of this Tuesday. I said in that article—

"This Government is about giving security and certainty to the timber industry.

My department is completing a public benefits test on the industry and I have instructed that it be on my table by the end of this week.

Jobs have priority in situations like this."

Jobs had priority in the dairy industry review; this Government made sure of that. People finished ahead of the National Competition Policy in the dairy industry. This Government ensured that a regulated farm gate price received by dairy farmers for the market milk was retained. This Government was not prepared to leave dairy farmers and their families to fend for themselves against the forces of full deregulation.

The Government made that decision because it was in the best interests of the dairy farmers, their families and their communities, and that meant jobs. This is the approach that this Government is taking in relation to the cypress pine industry. Can I make it clearer than that? Let me refer to the Premier's comments again. Let me repeat the Premier's position on National Competition Policy in this matter. He said—

"... I will never, nor will my Government, put economic rationalism ahead of jobs."

That is perfectly clear.

Last night I had the opportunity to meet with a number of cypress pine industry representatives to discuss a number of issues. It was a prearranged meeting, but it was opportune as I could relay to that meeting the Premier's comments to the House. The industry representatives asked me to pass on to the Premier their thanks for his commitment. The cypress pine industry is critical to many western communities including Augathella, Roma, Injune and many more.

I have visited almost every cypress pine sawmill in western Queensland since I became a member of this Assembly. How many One Nation members opposite have visited them? None! All they are doing is coming into this place to score cheap political mileage from the misfortunes and the uncertainty of people who are trying to eke out a living from the cypress pine industry. They should hang their heads in shame. They are not here to protect the interests of or to help the people in the cypress pine industry; they are here to continue their verbal attack on the National Competition Policy. Those poor people from those small western Queensland towns are being used as pawns by members of the One Nation Party to kick the National Competition Policy. I am going to make sure that, when I meet with those people in the cypress pine industry of western Queensland, I let them know what those members are on about.

While I am on my feet, I want to say that I am thoroughly disgusted with the previous Government, because the cypress pine industry representatives who spoke to me told me that they had made continuous representations to members of that Government from 1996 onwards and their requests fell on deaf ears. But as soon as we in this Government realised there was a problem, what did we do? We fixed it, because as a Government we believe in industries in rural towns because they are the lifeblood of those towns. If the sawmills go from those towns, jobs will go and, as a consequence, the economies will die. I ask the House to support my amendment.

Time expired.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (6.18 p.m.): It is with delight that I rise to second the amendment to the motion moved by the Honourable Minister for Primary Industries. Both the Premier and the Minister have very clearly and very publicly given a commitment to the cypress pine industry. This commitment has been in both words and action. Tonight I want to take the opportunity to show how this Government supports and invests in jobs in primary industry, and we do this no more so than in research and development.

Research and development is critical for any industry. Funds devoted to research and development are an investment in the future, and I do not think anyone could deny that. Tonight I want to inform the House of the major research initiatives undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries for the cypress industry, but before I do that I want to talk about another research and development project which I think is very, very exciting news. However, I do not think that it has received the coverage that it should have. I take the opportunity to acknowledge the recent announcement by the Honourable Minister for Primary Industries which is not only great value but also a great coup for Queensland. Well done, Minister! In fact, I would say this is one of the most exciting things to happen in a very long time.

Mr Sullivan: He is an exciting Minister.

Mrs LAVARCH: He certainly is. From my visit to Longreach last week I can tell the House that he is well received in the rural community as well.

The exciting announcement is that Queensland has secured the exclusive world rights to commercialise the rare and endangered wollemi pine. The announcement confirmed that a Queensland tender has

obtained the exclusive world rights to propagate and commercialise wollemi pine. It is a threatened species, and commercialisation has been recommended as the best way to preserve it. The successful Queensland tender, proposed by the Department of Primary Industries and Brisbane's Birkdale Nursery, will generate new jobs and new exports for Queensland. In the development phase alone 50 jobs will be created, with a multimillion-dollar export boost each year.

Mr Mickel: Gee, that's a lot.

Mrs LAVARCH: It is a lot. Well done. Last year the New South Wales Royal Botanic Gardens selected the Queensland tender, subject to further negotiations, ahead of 13 other interstate and international proponents. This joint arrangement combines the world renowned research and development expertise of the Department of Primary Industries with the international marketing skills and excellence of the Birkdale Nursery. Through research excellence, the State Government is ensuring not only that a rare and endangered plant is preserved for future generations but also that new exports and new jobs are created in the process.

Now I will speak about the major research project being undertaken in relation to cypress pine. Cypress is an Australian native timber, uniquely valuable because its heartwood is extremely resistant to decay and termites. The heartwood is durable for many decades, even under the most severe conditions, but small amounts of sapwood present on the product are not as durable and detract from its value. This research project by the Department of Primary Industries aims to extract the durability compounds from cypress sawmill wastes, sawdust and shavings and impregnate these compounds into the sapwood present on such cypress pine products as decks and cladding, adding value to both extracted wastes and board products. By adding value to these products we are securing jobs. We are boosting the value of these already valuable products and we are enhancing their position in the marketplace.

Two other research projects have flowed from this major project and represent exciting prospects in relation to cypress pine. This cypress research work is being conducted in partnership with the Forest and Woods Product Research and Development Corporation and agencies in New South Wales. This research project further underpins the cypress industry and jobs in the industry. The industry can look forward confidently to a positive outcome from the project and expect

to have a new tool for value adding to their exterior use products.

The money we invest in research and development today will be reflected in future profits and the future success of Queensland primary industries, including the cypress pine industry. The investment in research and development by this Government is a rock solid investment in the future of primary industries and it is also showing our commitment to rural communities—the timber towns in western Queensland. I think members opposite should give due recognition to that.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.23 p.m.): National Competition Policy was not an issue in relation to cypress pine until it was raised in the press recently. At the departmental level it should not have been an issue. The Minister knows that as well.

Mr Beanland: Who signed this National Competition Policy?

Mr HOBBS: The Goss Government here in Queensland supported it. This briefing note, given to me when the coalition was in Government, states—

"... the Public Benefit Test presently underway as part of the National Competition Policy review of the Forestry Act 1959 is expected to indicate that the anti-competitive elements of the System are not substantial."

So what has happened? Maybe it was not officially signed off. There is no doubt that NCP would not have affected mills. Why has this situation developed? Why is NCP suddenly bobbing up in mills where it was not an issue before? I suspect that the lure was the extra \$1m the department would have received had National Competition Policy been implemented. The Minister knows about the bean counters as well as I do. I know exactly how they operate. The Minister may not have known it, but he was set up.

Even the figures have changed. The public benefit test shows quite clearly that the situation is different from when the coalition was in Government. Labor set this up and got caught out. To put the best spin on the situation after it got caught out, it had to stage an event. Then the Premier had to make a statement in the House to say that everything is all right. We have seen the Premier make statements about things that are supposed to be there but are not. We had an instance of that this morning. This Beattie Labor Government is the Goss Government revisited. The hallmarks are there. We saw what

happened under the Goss Government and we are now seeing it again.

This Government does not give a damn about rural communities. I will explain how the NCP process operates. The Minister must go through the relevant legislation to see whether anything is anti-competitive. If something is found to be anti-competitive and it can be fixed up straight away, that is fine. But if something is found to be anti-competitive and it cannot be fixed up straight away, then a public benefit test has to be undertaken.

The socioeconomic tests show quite clearly that jobs cannot be taken out of these timber towns without creating a huge economic disadvantage to them. No-one in their right mind would have done that. Why did Labor members go out to these places and say, "We are going to give you NCP. We are going to take away your jobs"?

Labor members have said that the conclusions of the public benefit test state that the size of social impacts and the adjustment costs of relocating resources between the regions are unclear. The consequences of that are very clear. The Government's own people have set it up in relation to this issue. A little while ago the Minister said that people out in the region have been trying to talk to the coalition since 1996. Those opposite may have forgotten that Labor was in Government from 1989 to 1996. I am the local member, yet nobody has come to me to say, "I have a problem with NCP."

Mr Palaszczuk: They couldn't find you out there.

Mr HOBBS: That is absolute rubbish. I have been to all of those mills. I was there with the Minister at the opening of the new mills. There are two new mills being constructed in the area. Not one person has mentioned this issue to me. So why did it suddenly come up? I think the Minister will find that he has egg on his face, as has his department.

The coalition in Government extended those sawmill agreements for one year because everything came at once—NCP, the Trade Practices Act changes, native title and a regional forestry assessment. That is why the new licences could not be issued at that time. However, there is now no reason the Minister cannot do it. In fact, there is no reason for not issuing 20-year licences now.

I congratulate the industry stakeholders on the work they have done in putting together the sustainable cypress management strategy. As Minister for Natural Resources I provided funds towards that strategy. I think the

Departments of Environment and Primary Industries also provided some funds. Virtually a mini RFA has been done out there. That having been done will save a lot of time and effort down the track. The Minister's people have let him down.

Time expired.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (6.28 p.m.): No doubt the people of Augathella were grateful to see the Primary Industries Minister. They know that he is always available and easy to find, unlike their local member.

It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of the amended motion. This Government was elected on the platform of jobs, jobs, jobs. We rolled up our sleeves and we are working tirelessly to achieve our jobs target. It is a commitment to jobs across Queensland. This Government is genuinely committed to jobs in rural and regional Queensland. It is a Government that is working to meet its commitment to the people of Queensland. I know, because I am a member for a regional seat—the wonderful electorate of Mackay.

I direct honourable members to comments made by the Premier in this place yesterday on jobs and the National Competition Policy. His comments were alluded to earlier by the member for Caboolture and by the Minister for Primary Industries. The Premier said—

"I recognise the drive for National Competition Policy. I recognise that it is aimed at improving so-called service delivery, but I will never, nor will my Government, put economic rationalism ahead of jobs. That is what has gone on in this country for too long. That is why we need to be very firm about our position on this."

The Premier's comments were directly related to the cypress industry of Queensland.

Late last year, the Honourable Minister for Primary Industries officially opened the Augathella cypress mill. The mill is owned and operated by N. K. Collins Industries and employs 15 people. It is a major achievement for Queensland's primary industries, as it is for Augathella and surrounding districts. This Government recognises that many of our rural communities depend on the employment and dollars generated by our timber industry. And it is developments like the opening of the cypress mill in Augathella that are so sorely needed in rural and regional Queensland.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment of cypress pine millers to their

employees and to rural Queensland. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Nev Collins, the operator of N. K. Collins Industries, who boasts more than 50 years' experience in the sawmilling industry. The Augathella sawmill is but one in a total of five operated by N. K. Collins Industries that support the economies of towns along the Warrego Highway—towns like Dulacca, Surat, Roma and Mungallala. I also note that, like four other sawmills, the Augathella mill processes cypress pine exclusively.

In Queensland, we have built an enviable domestic and international reputation with quality structural and flooring products built on the cypress industry. DPI Forestry sells up to 130,000 cubic metres of cypress pine each year. A further 40,000 cubic metres, on average, are harvested annually from private land. When this total is milled, almost half of it is sold either interstate or overseas. Mr Collins' \$750,000 investment in Augathella will ensure the continuation of employment and industry for the town. It is a sign of his commitment to towns like Augathella that Mr Collins rebuilds older mills in their original locations rather than centralising his operations.

I understand that the Honourable Minister for Primary Industries will be invited to open the rebuilt mill also operated by N. K. Collins Industries in Mitchell later this year. The Mitchell mill will replace the earlier mill that had been destroyed by fire. To be in a position to open two mills in far-western Queensland within six or seven months speaks volumes for the commitment of Mr Collins. It is a commitment that this Government will deliver and keep on delivering.

It is important to appreciate that the timber industry is Queensland's seventh-largest manufacturing sector, but it is also important to note where much of that work is done, that is, in rural and regional Queensland. The Honourable Minister for Primary Industries announced this Government's commitment to increasing native timber plantations to support future expansion of the native forest industry. For the timber industry in general, the Government is working to put in place a forward-looking industry strategy to ensure a viable and profitable industry in the next century. This Government is passionate about rural and regional Queensland. This Government is committed to creating jobs in rural and regional Queensland.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (6.33 p.m.): I rise to support this motion tonight—indeed, with much pleasure. The

western Queensland cypress industry is worth some \$30m annually to the Queensland economy and supports some 2,000 direct and indirect jobs the length and breadth of the cypress pine belt. But looking at those figures in isolation does not truly do justice to the huge contribution the cypress industry makes and how much towns like Millmerran, Inglewood, Injune, Roma, Chinchilla and Wandoan depend upon it. It is industries like the western cypress industry which underpin the entire local economies and the community's way of life. Those timber jobs support families, who support the schools, the hospitals, the banks and the corner stores. If we take away the timber industry, we take away their income, their families and, inevitably, the town.

It is obvious from debates about the timber industry that many people are just not aware of the significance of the industry to rural and regional communities and will not accept that the timber industry is environmentally sustainable. We have seen it with the western cypress industry and the bureaucrats' advice to the Labor Government. And we are seeing it again in the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement debate. But it is more than disappointing when people who should know better try to write off the significance and the value of this industry to our local communities and to Queensland to pursue their own extreme and irrational political agenda.

On that note, I was disgusted but not surprised to read the ridiculous assertions by Aila Keto in the Courier-Mail on Monday and her logically devoid attempt to discount the south-east Queensland native timber industry. I know that some members opposite actually share my views, but I caution them because Ms Keto well and truly has their very own Natural Resources Minister's ear. For it is Ms Keto who is guiding the Minister down her extreme and naive, politically stupid path through the RFA process. The timber industry, the timber towns, the timber workers and the Australian Workers Union know it. And those members on the Treasury benches know it. Their Government's jobs rhetoric is just that—rhetoric—when it comes to the timber industry.

The Labor Party's policy is committed to a transition out of the native timber industry—code for shutting down the native timber industry. That is what it is about. That means a loss of jobs, a loss of families from those districts and, of course, the loss of services. Despite the protestations of the Deputy Premier, that is what it says. Drew Hutton has been quoting the policy in regional

newspapers. In place of the timber industry, the Natural Resources Minister and even the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade are going to establish booming industries, such as flower picking, rock painting and ecotourism. Goodness me! They say that that is going to do a lot of good. I can assure them that it did not do much good in the Wide Bay and Ravenshoe districts.

What has been the industry's assessment—not from a National Party point of view but from AWU organiser Damien Green? In the Bundaberg News Mail yesterday, he said—

"The AWU has been lobbying state and federal governments to take a pro-industry, pro-jobs approach to the regional forest agreement in south-east Queensland."

The article continued—

"The AWU and Burnett Sawmill management both scoffed at the state government's latest idea of turning logging sites into eco-tourism areas. Mr Green said the government was being held to ransom by environmentalists who predominantly lived in inner-city Brisbane."

I noted with interest the Beattie Labor Government's backflip between Saturday's Courier-Mail and Tuesday's newspaper. Our Primary Industries Minister trotted out the bureaucratic waffle in Saturday's newspaper, but by Tuesday there was a sudden backflip to assure those timber towns that the Labor Government—

"... was about giving security and certainty to the timber industry, and I strongly support maintaining the status quo in relation to cypress pine allocations to local millers."

In fact, the Premier even gave an assurance about those jobs in this Parliament yesterday.

Time expired.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (6.38 p.m.): All that tonight's motion from One Nation shows is that its members either read Saturday's Courier-Mail or, more probably, someone read it to them and they have not moved on from that. The fact of the matter is that Tuesday's Courier-Mail showed quite explicitly that the Government is there to protect the cypress pine industry. This issue was mentioned again in Wednesday's editorial of the Courier-Mail. One Nation's attempts to criticise the Government on the future of the cypress pine industry show that its members cannot read the newspapers much beyond Saturday and

certainly they do not listen to what is going on in this House.

The Government's position on cypress pine could not be clearer. We need only refer to yesterday's Hansard to find the clearest possible statement on the Government's position on this issue. During question time, the Premier spelled it out in the plainest possible language when he said, in part—

"My Government is committed to the cypress pine industry. It is the lifeblood of many regional Queensland towns."

How much clearer than that could one get? He also said that he endorses the position taken by the Honourable the Minister for Primary Industries. I would have thought that even One Nation members would have been able to work out the public position of the Government on this issue. As I said, the editorial of yesterday's Courier-Mail praised the Minister for Primary Industries. The Minister should be praised because he supports jobs, jobs, jobs. If the One Nation people had been listening at question time yesterday they would have heard the Premier say that the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Natural Resources are assessing cypress pine resources in the Tambo region in the electorate of Warrego. The member for Warrego did not twig to that because he is only a visitor to his electorate.

The aim of that exercise is to establish a mill in that region with the creation of 15 jobs. Surely even One Nation members can understand that these are the actions of a Government which is planning to expand the cypress pine industry. This is a Government that is leading the way in job creation and giving security and confidence to the cypress pine industry. It mystifies me how One Nation members could miss such an obvious message. Given the clarity with which the Government has spelt out its position, I am staggered at the preposterous position taken by One Nation in failing to grasp the issues.

Dr Prenzler interjected.

Mr MICKEL: I hear the member for Lockyer interjecting. I refer the honourable gentleman to an article in a newspaper which is very close to his heart. The Minister and I are also very fond of this newspaper. I refer to the Fassifern Guardian. On the front page—and not tucked away on a back page—is a most endearing photograph of the Minister and somebody wishing to invest \$30m to \$60m in the forestry industry.

It would behove the honourable gentleman from Lockyer to visit the fair town of

Boonah. Surely we would not have to get out a map for our old friend, the honourable member. He should be able to get there. Even if the member could not get someone to read page 1 to him, he could have gone to page 2 and seen an account of all the wonderful investment that is being made in the Fassifern area.

When it comes to forestry we have to talk about logs. We could not get bigger logs than the five One Nation members on the other side of the Chamber. As I look at the opinion poll results published yesterday, I notice that One Nation has dropped 17%. The logs that are going to be rolled out of this place are those five One Nation people over there.

Mr BLACK: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. I would ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There were no personally offensive words; One Nation was named, so the member cannot take a point of order.

Mr MICKEL: Even my good friend the member for Tablelands had the sense to get out. He knew what bad company he was in. He knows when to come in out of the rain because it is going to rain big time on One Nation. They are on their way out. This motion shows that the One Nation members have nothing positive to contribute in this House. Stick with the Government. We are the ones who are creating jobs in central Queensland. We have the cypress pine industry.

Time expired.

Mr DALGLEISH (Hervey Bay—ONP) (6.43 p.m.): During a recent sitting of Parliament, the honourable member for Logan raised the subject of the timber industry in Hervey Bay, which is a mere shadow of its former self since his Labor colleagues bowed to the wishes of the international tree-huggers and listed Fraser Island on the World Heritage register.

Anyone who knows the history of Fraser Island can tell us that the timber cutters were great conservationists. The forests were getting better every year while they were managed by the timber cutters. Then the Labor Government axed those jobs and threw those families to the dingoes. The Labor Government said, "Don't worry, we will provide a compensation package." Naturally, the compensation was a mickey mouse scheme which cost the taxpayer dearly but, once the money was all gone, the industry workers were thrown on the unemployment wood heap.

The mere suggestion that National Competition Policy could be allowed to threaten 2,000 jobs in the central western Queensland cypress industry is enough to strike fear into the hearts of every family living in those regional towns. In an industry constantly under threat from the vocal minority of radical greenies, security of employment is really shaky. The constant uncertainty endured by these families must stop.

The current generation is now making an enormous contribution to regional communities. They deserve better than to be living in fear for their jobs. They deserve better than to go through life worrying about how to put bread on their table. These people work long and hard for little reward. They do not ask for more. They just deserve some security. Their future and the future of rural Queenslanders is in the hands of this Parliament. I urge all members to think seriously about that. Reject National Competition Policy and do not destroy a viable industry just to satisfy an economic theory.

Let us not hear any more rubbish about compensation to help people leave the industry. These people do not want to leave the industry. It has been their livelihood for generations. What about the operator of the general store, the newsagent, the local butcher, the garage and all the hundreds of jobs that depend on the timber workers? I fear that they will simply be starved out and become another tragic unemployment statistic.

The mickey mouse solutions that did not work at Ravenshoe and did not work on the Fraser Coast will not work here. We want jobs, jobs and jobs. We want opportunities that can only be provided by protecting and encouraging our industries and promoting value adding. If we continue to bow to the greenies and the National Competition Policy, jobs will continue to disappear. Careers will be destroyed and Queensland rural families will be ripped apart by financial stress. If honourable members care about rural Queensland families they must support this motion.

In closing, I say that the dung beetles newly imported by the Brisbane City Council to break down dog excrement would have quite a feast if applied to the member for Logan.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (6.47 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to rise in the Parliament tonight to support the amended motion moved by the Honourable Minister for Primary Industries. I wish to quote the amended motion. It reads—

"This Parliament endorses the State Government's commitment to deliver certainty and security to the Queensland cypress pine industry and further endorses the Government's commitment to jobs in rural and regional Queensland."

Could a motion that comes to this Parliament be any clearer about a Government's commitment to providing jobs in rural and regional Queensland—specifically through the continuation of the cypress pine industry?

What we need to do is contrast the positive amendment that the Government has moved with the negative, carping, backward-looking motion that was moved by the spokesman for One Nation, which looks towards doing nothing—they just sit there and hope that things will improve. The reality is that we have to work hard to create jobs, to develop the industry and promote the industry into the export market. The State Government is absolutely committed to growing the cypress pine industry, because it creates many jobs in rural Queensland. Although I did not agree with everything that the member for Keppel said, he made a point when he said that it is the lifeblood of many towns and districts. It is an extremely valuable industry.

The amendment to the motion that was moved by the Primary Industries Minister is extremely important, because it looks forward to the creation of jobs and the development of the forestry industry. One Nation's motion is about stopping the industry where it now stands and holding the fort. That is simply not good enough. We cannot survive as a State or as a nation if we do nothing. We have to create new exports for Queensland. The challenge for us all is to ensure that this industry does not decline, that we are able to create certainty for the people who live in those regional towns and work in those industries and, through that security, maintain the fabric of those rural and country towns.

Queensland's forestry industry contributes more than \$1.7 billion to revenue annually and employs some 17,000 Queenslanders. That goes to show that a substantial part of the Queensland economy is involved in the timber industry. The industry's quality products are in great demand, and not just domestically. There is an increasing interest in export markets, where the projected global timber shortfalls will provide growth opportunity. That is the strength of the amendment to the motion that was moved by the Primary Industries Minister. The amendment looks towards the development of the export industry. It is not about standing still and

somehow hoping that nothing is going to happen.

As I think was said tonight, the amendment to the motion is not about a mickey mouse solution—the sort of solution that was suggested by One Nation. That is simply not a solution. We have to look forward and maintain and further develop this industry for those rural and regional parts of Queensland.

In relation to cypress pine, we have to consider a number of key points when projecting its possible export potential. As we all know, already cypress pine has broken into several key markets. In Queensland, more than 170,000 cubic metres of cypress pine is milled each year and almost half of that is sold either interstate or overseas, including to the United States and Japan. Secondly, and importantly, the quality of our cypress pine is attracting significant international interest. That is mainly due to the fact that cypress pine is very durable. Its natural resistance to disease and pests, especially termites, is well recognised in the marketplace. For instance, it was interesting to find out recently that the export potential of Queensland's cypress pine is expanding, particularly in Japan.

Time expired.

Question—That Mr Palaszczuk's amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

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

NOES, 38—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. A. Cunningham, Dagleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Pair: Fenlon, Goss

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

GRIEVANCES

Road Awareness and Accident Prevention Program

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (6.58 p.m.): For the past year, officers from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and

the Queensland Police Service have been conducting lectures and demonstrating the effect of road accidents on motor vehicles and the human body at high schools in the Brisbane and Ipswich regions. The Road Awareness and Accident Prevention Program—RAAPP—which recently was undertaken at the Chisholm Catholic College in my electorate, has attracted criticism because of the way in which a police constable presented the graphic facts of life and death in road accidents to students following the report in the Courier-Mail of 28 February.

Mortuary officials are said to be upset at the way in which the police officer described their workplace. Having watched a subsequent presentation at the school, I would be surprised that they thought that the presentation disparaged them. Certainly, the school itself had no problems with it. It would certainly be unfair if this reporting adversely affected the career of the police constable involved or led to unwarranted questions being raised about the RAAP program. The students and teachers regard the presentation as extremely positive. It seems to me to be well designed and, in these days of graphic images, to concentrate the minds of those most at risk of falling victim to the terrible epidemic of road trauma that afflicts Australian society.

These students may not remember the exceptionally graphic grim reaper television advertisements that were run during the anti-AIDS campaign some years ago. However, their teachers and the students' parents certainly would. That campaign was very effective, largely because of its shock value. The Dead Right road safety campaign now screening on television in Queensland is similarly graphic and I believe it is working to great effect.

Morgue workers perform an invaluable service for the community, operating in an environment that is deeply challenging to the human psyche and they deserve the respect and admiration of everyone. So do the fire officers who conduct the program in their own time, and so also does the constable at Chisholm, who at short notice was tasked to present the dangers of road trauma and the risk of death to students in or entering the most high-risk age group.

Time expired.

Clontarf Beach State High School

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (7 p.m.): Recently, Clontarf Beach State High School was unjustly

characterised in the Courier-Mail. However, Clontarf Beach State High School is the largest high school in Redcliffe, and it can list many significant achievements. For example, it has greater than a 100% retention rate of students who complete Year 10. That is to say, not only do all the students who complete Year 10 go on to Year 11 but others enrol at the school from outside. It has the most extensive and well-developed marine education facility in Queensland, which was highlighted on Brisbane Extra in 1997. In 1998, one student was selected as one of two students in Queensland, voted by her peers, to represent both private and public schools at the Constitutional Convention in Canberra. This is Clontarf's second success in this sphere in five years.

Clontarf Beach State High School students consistently achieve in the academic tournament at a regional level against private and State schools. In 1997, the junior school mathematics team was successful in winning a gold medal. In 1998, one student was placed in the top half of the top 1% in the Australian Westpac maths competition. Ninety per cent of students who were tertiary bound in Year 12 obtained placement in tertiary courses.

Clontarf Beach State High School is at the forefront in obtaining school-based traineeships and apprenticeships. Twelve places out of the 15 offered from one group training organisation went to the school. The school has a strong representation in regional sports competitions. Dance and the performing arts are well respected features of the school community.

The social and community support work of the school is intense. In 1998, the school was proud to be involved in hosting the anti-drug initiative involving police, private school personnel and members of State and independent high schools from the region. The school has supported a large number of charities, organised by the student council. There has been strong student representation in youth forums, including the Redcliffe Youth Council. For over 30 years the school has had a high profile and the criticism that was made of the school was most unjust.

Time expired.

Toowoomba South Boys School

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (7.04 p.m.): A great injustice has been done to a Toowoomba business in the Government process of selling the old Toowoomba South

Boys School. On 22 October 1998, this property was bought by Mr Mark Crampton, the trustee of the adjoining Holden dealership, for \$1.2m to build a new dealership with underground parking, creating new jobs for 60 people. The purchase followed extensive inquiry and investigation into the site's availability for sale and investigation of any heritage listing of the buildings by potential buyers, real estate agents, local government, valuers and solicitors. Amongst the extensive research was a building note and a Queensland Heritage Act search that clearly certified that the place was not affected by provisions of the Act.

On the day before the auction, a letter was received, including an extract from a cultural assessment by the Cultural Heritage Branch, that again showed the property had not been nominated to the Queensland Heritage Register. It went on to say that the building had cultural significance and that the Heritage Council would decide whether or not the property would be entered in the Queensland Heritage Register. Meanwhile, all financial and legal arrangements had been made by potential purchasers who were committed to the auction.

Only hours before the auction, Mr Crampton was informed that the Heritage Council was meeting the very next day. It did meet the day after the auction and decided that it had a mind to enter the place on the Queensland Heritage Register. The Queensland Heritage Council has since proceeded to the provisional register entry stage.

Departmental officers have admitted the system has not worked. What has happened is immoral, incompetent and grossly negligent, because the property could have been far less valuable or not even sold had the Heritage Council decision been made earlier and not the day after the sale. This matter needs immediate fixing.

I have spoken to the Minister for Natural Resources and the Minister for State Development. I sincerely hope that they can bring about a fair resolution. It is time that serious issues like this were fixed and that businesses that are interested in purchasing Government properties are given a clear indication of the heritage status of properties that they wish to buy. It is not right that, at a meeting the day after purchase, a decision is made that changes the whole status of the building.

Crime, Zero Tolerance

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (7.06 p.m.) A recent editorial in the Courier-Mail titled "Zero tolerance comes at a high price" stated that in New York zero tolerance has substantially decreased violent crimes and murders. However, will zero tolerance work in Australia?

In the early 1990s, New York police were dealing with a heavily criminalised and armed population. If a policeman stopped somebody for a minor offence, there was every chance that the person would be carrying an illegal firearm or drugs, or be subject to a warrant. Such apprehensions did lead to a decline in major crime. In Australia, people do not regularly carry guns and the worst crimes are committed in private rather than in public. Homicides are committed overwhelmingly by people who are intimates or acquaintances of the victim. Consequently, zero tolerance policing in Australia would not lead to an appreciable decline in homicides.

Zero tolerance is designed for a society that is divided by class and race. It is a response to a fear of the underclass. In Australia, we pride ourselves on our much stronger commitment to welfare safety nets, public health and public education. We aim to be an inclusive society. Surely we do not want to emulate the American experience, which has resulted in a prison population that is now five times higher than it was 25 years ago. On a per capita basis, California's prison population is seven times greater than Australia's.

An article in the Courier-Mail titled "American Apocalypse" highlights the fact that American's class and race divisions are increasing faster than almost any other country as income inequalities grow. The article concludes by stating—

"In the next ten years a generation of hardened criminals with almost nothing to lose will be tossed back into America's unstable cocktail of rage and hate with unpredictable results."

Zero tolerance comes at a very high price. The sending of minor offenders to jail will lead to an increase in major crime in the future. Moreover, aggressive street policing leads to social disorder and those targeted become marginalised. Do Australians want to see sharp declines in public health and education, New York style? Do Australians want to follow the Californian experience where more is now spent on prisons than education?

Time expired.

Hendra, Transport Routes

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (7.08 p.m.): I rise to talk about an injustice that has been perpetrated on a certain section of my electorate, that is, several streets in Hendra, centring on Burilda Street. One morning a few months ago, residents woke up to find buses running through their streets. Those streets had not previously been on the bus route. When they made inquiries of the Brisbane City Council, they were told that, as a result of requests by local residents, extra public transport services were being provided through those streets.

Under FOI, the residents found that such requests were never made and that the changes to the public transport routes were implemented by the Brisbane City Council without any consultation whatsoever with the residents of Hendra. Not only were the transport routes changed to include very quiet streets that were previously safe for schoolchildren, elderly people and other residents to use, and that was done without consultation, but some of the new services were inferior to those that had been provided previously.

My constituents in the suburb of Hendra are demanding a genuine review of the decision that was made so that the changes that are brought about can be said to have resulted from genuine community input. I am very grateful to the Honourable Minister for Local Government, who has seen a deputation of concerned constituents. The Transport Minister does not want to know them and is fobbing the problem off to the Brisbane City Council. However, there is a clear moral obligation on the Brisbane City Council to review a decision that it made without any consultation whatsoever. It also needs to come clean and admit that it did not consult, rather than masquerading behind a lie that it did.

Time expired.

Red Cross Blood Bank

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (7.09 p.m.): Today I draw the attention of the House to the vital work being performed by the Red Cross through its blood product and transfusion services and its maintenance of a donor register. I am sure every member knows of a relative, a friend or a neighbour who has at some time required a blood transfusion.

In 1998-99 Queensland Health will provide \$14m for capital and operating costs for the Red Cross Blood Bank. The State

meets 50% of its capital costs, some \$612,000; and 60% of its operating costs, amounting to \$13,656,188. The Commonwealth picks up the remaining costs. Capital costs for the Red Cross Blood Bank cover buildings and equipment, information technology, testing equipment, vehicles and blood collection caravans.

From a single blood donation, up to 13 products can be produced, all serving a vital function to others in need. Typically those who receive blood from donations include: patients suffering shock; those who lose 20% or more of their blood through an accident or trauma; persons undergoing surgery; sufferers of leukemia; women in child birth; transplant patients; and persons afflicted with haemophilia.

Most of us in this place would have been moved by Tjandamurra O'Shane's heroic fight for survival after suffering severe burns in an horrific incident in a Cairns schoolyard. Thanks to the efforts of his doctors, blood and blood products from over 100 donors—and of course his own remarkable courage—Tjandamurra recovered from his ordeal. There are many people living in our community who owe their lives to the generosity of blood donors.

I am a regular donor, as are many members. I understand the Minister, who is also a regular donor, is going to give blood just prior to the Easter period. Her blood and that of others may save a life. Over Easter the call on blood products to meet the need created by trauma arising out of traffic accidents is quite high. I urge all members to follow the Minister's example and donate blood to the blood bank. We should make a deposit now; in the future we may need to make a withdrawal.

Criminal Justice Commission; Comments by Minister for Main Roads

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (7.11 p.m.):

This morning in Parliament the Minister for Main Roads made certain comments. These involved matters relating to allegations of possible official misconduct by a Main Roads departmental officer and the referral of that matter to the CJC. I now place on record the fact that at this stage I have not and would not have referred this matter to the CJC; the department did.

I wish also to put on record the underhanded way in which the Minister has misrepresented this information. Firstly, the Minister did not acknowledge the fact that neither the department nor the CJC during its

investigation contacted me for further information or evidence. Secondly, the Minister did not fully disclose relevant matters in the response from the CJC. The following paragraph was also contained within the CJC's letter—

"In the circumstances, the Commission does not intend to take the matter further unless informed of some relevant development."

Obviously, the CJC has not finally closed this case. The Minister almost achieves a misleading of the Parliament in that deceptive move.

I now wish to move on to the manner in which the CJC has conducted itself in this matter. Firstly, it was no surprise to me to see the signature at the bottom of the CJC letter—none other than that of Mr M. A. Barnes, the Labor lawyer who misled the Senate in relation to his ALP activities. Secondly, it was no surprise to see the speed with which the Labor lawyer was prepared to jump to a Labor Minister's tune. Mr Barnes had not received the relevant information in relation to the department's investigation until 11 February 1999, yet just 18 days later, on 1 March, Mr Barnes was able to grant a qualified clearance to Mr Worrall, the public official involved.

Mr Barnes' haste in this matter should be compared with other Labor inspired inquiries with which he was involved in the past—for example, the foxtail palms inquiry, which was held in camera and found that Labor minders had no case to answer; and the speed with which the CJC was able to finalise the inquiry into the alleged bribe of the then member for Mundingburra, Ken Davies, prior to an election. I refer also to numerous other political inquiries that Mr Barnes has been involved with. I send one message to the Minister in relation to this matter: watch this space for further relevant developments.

Time expired.

Mr A. Gallagher; Dr W. Gale

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (7.13 p.m.): I rise to mark with respect the recent passing of two men who were leaders in the Cairns business community. They made their contributions over the past 25 years, during which period Cairns has grown from an isolated pioneering northern town into a vibrant internationally known tropical city. I speak of the fine contributions made by Mr Tony Gallagher and Dr Bill Gale.

Dr Gale came to Cairns in the 1960s and set up in practice as Cairns' first radiologist. He was committed to quality in his medical specialty. He was also able to grasp the latest innovations and best practice standards of his profession. Thanks to his foresight and efforts, Cairns is left with high quality and well developed radiological services in the private sector that are the envy of any regional city. Dr Gale was an urbane and well-liked man and he will be missed.

Mr Tony Gallagher, a large man in size as well as stature, has also left us. Arriving in Cairns in the mid seventies, he became well known through his establishment of the Abbott Manor—an elegant function centre and restaurant in one of Cairns' beautiful old Queensland homes. Mr Gallagher went on to other initiatives in tourism and hospitality. He was a fine sportsman who loved sailing and, in later years, he was a yacht broker. In addition, he was a member of the Resources Advisory Committee reporting to the Great Barrier Marine Park Authority. I am pleased to have known Tony—a man of style.

I have no doubt that many people in Cairns join with me in marking the passing of these two fine men, in recording for posterity their contributions to the community of Cairns and in sending our condolences to their wives—Mrs Jill Gallagher and Mrs Ann Gale—and to their families.

Primary Producers, Far-north Queensland

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (7.15 p.m.): The extremely wet conditions in far-north Queensland have had an adverse impact on many crops. The problems associated with Cyclone Rona have continued, with incessant rain deluging the coastline. People dependent on primary industries have suffered major losses in the banana and pawpaw industries, with their crops being flattened by wind and inundated by floodwaters. No doubt the sugar industry is facing enormous difficulties, with a disastrous season last year and low world prices now evident for this year's crop.

I am requesting the Premier to replicate the Central Queensland Job Initiative for workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the severe weather conditions. If it is good enough for the miners who had incomes of \$60,000-plus and are now picketing the Gordonstone mine in central Queensland to receive a Government contribution to a trust fund of \$200,000, the Beattie Government should provide a similar initiative for people

who have lost their jobs through a natural disaster.

Workers have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. The impact of these conditions has sent a ripple effect right across the community. Experienced workers are hitchhiking out of the region, as their employers can no longer afford to provide jobs for them. The re-establishment of these crops could keep them in work. With three successive years of cyclones, farmers are already in the red and, in many cases, lack the ability to get going again. The Premier lost no time in supporting the striking miners. The same degree of support should be provided for struggling families in the north who are not able to tough it out.

Time expired.

Fire Service Training

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.17 p.m.): I commend the fire service officers and the Queensland Ambulance Service officers for the great work they do in our community. A number of weeks ago, I was invited to a fire service training session in an industrial estate at Darra. In a disused besser block building on the site, a room was set up as a lounge room, with old furniture, complete with armchairs, stereo, TV, curtains and cabinet. A cigarette was purposely left burning on the lounge chair. It did not take long before smoke started to seep through the doorway. Eventually this developed into a major blaze which eventually engulfed the room. The windows exploded and the smell of burning fabric wafted towards me.

The fire crew in training, equipped with hose, breathing apparatus and safety gear, entered the building and doused the flame. Within minutes the fire was under control and subsequently extinguished. These men came face to face with flame temperatures up to 400 degrees Centigrade, thick acrid smoke and debris under foot. These were only a few of the hazards that confronted them as they entered the building.

Once their job was completed, I entered the building to examine the aftermath of the fire. Officers explained to me that this was only a first step in their overall training. In a few weeks, another crew will investigate the scene to determine the cause of the fire. This is all part of the hands-on training provided to firefighters, who risk their lives in the normal course of their duties.

Research into the causes of fires is put to valuable use in educating the public in fire

safety. This has resulted in Queensland having the lowest rate of preventable fire deaths in Australia. I congratulate the fire service and Minister Merri Rose for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our citizens.

Gatton College

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (7.19 p.m.): I rise on a matter that is having a considerable impact and causing great concern to my electorate around the Gatton and Laidley areas. Gatton college has for many years been an integral part of these communities, providing employment, places of abode, and food and entertainment for both students and staff alike. Since the amalgamation of the college into the University of Queensland in 1990, we have seen what could only be described as maladministration of the college by the Brisbane based university senate. This culminated at the end of 1998 with approximately 650 students attending the business degrees at Gatton being moved to the new campus at Ipswich and South Brisbane.

Alone, the loss of these 650 students and staff convert to an estimated annual loss of around \$8m per year from the economy of the area. We need a visionary concept for Gatton—one that will allow the veterinary and agricultural schools to grow with Queensland's development, to grow and develop as a world class educational and research facility. This visionary concept has already been mooted. Professor Craig Pearson, executive dean of the faculty, has already given credence to such a vision.

The veterinary school farm at Pinjarra Hills has only a limited life span. Encroaching urbanisation will place pressures on this site to be eventually sold off for real estate development. This will happen despite the articulations by members of the Australian Veterinary Association and some members of the University of Queensland Senate. Also, the Department of Primary Industries has to establish in the near future a new animal health institute. A world class veterinary, educational and research facility, coupled with the DPI research institute on some 2,000 acres of fertile, irrigated rural lands near Gatton, certainly is a visionary concept—a concept that should have the backing of this Parliament. I ask—and urge—the Premier to give this matter his urgent attention.

Early Intervention and Parenting Support Program

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (7.20 p.m.): I want to defend the parents of Logan against

the Opposition's disgraceful attack on the Government's early intervention and parenting support initiative and the School Nurse Program. These are some of the most important and popular initiatives of the Beattie Government. The Positive Parenting Program was launched by the Minister for Health at Browns Plains earlier this year. It offers hope to parents who are struggling with the very real problems of raising children. The program was developed by the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland and has won acclaim around Australia and around the world. All the evidence says that this program works, that it improves relationships within families and helps ease the stress that builds up and causes so many problems in our community.

I believe that all of the members opposite would be horrified at the suggestion by their Health spokesman that this program should be cut. Rather than attacking families, we are backing them. The child health nurses in my electorate are excited by the PPP program. It gives them additional knowledge and skills that they can in turn pass on to parents, particularly young parents, with troublesome children in the two to seven year age group.

While the Minister for Health is in the Chamber, I have the perfect opportunity to say to her that the Browns Plains State High school and Park Ridge State High School have a submission in at the moment for the School Nurse Program. I know that the Minister is very attentive to that. I have read the submission; it is an outstanding submission. It will make an excellent contribution to that program, and I know that the Minister will not knock it back. This also gives me an opportunity to say that the Minister will extend the service, of course, up to the Kingston State High School and to the Marsden State High School. All those parents up there are very, very deserving. I know that she understands their problems first-hand. I will be taking a copy of her support back to these people after I finish my speech here tonight. I know that the Minister supports the program. I look for her support for those submissions.

Time expired.

Acute Care Spinal Injuries Unit, Townsville

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (7.23 p.m.): The Beattie Government's commitment to provide long-term rehabilitation and care for north Queensland's spinal patients is most welcome. However, I encourage the Government to seriously reconsider the inclusion of an acute care spinal

injuries unit. I have had several letters directed to my office relating to the horrendous pain and suffering endured by spinal cord injury patients during transfer to Brisbane for acute spinal treatment.

One of these people, Scott, received spinal cord injuries in a motor cycle accident. At the Townsville General Hospital tongs were drilled and screwed into either side of his head. He was then flown to Brisbane in the small Emergency Service aeroplane. The turbulence during the flight caused intense pain and air sickness but, because of the tongs screwed into his head and the risk of doing further damage to his injury, he was unable to move his head to stop vomiting all over himself. The tongs fell out of Scott's head three times and Scott had to endure the excruciating pain of having the tongs rescrewed.

From the location of the accident in Townsville to the PA Hospital in Brisbane, Scott was moved approximately 20 times. Scott now wonders what impact the constant movement and shifting had on his injury and how much extra damage was done to his spinal cord during the transfer. Scott is now a quadriplegic, working as a volunteer presenter for the spinal education awareness team and feels that, if he had been transferred immediately to a spinal injuries unit in Townsville, his injury would have been much less severe.

Scott spent 10 and a half months in Brisbane, causing enormous financial and emotional strain on his family. He was left without the support of loved ones. An acute spinal injury unit in Townsville would decrease the risk of further injury. I first brought this matter to the attention of the House in October 1998. Other States do not have the decentralised population that Queensland has. It is of paramount necessity that an acute care spinal unit be provided in north Queensland, and what better time than when the new \$200m hospital is being constructed in Townsville?

Mackay West State School

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (7.25 p.m.): On Thursday, 11 February, I had the pleasure of addressing the 75th anniversary parade of the Mackay West State School. In 1922, Mr Ernest Couldrey, on behalf of a committee of parents, approached the then Department of Public Instruction to build a school for the estimated 109 children residing in the South Ward area, now known as West Mackay. The department decided to purchase three acres of land in Bridge Road

from Mr J. Walker to build a school building. The school building was completed by the opening day of 11 February 1924. The school was known as the South Ward State School for 14 years, but in 1938 the name was changed to the Mackay West State School.

Eighty-four first-day pupils were enrolled on the day of the opening of the school. Some of the first-day pupils were children of the five old settlers living in the areas who were from the Crowley, Donald, Reidy, Hennessey and Burdon families. Staff numbers on opening day consisted of the principal, Mr John Davies, and a pupil teacher. During the first year, enrolments at the South Ward State School increased to 151. There were five grades in the school, with children who had never been to school enrolled in Grade 1. Those children with some school experience went into the other grades. In Grade 1 there was one boy who was aged five years, six months and another boy who was aged fourteen years, four months. One duty of the older boys at the end of each school day was to go out into the yard and catch the principal's horse. They then had to hitch the horse to the buggy so that the principal could drive home.

Today the school has 723 students, 29 classes from pre-school to Year 7 and 80 staff as well as the principal, Mr Don Grobe; and deputy principals, Mrs Michelle Davis and Mr Arthur Wane. First-day pupils, Mr Jack Rolleston; Mr David Francey; Mr Henry Weight; Mrs Ivy Wright, nee Winton; and Mrs Jessie O'May, nee Wilson, were in attendance at the 75th anniversary parade, along with parents and friends of the students. Mrs O'May unveiled a commemorative plaque to mark the occasion, and afterwards they were treated to afternoon tea hosted P & C President, Mr Norm Cook, and other P & C members.

Time expired.

Gympie Floods

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (7.27 p.m.): In February this year businesses and houses in Gympie were inundated by flood waters. Buildings suffered very badly and many businesses were forced to close for two, three or four weeks. As a matter of fact, one or two have not opened since. We cannot help but feel for them because of the damage that has been caused.

When the Premier came to Gympie, the people were given some hope when he told them that the Government would make available low-interest long-term loans. They went along with the idea that they would be

able to do the repair work and the loan money would cover the cost. Unfortunately, it is not quite as easy as that. There were a number of problems associated with it. The people had to go through the process of making applications through the banks and also through the Government. When both the banks and the Government turned down those applications, they had nowhere to go. So instead of getting some assistance, they were left out on a limb.

Under those sorts of conditions, we cannot help but feel for those people. We must give them some hope, even at this late stage. The criteria involved are the same as have been with us for a while, and I pointed out to residents that they needed the bank or another lender to approve their application for them.

Time expired.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP)
(Minister for Police and Corrective Services)
(7.29 p.m.): I move—

"That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 13 April 1999."

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m.