WEDNESDAY, 25 AUGUST 1999

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

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Toolooa Industrial Estate

From **Mrs Liz Cunningham** (37 petitioners) requesting the House to restrict the Gladstone City Council from considering or granting any further building permits for the Toolooa Industrial Estate until such time as the Environmental Protection Agency completes its Nuisance Regulations 1999 regarding excessive noise and such regulations become law and are adhered to by existing businesses and an obligation is applied to prospective businesses.

Dental Ancillary Workers

From **Miss Simpson** (10,158 petitioners) requesting the House to (a) maintain the current duties of dental ancillary workers and (b) resist National Competition Policy at all cost.

School Dental Therapists

From **Miss Simpson** (309 petitioners) requesting the House to maintain the restrictions of the duties of school dental therapists and dental hygienists and resist National Competition Policy at all costs.

Petitions received.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Turkish Earthquake

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.32 a.m.), by leave: On behalf of all Queenslanders, I want to offer the people of Turkey our profound sympathy for the terrible loss that they suffered after the earthquake which struck on Tuesday, 17 August 1999. In this lucky country of ours, the sheer scale of the tragedy is almost beyond our comprehension. Whole communities between Istanbul and Izmit were destroyed. Thousands of lives were lost and many thousands more were injured and left homeless.

When the first terrible news reached us in Queensland, we were horrified by the appalling loss of life. As the days unfolded and the scale of the tragedy increased, we all felt a deepening sense of sorrow. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who are suffering, particularly those who must now try to pick up the pieces and rebuild—not just buildings, towns and cities but lives shattered by the loss of family, friends and livelihoods. We hope that somehow they will be able to find the strength to carry on.

This is a tragedy which touches us personally in Queensland. Across the State, Queenslanders of Turkish origin are dealing with this heartbreak. All of them are saddened by the news. Some are grieving for lost friends and relatives. In Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Bundaberg, Gatton and other towns, Queenslanders of Turkish origin are filled with a sense of loss made more acute by the fact that they are so far away from people who need them now. They are already rallying to help their country of origin in its time of great need.

The Brisbane-based Turkish Welfare Association has established an appeal, the proceeds of which will be forwarded to the Turkish Government-run appeal organised by TRT, which is Turkish Radio and Television. Major aid agencies are also launching appeals.

May I say that in the midst of all of this suffering, we can only be filled with admiration and respect for the resilience and courage of the people of Turkey. We acknowledge also the efforts of the international community who have worked so tirelessly to give assistance and support to those in need.

I am sure that all honourable members of this House will join with me in offering our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Turkey. I move—

> "That the expression of our heartfelt sympathy be noted."

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.35 a.m.): I join with the Premier in expressing the horror and sorrow of Queenslanders at the appalling earthquake tragedy in Turkey. We have all seen the harrowing television pictures from the earthquake zone and read the news reports from there. Many Australians, many Queenslanders, know Turkey well, particularly the area so hard hit by the earthquake. That stirring icon of our nationhood, Gallipoli, is nearby.

The very thought that 18,000 lives—uncountable lives, in effect, since we shall probably never know the exact toll, although we know that 32,000 are still missing—can be snuffed out by nature in this way is horrifying. It also reminds us that however clever humankind is or becomes, nature is always the ultimate master.

Queensland is an open and international society—a place where people from many countries come to live in peace and harmony in safety and security. At this time, we especially remember in our thoughts Queenslanders of Turkish origin. Our hearts go out to the bereaved in Turkey and elsewhere, including relatives of the dead and injured who may reside in this country, and I am pleased to see that practical assistance has also been offered from this country to the authorities in Turkey.

The task of rebuilding the shattered communities afflicted by the disaster will be a very long-term one. The Turkish authorities are talking in terms of having everyone who is now homeless accommodated in tents within a month and in prefabricated buildings within a year. In our comfortable and well-ordered communities here, we need to pause and think about what that means to those thousands of families—some still intact, others shattered. It is a human tragedy of the utmost magnitude.

Over the reconstruction period, there may be a lot more that Australia and Australians, who have long had a special affinity with the Turks, can do to help. This is a time for the generosity of spirit for which we Australians are known and for the down-to-earth practicality that Australians historically have used to beat adversity. At times such as this, Queenslanders, indeed Australians everywhere, speak with one voice. That voice in this instance offers spiritual sustenance, practical help and profound human sympathy.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Court Funding; Employment

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: The front page of today's Courier-Mail confirms that my Government is getting on with the job of the Budget and getting on with the job of improving the circumstances of all Queenslanders. It is particularly important that in the Budget we focus not just on the macro-economic side of the equation, such as Budget surpluses and economic growth. That is why I can confirm that in next month's Budget we will be allocating more than $700,000 to boost court funding and education for magistrates to help eliminate the traumas that child witnesses often face in court cases. A court appearance should not leave children traumatised and the Attorney-General will be detailing a range of initiatives in relation to this issue later this morning.

No matter what the issue, my Government is a Government for all Queenslanders, and that applies when it comes to job creation. When we say "jobs", we do not mean just any jobs, we mean jobs in workplaces that are safe and equitable, where workers have choices and employees have access to superannuation, sick and holiday pay, workers compensation and maternity and long service leave.

It is vitally important that no worker in Queensland is unfairly disadvantaged. This is especially true when it comes to women in the work force. For instance, a social and economic profile of women in Queensland, 1999, produced by the Office of Women's Policy reported that women's average earnings are lower than men's across all occupational groupings, at both managerial and non-managerial levels. Women also continue to be employed on a part-time and casual basis at a much greater rate than men.

We must not forget that the Federal coalition's draconian industrial relations laws—laws that the Opposition tried to mirror in this State—are skewed to make things worse for women. This is why a key initiative of the Budget that my Government will deliver next month focuses on ensuring that women get a fair share of the jobs growth—the opportunities—generated by this Government. This initiative of next month's Budget will provide funding to help eradicate gender inequity in the workplace.

Our commitment to jobs for women will be strengthened by $240,000 of funding for the Premier's Council for Women to run a women and employment project. This is a very important initiative. This Government is about jobs, but most importantly it is about quality jobs—jobs that enrich the lives of both employers and employees. The 12-member council has identified two priority areas affecting Queensland women. These are economic development for women of all backgrounds throughout the State, and education and training. A research project will flesh out the needs of Queensland women in these areas and will assist an all-of-Government response to these issues.

The council will inform women and the Government on such issues as the pros and cons of casual work, working in non-traditional areas, balancing work and family commitments, workplace harassment, education and training. These are the issues affecting the cannery worker at Northgate, the George Street lawyer and the Mount Isa mineworker.

The Premier's council will look at ways of helping women get a foothold in new and emerging industries—such as information technology—and progress up their career ladders. But it will also address the fundamental concerns of women who do not have the luxury of a career path. This Government will not forget the women who have worked the same job for more than a decade but are still employed on a casual basis: women who have little job security. We will not take the coalition's John Howard/Santo Santoro approach of a white picket fence, no opportunity and no equity when it comes to women's employment issues. These women will be brought under the umbrella of Women and Employment—a jobs strategy for all Queensland women. This initiative will help deliver equity in the workplace for Queensland women.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Industrial Relations; Film and Television Industry

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: I am extremely pleased to inform the House that Queensland's industrial relations climate is extremely healthy and working well. We said we would introduce fair and balanced legislation, and the results speak for themselves. The latest industrial disputes statistics published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that Queensland continues to outperform the national average when it comes to the number of working days lost.

There were only 47 working days lost for every thousand employees in Queensland in the 12 months ending in May this year compared with a national average of 62. In that 12-month period, Queensland accounted for only 14% of working days lost nationally through industrial disputes, which was significantly lower than its employment share of nearly 19%. In contrast, New South Wales had a rate of 38.6% compared with its share of 33.4% and Victoria had a rate of 29.4% compared with its share of 24.9%. This sort of climate helps generate more jobs for Queenslanders.

Another area which is crucial to job creation is the film and television industry. The Queensland Government welcomes a decision by the Australian Film Commission that Australian co-producers be allowed to source finance from any country. This represents an enlightened and informed approach to the marrying of cultural and financial imperatives. But I warn Parliament and the public that the commission could severely damage our industry if it makes changes to guidelines affecting co-production program formats. The proposed changes would exclude long-running television series from the co-production program. These productions provide opportunities for Australian producers, directors, writers, actors and crew to earn a regular and reliable living in the industry in Queensland.

Coote/Hayes Production Services are the Australian co-producers of television series Lost World and Beastmaster and say about 300 Australians are employed on these series at the moment. Beastmaster is an official Australia/Canadian co-production and complies with the co-production guidelines. But Coote/Hayes have warned that if the commission changes the guidelines these series would be excluded from the co-production program, with the risk that shows like these would not be shot in Australia. The commission made no decision on the proposed changes last week. I urge it to take the changes off the agenda immediately, because its proposals would cost Queensland and this industry in Queensland hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in foreign investment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Witnesses in Courts

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.45 a.m.), by leave: Several weeks ago, the ABC program Four Corners ran a story which touched a chord in our community. It was about the treatment of child witnesses by Australian court systems and included a harrowing recording of a young boy giving evidence in a sexual abuse case. That story could not but move those who saw it.

The Queensland Government has had a number of processes in place to help address some of the issues raised by those concerned about the treatment of children in our courts. But I readily admitted at the time that much more needed to done. Today, I am pleased to

be able to inform the House that this Government has committed itself to do more.

Next month's Budget will contain an allocation of $710,000 for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General as part of a whole-of-Government approach to implementing the new Child Protection Act to give Queensland children better protection against child abuse and neglect. The money will be spent on a range of initiatives, including the appointment of an extra magistrate and special training for magistrates. Training also will be provided for indigenous justices of the peace (Magistrates Courts) who work in Aboriginal communities which do not have full-time magistrates. $250,000 will be allocated to Legal Aid to allow it to provide extra resources. Part of that will include the provision of separate representation for children. I should stress the extra funding for Legal Aid Queensland is on top of the $5m a year boost this Government already has committed. I should also like to stress that children and families are the main losers from the Federal Government's heartless decision to rip $2m a year from its funding for Legal Aid Queensland.

In addition to these initiatives, the Queensland Government is taking additional steps to achieve a fairer go for children in our court system. Simple things, such as the use of microphones for child witnesses, can have a big impact on lessening the trauma of court appearances for children and other witnesses with soft voices. In addition, new courthouses are provided with video interview rooms, which may avoid the need to put children through the trauma of entering the imposing atmosphere of the court room. The Queensland Law Reform Commission is working on its report on the treatment of child witnesses and this Government will pay close attention to the recommendations contained in that report.

Yesterday I described the situations faced by children in our courts as sometimes being "pretty grim". I do not shy away from that description. However, this Government is determined to achieve a fairer go for children and, more importantly, we are not just publicly expressing sympathy—we are putting our money where our mouth is.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Breast Cancer

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: I would like to inform the House about some promising signs that are beginning to emerge about the detection and treatment of breast cancer. A recent national report, Breast Cancer in Australian Women 1982-1996, was released recently by the National Breast Cancer Centre. This report shows, for the first time, an increase in the number of women surviving breast cancer. It shows that mortality rates from breast cancer have fallen for two consecutive years, by 4% from 1994 to 1995 and a further 3% to 1996.

Researchers believe that early detection, through screening programs, such as BreastScreen Queensland, and early treatment that follows have helped force these previously stable death rates down. These trends are also reflected in a soon-to-be-released Queensland Health information circular which shows that for the period 1993 to 1997 there has been an average decrease in the mortality rate of 3.5% each year. Obviously the results will continue to be monitored. Everyone involved is hoping the mortality rate continues downward and that these figures are confirmed as a real trend in future years.

Another encouraging indication of the impact of the BreastScreen Queensland Program was that the largest increase in incidence, and therefore detection, of breast cancer was in women in the target age group for the breast cancer screening program, being women aged 50 to 69 years.

This Queensland data is consistent with the national report that found that incidence rates for breast cancer have increased by an average 2.2% a year from 1982 to 1996—the biggest increase among women aged over 50. This pattern of increasing incidence and, probably, decreasing mortality is exactly what would be expected from a successful breast cancer screening program. While everyone involved is cautious about reading too much into these figures, the statistics regarding screening using mammography are certainly encouraging.

By contrast, some women may have been misled by recent publicity promoting the use of thermography, which is digital infrared thermal imaging, as an alternative to mammography. There is widespread concern within the medical community about the promotion of thermography for breast cancer screening as there is no scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of thermography. This contrasts with international studies conducted into the efficacy of screening mammography, as used by BreastScreen Queensland, for the early detection of breast

cancer, which show mammography is the only proven method of reducing mortality from breast cancer.

I am concerned that women are potentially being misled about the efficacy of the test offered and that women may be falsely reassured and take no further action regarding screening or in reporting symptoms. I stress that breast cancer screening by mammography, as offered free of charge by the BreastScreen Queensland Program, offers the most effective means of detecting the early signs of breast cancer.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Expectation Pty Ltd

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.51 a.m.), by leave: The Department of Main Roads currently has an appeal before the Planning and Environment Court in relation to the conditional approval of a shopping centre in Buderim. This appeal relates to traffic concerns that the department has regarding that development. Since lodgment of the appeal, the development proposal has been significantly modified and it now appears likely that the concerns of the department regarding traffic issues will be resolved.

In today's Courier-Mail and the Sunshine Coast Daily, Expectation Pty Ltd, the developer of another site on the Sunshine Coast, the Chancellor Park development, has taken out advertisements that criticise the department and call upon me to hold an independent inquiry in relation to this matter. At the outset, I advise the House of the rampant self-interest of Expectation Pty Ltd in this matter.

In an article that appeared on page 3 of the Sunshine Coast Daily on 18 August 1999, Expectation Pty Ltd threatened Woolworths with a law suit if it proceeded with the proposed Buderim shopping centre development ahead of the development of a shopping centre at Expectation Pty Ltd's Chancellor Park site. Expectation Pty Ltd has no genuine concern in this matter regarding traffic issues in Buderim. Its interest and motivation is solely its commercial desire for a shopping centre development in the Chancellor Park estate.

It is expected that when the department and the developer meet at the Planning and Environment Court, there is likely to be a consent order made with respect to the proposed Buderim supermarket as a result of the mitigated traffic impact of the revised 4,000 square metre development. Expectation Pty Ltd has publicly demanded that my department continue the appeal to the Planning and Environment Court, irrespective of the independent advice received on the mitigated traffic impact. Expectation Pty Ltd wrote to me on 9 August 1999 threatening a public campaign against me if the appeal was discontinued because the concerns of Main Roads had been resolved.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr BREDHAUER: They will be, too. They speak of nothing else at the Kowanyama tavern.

In discharging my responsibilities as Minister, I am not prepared to kowtow to the commercial interests of property developers on the Sunshine Coast or anywhere else. I will not be intimidated by their threats.

Under section 4.3 of the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990, Main Roads is able to object to development applications to ensure that satisfactory access and traffic management can be implemented on State-controlled roads. Current material and advice available to Main Roads does not support that the adverse traffic impacts of the development are significant enough to warrant refusal of the application on traffic engineering grounds. The department will impose conditions that will minimise the effect of traffic from the proposed development.

Today I have asked my director-general to satisfy himself that these assessments are impartial and meet the requirements with respect to the traffic impact of the development on our State-controlled roads. It is not the responsibility of the Department of Main Roads to decide whether shopping centres or developments are approved. That is the responsibility of local governments and, in this case, the Maroochy Shire Council.

On 11 August 1999, the Maroochy Shire Council resolved to agree to a consent order to amend council conditions after considering the amended 4,000 square metre development proposal. I am satisfied that at all times during the assessment of traffic management impacts related to the proposed development of this site, Main Roads has properly followed the processes as provided by the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 and the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act 1990.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Forde Inquiry

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: Today I am pleased to table the Government's response to the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions. The report of the Forde inquiry marked a watershed in the history of Queensland's child protection system. The inquiry found not only shocking evidence of past physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children in State and church-run institutions; it also found evidence of risk for children currently in our child protection and youth justice systems.

I believe that we all have a duty to embrace this opportunity for change. The Government broadly supports the inquiry's recommendations and will work towards their implementation. I am pleased to say that the reform process has already begun. A major rebuilding program of the State's youth detention system is under way. The Government has completely overhauled Queensland's outdated child protection legislation. A comprehensive review will strengthen the role and independence of the Children's Commission and amendments to the Family Services Act are currently before this Parliament to tighten the screening of staff employed within my portfolio.

Today I am proud to announce the fulfilment of yet another key recommendation—a joint apology by the Queensland Government and the heads of churches to those who suffered harm as children in our institutions. The apology will be formally signed by myself, the Premier and senior representatives of the major churches later this morning. Our joint apology will never undo the harm caused in the past, but it may help those people who have been damaged by their past experiences to start to rebuild their lives.

In order to assist former residents and victims of abuse, the Beattie Government will establish a $1m trust fund. A board of trustees will be established to administer the fund. The trust will provide funds for services and support over a four-year period. The churches will be asked to contribute to this fund.

The Government's response strikes a balance between repairing the past and securing the future. I want to assure the people concerned that access to the trust fund will in no way jeopardise their ability to pursue claims through negotiation or, if necessary, the courts. Given the historic nature of much of the evidence before the inquiry, the question of limitation periods may be relevant.

The Government supports the inquiry recommendation to increase the independence of the Children's Commission and will transfer the responsibility for the Children's Commission to the Premier's portfolio. In light of the findings of this report, the Government supports the need for external scrutiny of the implementation of the recommendations. An independent monitoring body will be established to oversee the implementation process. The monitoring body will be chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor, the head of the School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Queensland. Professor O'Connor will be assisted by a number of other independent appointees, including the head of the Child Protection Council, former residents and children in care, whose first-hand experience of our child protection and youth justice systems will be invaluable. I table the membership of this body for the information of the House.

So that there can be absolute confidence in the independence of the monitoring body, it will be administratively supported through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I will be tabling regular reports from the monitoring body in the Parliament on the progress of the implementation process. The Parliament will, therefore, be the ultimate forum of scrutiny for the implementation of these recommendations.

The only recommendation that the Government will not consider implementing is recommendation 14. It recommends that a working party be established to investigate alternative sites for the new youth detention centre planned for Wacol. The Government does not support this view. If we delay the opening of the new centre, we will not be able to urgently close the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre by the end of the year 2000 as stressed by the inquiry itself in recommendation 13. I am confident that the design and positioning of the new centre will provide a state-of-the-art facility that will promote the rehabilitation of young offenders. The Government's response, therefore, expresses broad support for 41 of the 42 recommendations. Funding of these recommendations is being considered in the Budget process.

I take this opportunity to again express my gratitude to those who gave evidence to the inquiry. The work of so many people has led us to this point and it is impossible to

recognise them all. However, I would like to especially acknowledge the unstinting courage and determination of John Manthy, Allan Allaway, Mary Eather and Lewis Blayse to bring the truth to light.

Much has been achieved already, but there remains much to do. I assure the House of my commitment and the commitment of our Government to improve the safety and well-being of children and young people in the care or detention of the State. To do less would betray not only the children of today but also the children of yesterday—whose stories are captured in the Forde inquiry's report—and, most importantly, the children of tomorrow.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Banking Industry

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 a.m.), by leave: In today's society banking should be considered an essential service. All citizens should be entitled to reasonable access to banking services at an affordable price. They should also be easily able to compare the actual cost of the services provided by the banks.

Over the past two decades, the number of bank branches has reduced and, in many respects, service levels have declined, all at a time when the profits of banks have been on the rise. The result has been that many people and communities have been disadvantaged, in particular people in rural areas, older residents unfamiliar with the use of ATMs and other forms of electronic banking, and people without ready access to transport. Anyone who has travelled around this State has seen the now vacant buildings in many country towns where once banks operated thriving businesses. Banks, like other commercial operations, have a responsibility to act as good corporate citizens and, based on their poor track record, it appears this can be done only by regulation.

Last Friday, the Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmanian Governments supported a paper that called for legislation for minimum standards of service for banks that was presented to the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs. These services would include the following: a certain number of fee-free transactions for those in receipt of Government pensions and benefits; a certain level of banking services in rural and regional areas; and safe, accessible and easy use of ATMs/EFTPOS for aged and disabled consumers.

Currently in the United States, as a result of its Community Reinvestment Act, banks are assessed by the regulator in terms of how they meet the needs of the entire community. Whilst the situation in Australia may not be identical to that in the United States, a similar model can be adopted here. Of course, bank licensing and regulation is the responsibility of the Commonwealth. I would urge the Commonwealth to take a greater role in ensuring that the banks meet their community obligations.

There are, however, areas where the States can force banks to give greater consideration to consumers, and this is in the area of an easily comparable rate for loan products. A review of the Uniform Consumer Credit Code is currently under way. The report on Stage 1 of the review was handed to the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs last week. Amongst other things, the report recommends the use of a comparison rate on loan products, which is known as the averaged annual percentage rate—AAPR.

Many people would be aware that, when they apply for a loan, they have to consider not only the interest rate but also other fees and charges. These include start-up fees, monthly account-keeping fees, application fees, early termination fees and the like. The AAPR also takes account of variations in the interest rate including, for example, honeymoon rates on housing loans. Whilst there are some practical difficulties with disclosure of the comparison rate, the inclusion of the AAPR in advertising and precontractual disclosure will further the objectives of the Consumer Credit Code.

It should be noted that the recommendation is only for fixed-term loan contracts—that is, home loans and personal loans. The Consumer Credit Code currently includes a formula for AAPR. However, the use of this figure is optional and, as a result, very few lending institutions use this real rate in advertisements. It is something I believe should be mandatory and my stance is supported by the other Labor States of New South Wales and Tasmania.

I also understand that it is supported by the Opposition at a Commonwealth level and in South Australia. The stance is supported by at least one of the major banks. Last week I received a letter from the ANZ in which it indicated its support for greater use of the AAPR. Many other countries already advertise

lending products on an annual rate. As the template State for the Consumer Credit Code, Queensland cannot make changes by ourselves on this matter. We need the endorsement of Fair Trading Ministers in other States.

The review recommended that a comparison rate for fixed-term products be displayed on all advertisements for fixed-term products. As mentioned earlier, whilst Stage 1 of the Credit Code review has reported, the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs has decided to wait until the second stage of the review is completed. This second stage, which is currently under way, will cover a large range of operations of the Credit Code, and I must say that Queensland institutions have played a leading role in this review.

Due to the lack of independent data on consumer decision making in the consumer credit market, approval has been given for research to investigate the following issues: the socioeconomic and demographic patterns of consumer credit usage in the community, the factors which contribute to and inform consumer decisions to enter into consumer credit arrangements, the factors which determine choices between credit providers and credit products, and the manner in which Code disclosure information is used by consumers.

As part of the process, the Queensland Government Statistician has researched data through a telephone survey of 1,500 consumers who had taken out loans since 1 January 1997. Another Queenslander, Justin Malbon of the Griffith University Law School, has prepared a report on the research findings as well as market surveys on credit advertising and focus group research to refine the research findings. The research report is in the process of being finalised and will be submitted to Fair Trading Ministers soon so that we can again consider the issue of comparable rates.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Aquaculture Research

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: Following the Community Cabinet meeting in Beerwah and Landsborough next week, I shall officially open extensions to the Department of Primary Industries' world-leading Bribie Island Aquaculture Research Centre. Aquaculture is widely regarded as one of Australia's fastest growing primary industries. In Queensland, the industry's economic development and environmental management is being underpinned by groundbreaking research, which is attracting significant international attention.

Under one of the projects under way at the research centre, scientists are evaluating the efficiency of using mullet and other finfish species to remove effluent from aquaculture operations. The project has begun with preliminary investigations into the breeding technology and larval rearing of sea mullet. The application and finetuning of this research offers to assist in the development of sustainable aquaculture in Queensland. Overseas trials have found that sea mullet are effective consumers of algae, plankton and prawn waste at low cost and with minimal maintenance. Fishers at Bribie Island collected mature mullet during its winter spawning migration.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The honourable member is a rude man.

Honourable members interjected.

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

Mr PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The mullet are being held in brood-stock tanks at the research centre. With the development of this technology, tens of thousands of juvenile mullet are being raised to the fingerling stage and then transported and released into settlement ponds at various aquaculture farms. The potential of this project for both environmental management and resource efficiency of the aquaculture industry is exciting. But I understand that the project is expected to demonstrate that mullet, and other fish species, will consume algae and other waste material, converting it into a commercial fish crop whilst improving discharge water quality. This research is aiming to boost the economic potential of aquaculture, while preserving the environment—all thanks to the humble mullet.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Submissions

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (10.08 a.m.): On behalf of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, I lay upon the table of the House those submissions which the committee has authorised for publication in relation to its review of the Freedom of Information Act

1992. The committee will be calling for further comment on issues arising out of submissions and the committee's preliminary research. On behalf of the committee, I take this opportunity to thank those people and organisations who made submissions to our inquiry.

NOTICE OF MOTION

SES Positions, Merit Selection

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (10.10 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

> "That this House expresses grave concern at the Beattie Labor Government's approach to public administration and calls on the Government to:
>
> (a) ensure that all future vacancies in chief executive positions are publicly advertised, the candidates evaluated by an independent selection panel and appointments made on merit and equity;
>
> (b) ensure that all SES positions are filled on merit and equity; and
>
> (c) stop filling important public sector entities with its mates."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ministerial Legal Expenses

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.10 a.m.): It is clear from statements made by the Premier and the Attorney-General that there has been a secret and dramatic shift in the eligibility guidelines in respect of Ministers and members of this Parliament in regard to legal expenses. Yesterday the Premier told the Parliament that last year Cabinet endorsed guidelines for Ministers obtaining legal assistance; "we have visited those guidelines recently"; Ministers can apply for assistance if they see fit; members of the Opposition can seek to be represented and can apply; and the application goes through the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General.

The Attorney-General then elaborated further. He said that the new principles involved an application through the Solicitor-General, the Attorney-General and the Premier; however, in the case of the Premier, Cabinet approval is required; and a similar policy applies to Parliamentary Secretaries.

There are a number of inconsistencies. Firstly, it appears as if the new guidelines for legal representation were approved last year and no announcement was made. If that is so, then new guidelines replace those that have been in place in this State for a number of decades. Under those guidelines, Cabinet approval was required and the Attorney-General was the officer responsible for making the recommendations on advice from Crown Law. It would seem from the Attorney's answer that for some reason, with the exception of the Premier, a decision to grant approval for legal assistance can be made without Cabinet approval. Further, in these cases the Premier himself has a role to play.

Why? Where are the guidelines? Why was it deemed necessary by this Government to change the guidelines and why did the Government fail to make any public statement in respect of this matter until it was questioned in this House? It is becoming increasingly obvious that it has gutted the guidelines to benefit its Labor mates.

Time expired.

Drug Abuse

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (10.12 a.m.): While I was overseas on the recent Parliamentary Information Technology Trade Delegation, I took time out to meet with law enforcement officers attached to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division in Colombia. We discussed methods of responding to drug abuse in our communities and how to build better relationships between police and the public.

I now table for the benefit of members and, in particular the Minister for Police and the Minister for Education, a copy of their Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program. This is a joint project of the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles School Department, aimed at preventing drug abuse in children and youth from kindergarten to Grade 12.

In this regard, I would like to place on record my sincere appreciation to Special Agent Fayette Watkins and Special Agent McAllister for their willingness to exchange programs and ideas. The officers also advised that every year they have a "respect for the law day" which, I have been informed, has proved very, very successful in building positive bridges between police and the public.

The building of bridges and the willingness of people from different countries around the world to exchange ideas for the good of all is one of the direct benefits that I have experienced as a result of the Premier formalising the sister State relationship between Queensland and South Carolina. I

urge the respective Ministers to have some of their staff evaluate this Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program and assess its possible suitability to Queensland.

Queensland Heritage Trails Network

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (10.14 a.m.): I refer to the Premier's comments in this House yesterday when he mentioned the funding to expand the Charleville Sky Watch project into the Cosmos centre under the Queensland Heritage Trails Network. The Premier said that he had presented a cheque for $750,000 to the Murweh Shire. In fact, he presented a cheque for $175,000. Although the funding is not at the level the Premier had described yesterday, the community and I are appreciative of the $175,000 that will go towards the $3.4m project. I understand that further funding will be forthcoming from the Federal Government under this program.

The Heritage Trails Network is a worthy project, and no doubt most submissions have some merit and community support. However, the Premier's statement yesterday saying that funding is to benefit country Queensland is somewhat misleading. To those members on the other side of the Chamber, Ipswich may appear to be in the country; however, the Government would have great difficulty convincing the real country Queenslanders that $15m of the $39m should be spent in metropolitan Ipswich. Perhaps the Premier may be happy to turn the trail around so that it starts from Charleville instead and heads towards Ipswich.

The Labor Government's administration of the Heritage Trails Network is nothing more than a pork-barrelling exercise for the former Treasurer, David Hamill, and his Labor mate Don Livingstone, the former member for Ipswich West. It was David Hamill who increased the funding from $3m to $39m, which resulted in a $15m windfall for him and his Labor mate Don Livingstone. There is nothing like winning back the seat next door with $15m in your back pocket! The member for Ipswich has said that the $15m project is not in his electorate and, therefore, is not pork-barrelling.

Time expired.

Mr D. Petrovic

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (10.16 a.m.): I rise to inform the House of the wonderful accomplishments of one of my young constituents, Mr Dejan Petrovic. I remind the House of my recent speech concerning a function held at the Queen Alexandra Home in Coorparoo to launch conversation classes for migrants being conducted by the Coorparoo community association. The number of local residents who came to listen to Mr Uri Themal and a range of other speakers and enjoy the entertainment provided by students at the Coorparoo Secondary College was very heartening.

On that occasion I took the opportunity to prevail upon guests to purchase tickets in a raffle to help send one of our local primary school students to Darwin for the national cross-country titles. This was conducted to supplement the various donations and the money dedicated by the Greenslopes State School P & C Association. I have now been informed by the school's acting principal that Mr Petrovic won second place at the national titles in cross country and recorded the fastest time in a 1,500 metre relay team which won gold.

What sets Mr Petrovic's achievements apart from those of many other sporting successes is the fact that he and his family arrived as refugees from Croatia only two years ago. When he first arrived, he could not speak any English at all. Since that time he has not only excelled in athletics, but has also displayed leadership skills that have seen him appointed as the school captain. I am informed that he is also distinguishing himself academically. Such achievements are, of course, an immense credit to him and his family. I am told that all of his extended family remain in Croatia and that they have taken great pride in his achievements. His grandfather, in particular, has received photos and stories of Dejan's success here with immense pleasure.

I take this opportunity to commend the Greenslopes State School on the environment of support and encouragement it provides to its large population of migrant students and their families. I know that the acting principal, Ms Margaret Drew, has determined that one of her students would not miss out on the opportunity to participate at a national level and, together with other members of the school community, was instrumental in raising the necessary funds.

Time expired.

Coalition Industrial Relations Policies

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (10.18 a.m.): During the past few weeks and coinciding with various rallies against the Federal Government's workplace relations

policies, several Labor members of Parliament, including Ministers, have perpetrated untruths about the efficacy of the Federal coalition's workplace relations policy. Obviously, Labor in this place and the ACTU will not tell Queensland workers the facts. The facts do not suit their form of industrial cronyism, but the facts are that the coalition policies that they rail against have produced the following benefits for Queensland and Australia—

> A workplace environment based on agreement making and the choice of employers and employees—not based on class ideology or union membership.
>
> Real safety net wage increases for Australian workers, especially for low paid and disadvantaged workers of more than 7%—compared with a decline in real wages of more than 5% under the Labor/ACTU Accord.
>
> Real wage increases almost double the safety net for workers making agreements with their employers.
>
> The lowest level of industrial disputes and strikes since records in Australia began in 1913.
>
> Nearly 490,000 new jobs created since 1996.
>
> A reduction in the unemployment rate to 7%—the lowest for 10 years—compared with Labor's 11.2%.
>
> The lowest youth unemployment rate for more than 10 years.
>
> Equal rights for union and non-union workers.

All of these achievements have been the product of reforms which are opposed by Labor and its union mates. These reforms have also contributed to a more secure workplace because they have been underpinned by better productivity and a stronger economy.

Australian employers and workers are getting on with the job of workplace reform. Only the Labor Party and its union ideologues are living in the past, beholden to its union mates and ideological mantra. The coalition's policies are based on the common good—on the interests of employers and employees alike, union and non-union alike, and the interests of the unemployed as well as the employed. In contrast, Labor's industrial relations laws were railroaded through the Queensland Parliament without detailed debate—a payback to union mates, backroom deals with union mates and a return to power and privilege of favoured union bosses and union members.

Skills Week

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): This morning I had the pleasure of launching the State Government sponsored Skills Week in my region at the Construction Training Centre at Salisbury, an excellent partnership facility between industry, Government, unions and TAFE. Around 80 local employers attended—a great show of support for training in their industries.

It is well documented that effective training improves productivity. Training is therefore an essential business investment. It is also well known that if we fail to keep employees up to date with the latest skills and technologies, our capacity for economic growth will be stifled.

My message to employers this morning was that there has never been a better time to take on apprentices and trainees. Training options are widely available, and the Training Minister, Paul Braddy, has expanded the incentives available to employers to take on apprentices and trainees.

I also give a plug to Q-Build. I acknowledge the Minister for Public Works, Robert Schwarten, for his commitment to growth in apprenticeship opportunities within Q-Build. This morning I met Daniel Gill, Apprentice of the Year for 1998. Daniel is a stonemason with Q-Build. He praised Q-Build for the opportunities and training given to him and he also said that Q-Build's safety record far exceeds that of other contractors that he has worked alongside. Daniel Gill is one of many committed Q-Build employees.

Our Government is determined to provide career paths for many more young men and women such as Daniel. This morning I called on private employers to take on a Daniel or a Danielle and play a key role in giving a future to our young people.

National Parks

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.21 a.m.): This morning I draw the attention of the House to the declining condition of many of Queensland's national parks under the Beattie Government. It is of great concern to me, to neighbouring land-holders and to every Queenslander that these parks are falling into rack and ruin because of underfunded or non-existent pest control

programs and a severe shortage of park rangers.

The first Beattie Budget bloated the bureaucracy at the expense of our national parks. $400,000 was provided to establish the Environmental Protection Agency, and 51 new positions were to be created within the Brisbane-based office this past year. Then the department purchased at least another eight properties for national parks—a total area of some 71,000 hectares—but did not increase park ranger numbers.

It is no wonder that weeds and pest populations are exploding and that there are increasing problems with vandalism, trespassing and even hunting. Neighbouring land-holders have been forced into the role of first line defence against the spread of weeds and feral animals in national parks. They are being made to pay for the mismanagement of the Beattie Government.

The State land pest management project is nothing more than window-dressing. It has not received one cent of extra funding. All the buzzwords and flashy project names in the world will not help to control feral pigs or weeds in national parks. Our national parks need dollars to be spent on the ground.

This year's Budget presents the Government with an opportunity to correct this situation and put more funding into rangers and pest control. I call on the Beattie Government to take this opportunity to do the right thing by our national parks and not throw the burden back upon our land-holders to make sure that feral animals are not running around. The Government should do the right thing by national parks.

Bayside 2000 What Next? Initiative

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (10.23 a.m.): Job creation is at the centre of every decision taken by the Beattie Labor Government. I am pleased to advise the House of what the Redland community is doing to ensure that more people obtain jobs.

On Monday morning I had the great honour to launch the Bayside 2000 What Next? initiative. This initiative has grown from the desire of the bayside community to actively do something about unemployment in the district and not wait passively for assistance from others. It is a powerful initiative, not only for what it will achieve but for what it demonstrates. When community groups, Government and individuals pool their energy and resources in a coordinated way, the benefits to our community can be enormous. The Bayside 2000 What Next? initiative is one such benefit.

Redland Shire Council, the Redland Employer and Placement Service, Bridgeworks Personnel, local members of the job network system and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority have worked together to develop high quality programs and resources in a very short period of time. The Redland community is indebted to the members of these organisations for their foresight, planning and hard work. I thank them sincerely on behalf of our community and the State Government.

The Bayside 2000 What Next? approach of targeting all sections of our community—students, parents, job seekers, business and Government—through an awareness campaign, backing this up with quality resources and personnel, is a unique model that will put 2,000 bayside residents in jobs by the year 2000. The Beattie Labor Government, in providing funds for Bayside 2000, recognises the hard work and initiative of our community, as well as the great gains to be made by such a worthwhile project. I personally thank Bernadette Roberts, the executive director of TEPA.

Time expired.

Queensland Ambulance Service

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): I rise in this House today to alert members to a disgraceful situation which seems to be occurring right around our State on an all too regular basis. I have several relevant cases on file as a result of members of the public contacting me, and I refer in particular to a letter I received from a Mrs McHugh of Roma. Mrs McHugh's son had a major operation in Brisbane which involved a laminectomy and a backbone graft/fusion. Members may or may not know that the operation prevents a patient from sitting for six weeks or more.

When the hospital endeavoured to obtain ambulance transport for the patient it was refused, much to the anguish of the medical staff and the patient's mother and wife. The patient's wife and mother then endeavoured to transport him back to Roma—a trip of more than seven hours—with him reclining on the bucket seat of their car. It was a very painful and difficult procedure for him to get in and out of the car, as members could well imagine. Medical advice was that the patient should get out of the car every hour on the seven-hour journey, but his wife and mother were unable to achieve this and were able to do this only three times over the seven hours.

This is a disgraceful situation that is occurring too regularly. Although the Minister has replied to Mrs McHugh's concern, there seem to be some discrepancies. The Minister states that QAS has no record of receiving communication from the doctor or hospital for ambulance transportation and that it would have been available had the physician authorised and requested it. This may be so, but one has to ask why. Why was there no request or record of request? Mrs McHugh can only go on what her son's doctor told her—that he had requested an ambulance.

The Minister states that Mrs McHugh's son's request for QAS Roma station staff to dress his surgical wound would have resulted in an examination by the ambulance officer and advice that the surgical wound appeared to be breaking down and sutures dislodged. Her son was particularly distressed because of the Minister's response. Her son and his wife were left standing on the footpath in pouring rain—

Time expired.

Safety Institute of Australia Conference; Adventure Tourism

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): On Monday of this week I was pleased to represent the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations in opening the Safety Institute of Australia, Queensland Division, conference in Cairns. The conference was well supported by the Division of Workplace Health and Safety and WorkCover Queensland. It is timely, in light of the strong stand of the Minister and this Government on workplace health and safety issues.

One of the important actions taken has been to increase the number of workplace health and safety inspectors, particularly those targeting construction sites. This has been welcomed by Dave Hanna, the BLF organiser who has campaigned on this issue. The previous Government seemed to have deaf ears when it came to this issue. I congratulate him on his strong and continuing leadership in the region on this matter.

There should be, as was said at the conference, zero tolerance of workplace health and safety breaches, while at the same time it should be ensured that industry knows and expects that breaches will be dealt with consistently and that there is predictability as to the high standards expected.

I also draw attention to the importance, particularly in Cairns, of adventure tourism. It is, of course, a risky business. Popular tourism activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling, whitewater rafting, horse riding, parasailing and bungee jumping are heavily marketed to novice participants, and therein lies part of the difficulty. We are well led in the workplace health and safety division by dive inspector Chris Coxon in Cairns, who has, with Dive Queensland and particularly Col McKenzie, taken a lead in the revisions presently under way to the code of practice for recreational diving and recreational snorkelling at a workplace. Only by monitoring and working with the industry to develop even higher standards than we already have can we make sure that these activities are safe, fun and easy for the people who visit the Great Barrier Reef and other adventure tourism outlets.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ministerial Legal Expenses

Mr BORBIDGE (10.30 a.m.): I refer the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to his disclosure yesterday of the previously secret—and recent—widening of eligibility of MPs to taxpayer-funded legal assistance, generally on his decision alone, and with reference to Cabinet only in the case of the Premier. I refer also to the apparent contradiction of his statements by the Premier today, who says that he also has a role in all decisions other than those decisions affecting himself, and I ask: why has the Attorney abandoned the long-established convention requiring Cabinet approval in all instances? And will he now table the old and the new guidelines?

Mr FOLEY: With respect to the guidelines previously in existence—they were somewhat disordered and required to be coordinated and clarified. That was particularly so in view of the significant expenditure of public moneys paid out in respect of Mr Cooper's legal fees of $522,259.69 and Mr Borbidge's legal fees of $449,409.46. Prior to that, the situation was somewhat ambiguous.

There was a set of proposed guidelines from EARC in relation to public funding of defamation suits, which I table. There was also a set of guidelines in respect of Crown acceptance of legal liability for actions of Crown employees, which I also table but which was not entirely applicable to the circumstances relating to Ministers. There was also a set of guidelines relating to Ministers of the Crown. But contrary to what the Opposition says, the actual procedure required was not clear.

It became important to determine these matters because claims were received from Mr Lingard and Mr Connor regarding their fees for the inquiries by the CJC—legal costs for Mr Lingard in the sum of $12,793.35 and those for Mr Connor in the sum of $1,178.30. It was also important with respect to an outstanding defamation proceeding involving Mr Borbidge.

So I do table the funding guidelines established by this Government to try to pull those together. They differ in one important respect, in that rates for counsel are not paid at commercial rates but at Crown Law rates. That is a more frugal rate because, frankly, there was concern that the sums involved were excessive and it was felt important to clarify that matter. I also make this comment: the guidelines make clear that, in respect of representation, say, before a CJC inquiry, that is subject to the relevant Minister being cleared, contrary to some of the claims of the Opposition Leader.

In accordance with those guidelines, funding has been made available to Mr Borbidge and to Mr Cooper in respect of defamation proceedings against them. I point out that, in their capacity as Ministers of the Crown, the Crown acts through its employees and its Ministers, and that procedure is reasonable in the circumstances. The provision of legal representation—

Time expired.

Ministerial Legal Expenses

Mr BORBIDGE: I direct a further question to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I refer again to his disclosure of the previously secret widening of the eligibility of members of Parliament to taxpayer-funded legal assistance, with no reference to Cabinet required in the case of Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and backbenchers. I refer also to the precedent set with legal costs now being made available to Parliamentary Secretaries, and I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: was his decision to significantly liberalise the guidelines prompted by the potential for the Premier's Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Townsville, to face legal costs in relation to an electoral fraud case in Townsville?

Mr FOLEY: With respect to the latter question: no. These guidelines do not—contrary to the claim in the question—cover backbenchers. They cover agents of the Crown, that is, Ministers of the Crown, and they were set out on that basis.

With respect to Parliamentary Secretaries, who are a new creature of the Constitution brought into existence as a result of amendments to the Constitution Act by the honourable member's Government—they have been brought within the guidelines in recent weeks simply because they, too, are appointees of Executive Council; that is, they act on behalf of the Crown. And in respect of them, the guidelines which I have tabled are set out there. That is different from the position with respect to backbenchers, who are not agents of the Crown.

The question arises as to whether and to what extent Parliamentary Secretaries should enjoy the same legal representation as Ministers. The broad answer is that they should. However, there is a question as to what is the extent and scope of their duties. Section 58 of the Constitution Act 1867 provides for that to be specified by the Premier. In fact, neither the previous Premier nor the current Premier has set out in specific detail those duties. So in the approval process, the question of whether or not it falls within the scope of those duties is determined by the Premier.

What we have sought to do has been to rein in the massive spending machine—out of control—that we saw in the—

Mr Borbidge: Mr Reynolds is eligible.

Mr FOLEY: I do not know what the member is referring to with respect to some electoral fraud matter. Any Parliamentary Secretary is entitled to apply in respect of any matter in which he or she has acted pursuant to his or her duties as a Parliamentary Secretary, not in a personal capacity and not in the capacity of a backbencher. That is the point.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will allow the House to hear the Attorney-General's answer.

Mr FOLEY: I am informing the honourable member that I have no knowledge of the matter to which he refers. The guidelines are there in order to rein in the significant expenditure. I ask members to keep this in mind: the expenditure in respect of the Carruthers inquiry—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

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

Mr FOLEY:—was made in respect of conduct engaged in by the Honourable the

Leader of the Opposition while not a Minister of the Crown.

Time expired.

State Emergency Service Cadets; Youth Training Programs

Mr SULLIVAN: I refer the Premier to his announcement in the House yesterday that the State Government will extend the excellent program for SES cadets, and I ask: is the State Government supporting similar training programs for other young Queenslanders?

Mr BEATTIE: I know that the member for Chermside has a very strong interest, as a family man, in encouraging children and encouraging their participation in voluntary organisations. I am pleased to say that yes, the State Government does indeed support a host of similar programs for young Queenslanders.

My Government believes in supporting young Queenslanders in a host of activities, such as the SES cadets and other worthwhile pursuits, such as sports. As I said yesterday, the initial four-year State Emergency Services cadets program has been so successful that it will be made permanent with funding of $1m a year. There is little doubt that the cadet scheme is one of the most successful youth programs in this State.

Another example of the State Government's support for young Queenslanders which I wish to bring to the attention of this House is the excellent City Nipper program. I am pleased to announce that I have recently approved $30,000 in grants for this program, which is run by Surf Life Saving Queensland. This program has been conducted for the past five years at South Bank and for the past year at the Strand in Townsville. During that time the program has educated more than 1,200 young Queenslanders aged between seven and 13 about surf and aquatic safety.

Given our climate and lifestyle, that is a very worthwhile endeavour and I commend the people who have conducted these programs—in particular Surf Life Saving Queensland. It is worth noting that the programs have been filled to capacity each year. That means that there is very strong support from young Queenslanders and their parents for these programs.

The City Nipper program was originally designed to give geographically disadvantaged young Queenslanders—youngsters who live some distance from the coastline—a chance to take part in much the same activities as Nippers at surf lifesaving clubs on the coast. Each year, Surf Life Saving Queensland runs two programs during summer for about 10 weeks each. The program is taught by qualified surf lifesavers and covers a range of aspects including surf and aquatic safety, fitness, nutrition, surf awareness, competition and lifesaving skills. So, these young Queenslanders learn to not only save the lives of others but also their own lives.

Fourteen people drowned in Queensland in the past 12 months, and that is 14 too many. Tragically, the statistics also show that almost half the tragic drownings were people who lived more than 50 kilometres from the beach. This program, which this Government is funding, is aimed at reducing—and, hopefully, stopping—this unfortunate loss of life. That is why I am proud that the State Government is contributing $30,000 to ensure the continuing success of the City Nipper program.

I should say, in passing, that surf lifesaving in this State provides an incredibly valuable service to the community. I want to put on record on behalf of the State Government my appreciation for that service.

Ministerial Legal Expenses

Dr WATSON: My question is directed to the Premier and acting Treasurer. I refer to the answer just given by the Attorney-General regarding the extension of publicly funded legal assistance to Parliamentary Secretaries and the relevance of the scope of the duties of Parliamentary Secretaries. I ask: what involvement did the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer have in the net bet affair? Has the Treasurer's Parliamentary Secretary ever met with representatives of Gocorp, Navari, or any of the shareholders of these or antecedent companies? If the Treasurer's Parliamentary Secretary had no involvement in net bet, why have you taken the unprecedented step of extending publicly funded legal assistance to him?

Mr BEATTIE: If there was any Government that went out of its way to fund Ministers and, significantly, Opposition spokesmen, it was the Government of the Borbidge/Sheldon years. There was a significant difference in all this. When the secret MOU was signed Mr Borbidge was not Premier—he was Leader of the Opposition. When Mr Cooper signed that document he was not the Police Minister—he was the Opposition Police spokesman.

They have the hide to come in here and talk about guidelines. These are guidelines for Ministers. What did the Opposition do? Those opposite put in guidelines to look after their mates when they were in Opposition. Talk about mates' rates!

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Well, you did it. Let the people of Queensland know what mates' rates cost the taxpayer. Mr Cooper—$522,259.69. Not bad mates' rates! Mr Borbidge—

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order and I move that the Premier table the document which includes how much the Labor Party was paid when he, as Leader of the Opposition, said that Labor would not lodge a claim. It was $200,000, $300,000, or more.

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

Mr BEATTIE: If there had not been a secret MOU, the Labor Party would not have had to appear anywhere. Let us be really clear about this. The only reason that all came about is that the Leader of the Opposition started—

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. The ALP appeared because it was all to do with the shooters.

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

Mr BEATTIE: The member for Indooroopilly knows the sequence as well as I do. However, let me finish with these figures. Mr Borbidge—$449,409.46. Not bad mates' rates! Here is another mates' rate: Joan Sheldon, $13,867.50. That is not bad! Talk about Mr Santoro! Talk about mates' rates! What did Mr Santoro receive? He received $18,489.05.

What about Russell Cooper's key adviser? Do honourable members remember Mr Heery from Townsville? What did he receive? Mr Heery got $62,835.25. The Police Union—the union the Opposition did the deal with—received $604,644.

This Government is the first Government to introduce guidelines and integrity in relation to this process. The Leader of the Opposition was on radio station 4QR talking about various principles, and the guidelines with reference to people being charged were raised. The Leader of the Opposition knows that he has benefited from a settlement process in a matter which was found against him.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Yes, you have. In the legal defamation process—oh, here we go, he wants to object.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. If the honourable member is referring to the Carruthers inquiry, I was exonerated, as was the former Minister for Police.

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

Mr BEATTIE: I am talking about a defamation action which we settled since being in Government.

Mr Borbidge: Tom Burns' as well.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We are not going to have tit for tat.

Technology

Mr LUCAS: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's determination to make Queensland the smart State, and I ask: will the forthcoming State Budget contain any measures to further this goal?

Mr BEATTIE: Let us talk about real things that impinge on people's lives instead of playing games and such nonsense.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: You have no credibility. Remember the $2.2m on the Carruthers inquiry. Your hands are dirty and filthy. You have no credibility.

Let us talk about something serious. Let us talk about the Budget. I am happy to tell the honourable member that, yes, there will be funding for the 10-year plan for biotechnology. This $270m plan involves funding scientific research facilities and technology incubators. We will also be providing major financial assistance, and assistance in kind, to 13 new cooperative research centres which were recently approved by the Commonwealth Government after being recommended by the Department of State Development.

Cooperative research centres see the Government, the private sector and universities working together to produce sustainable, smart jobs. That relationship is very important for our future. We want sustainable jobs and sustainable investment that will take us into the next century. To achieve these aims we will foster pioneering industries. This is about innovation; this is about our future.

The Queensland Innovation Council will advise on developing and promoting our vision for a smart State. It will work towards advancing research and development and building on our science, engineering and technology base. It will also accelerate the commercialisation of innovation and promote a

culture of innovation in Queensland. That is what this is about—a culture of innovation from which we can get new jobs for our future. This will allow us to compete in what is a very ugly commercial world.

Queensland will also host three major conferences in the coming months. I hope honourable members will take the opportunity to try to get to some of these conferences. The State Government is pleased to be a major sponsor of the largest and most influential technology event ever held in Australia—the APEC Technomart, which will be held on the Gold Coast in early November. In July next year, Queensland will host ABA 2000, which is Australia's foremost biotechnology conference. After that comes the International Marine Biotechnology Conference in Townsville.

That is the vision that the Budget will provide. That is the future for our children. That is the future that Queenslanders want. Queenslanders do not want politicians in the gutter spinning half truths and the dishonesty that we get from the Opposition in this place. What Queenslanders want is a future.

We have such things as Heritage Trails, but we have the local member coming in here in a half-smart way to denigrate what is one of the most important tourism innovations in this State. Who approved it? Who also approved the Ipswich Railway Workshops upgrade? The Opposition did! The former Minister did!

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: It came in when you were in office. What hypocrisy! You couldn't lie straight in bed.

Ms D. Linnane, Mr D. Brown

Mr SANTORO: I refer the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to the Beattie Labor Government's recent appointment to the Industrial Relations Commission of Queensland ALP President, Don Brown, and former clerks union organiser and vice-president, Dianne Linnane, and I ask: why has the Beattie Labor Government appointed two high-profile union representatives to the commission, particularly when the retiring commissioner, Mr Nutter, had been appointed to the commission by the Goss Labor Government as a public sector representative? Will the Minister confirm for the benefit of the Parliament that these two appointments represent yet another example of cronyism gone mad within the Beattie Labor Government and an outrageous attempt by the Beattie Labor Government to unionise the Industrial Relations Commission?

Mr BRADDY: First of all, the appointment of Dianne Linnane has been, as usual, entirely and deliberately misconstrued by the honourable member for Clayfield. For the past 11 years, Dianne Linnane has not been associated with the union movement. She has been a practising barrister at the private bar acting in capacities, yes, on some occasions for trade unions, but she has had a very large practice with employers, particularly employers in the coalmining industry. In fact, the most significant part of her practice as a barrister practising industrial relations was with some significant coalmining companies throughout Australia. Prior to that, some 11 years ago she worked for the trade union movement. At the time of her appointment she was not and, to the best of my knowledge, has never been a member of the Australian Labor Party. She has been a practising barrister, very highly regarded in the industrial relations area and she was appointed to a position that required the appointee to have legal qualifications as well as experience in the industrial relations area. The people in the coalmining industry from the employers' side thought so highly of her that she was briefed regularly by them to appear in the Industrial Relations Commission.

In relation to the appointment of Commissioner Don Brown, we see a contrast between our behaviour and the behaviour of the member for Clayfield. When he made an appointment, he cut out a former union person as an industrial commissioner and broke a convention and a tradition that had been respected in this State for some 80 years. The only person who has brought the Industrial Relations Commission into disrepute has been the member for Clayfield. On the other hand, as the employer representatives have said, and several of them are on the public record, they understood—and the member for Surfers Paradise also agreed—that under the tripartite system it was time for a trade union person to be appointed. The employer representatives have said that Don Brown is a perfectly proper appointment.

Dianne Linnane has no connection with the Labor Party. Don Brown was a trade union representative and he has been appointed as such. His appointment has been welcomed by employers and business as well as the community. So the only person who has brought the commission into disrepute has been the member for Clayfield by his partisan removal from the commission of a trade union person.

Small Business

Dr CLARK: I ask the Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: in light of the significance of small business to the Queensland economy, can the Minister please indicate what steps the Government is taking to help small businesses like those in Barron River to adapt to new technology?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question. The Government is committed to helping small business, not just in a rhetorical sense but in a real sense. Unlike those opposite and unlike One Nation, which actually thinks that the world has to stop, we are actually helping small business in a real sense. We want to help small business adapt to the changes in the business environment.

A greater use of the Internet is far more evident now in business. Big business is using the Internet more than small and medium-sized businesses. In the next few years it is estimated that over 20% of all business will be conducted on the Internet. Small and medium-sized businesses are disadvantaged by that move into that technology. Actually, they are flat out running their businesses without looking at how they might run their businesses in an e-commerce environment.

Rather than have a standard seminar where a boffin gets up and tells people how it is done, through my department this Government has adopted a far more proactive approach. We are actually working with small businesses and giving them the tools and the training to assist them develop an e-commerce environment. Having given 12 small businesses that training, those businesses will then go out and work with their peers on an introduction of e-commerce within the broader small-business community. We are offering Internet access and training and electronic support. We are giving them the electronic catalogues, the capacity to order electronically, in some cases including software that will enable the electronic generation of export and Customs documentation and, in some areas also, the equipment to accept credit cards on the Internet. Those businesses will then work at a comprehensive e-commerce strategy and then act like champions out there in the small-business community. We are doing this with 12 companies right throughout the State.

So our part of the deal is that we give them the software and the training; their part of the deal is to go out and talk to the broader small-business community in their home towns and in their industry sectors. In other words, they will share their experiences with those small and medium-sized business.

As well, we will use our relationship with Osaka—and yesterday the Premier alluded to the opening of further offices in Osaka—because they are interested in piloting an e-commerce program with small businesses. We will use that relationship to link small businesses electronically to Osaka to assist some of them to improve their export opportunities in Japan. This trial is not only making sure that small businesses can compete in the local economy but also it gives them an opportunity to compete in the real world.

Mr G. Hannigan

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to his appointment of Garry Hannigan as acting in the newly created executive director's position within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and I ask: why was the position created in response to an appeal from the Director of Public Prosecutions for additional funding resources to overcome an increasing workload and backlog within the office? Will the Attorney-General explain to the House how a newly created SES position will help the DPP attend to this workload? Does the Attorney-General agree that the appointment of Mr Hannigan could create the perception within the independent Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions of potential political interference, given Mr Hannigan's previous senior positions as an adviser to the previous Queensland Labor Government and his Labor Party involvement?

Mr FOLEY: In answer to the last question: no. The question is not only insulting but scandalous. It is unfair to Mr Hannigan and it is quite unfair to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which has a very strong reputation for independence.

With respect to that appointment, this is a matter for the department and it is not a matter in which the Minister becomes involved. However, I can inform the House that Mr Hannigan is acting in that role, that the position has been advertised and that applications have closed. The position was created to allow the resources of the Director of Public Prosecutions to be better utilised. The position was created with the offset of another position.

With respect to the issue of increased resources, I inform the honourable member that we actually gave increased resources to the Director of Public Prosecutions in the last Budget, after it had been starved of funds by the previous Budget. However, there is a more

disturbing element to the honourable member's question which deserves to be the subject of criticism. Today, we are seeing a victimisation of a public servant. Everybody from whatever background is entitled to pursue his or her career free from political bias. For that reason, during my term as Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, I was very proud of the fact that Craig Sherrin, a former National Party Minister, was promoted under our Government.

With reference to the honourable member for Clayfield, I might say that Commissioner Kevin Edwards, formerly a private secretary of Mr Lester, the member for Keppel, having been appointed to the Industrial Relations Commission, was appointed during the course of my term. That is because Labor approaches these things on the merits. It is a very dangerous trend to see the privileges of this House abused by the victimisation of a public servant because of their background.

The position is simply this: people are entitled to pursue their careers without fear, favour or affection, without political bias and without underhand, snide, unfair, unfounded accusations such as that made by the member for Warwick. As shadow Attorney-General, he should know better. He has a duty, among other things, to uphold respect for the administration of justice instead of politicising the administration of justice as he has sought to do.

Petrol Pricing

Ms NELSON-CARR: I refer the Minister for Fair Trading to the fact that recently the price of petrol has increased dramatically. There are also big differences between the prices paid by country motorists and metropolitan drivers. Can the Minister outline what is being done to address this problem?

Ms SPENCE: The member for Mundingburra and the member for Townsville regularly communicate to me the concerns of the residents of Townsville about petrol prices. Last August when the Federal Government deregulated the petroleum industry, we were told that the price of fuel would go down. Since January this year, the price of fuel has risen on average by 10c a litre. Obviously, some of that can be put down to the fact that international crude oil prices have risen. However, there are other factors at play.

So concerned have the Australian Fair Trading Ministers been about this issue that at last Friday's meeting of Consumer Affairs Ministers, we spent a great deal of time discussing what we could do to ensure that consumers in Australia get a fairer go in terms of the price of fuel. The Fair Trading Ministers resolved to request the Commonwealth to get the ACCC to investigate how movements in the barrel price of crude oil are translated into retail prices in Australia, with particular reference to retail price increases over the past six months, and whether there have been factors other than crude oil prices at work.

There definitely have been factors other than crude oil prices at work. I regularly receive letters from councils, individuals and independent service station owners throughout Queensland conveying to me the kinds of concerns that the marketplace has. Recently, the Monto Shire Council raised concerns about the price of petrol in the Burnett area. The price of petrol cannot be related to the price of crude oil only. There are other factors at play, such as the fact that the oil majors are trying to squeeze the independents out of the business and reduce competition.

The Commonwealth Government plans to repeal the sites Act, which limits the number of sites that can be owned by petroleum producers. A repeal of that Act means that the oil majors can increase their share of the market.

I am concerned that because the Federal Government cannot get the repeal of the sites Act through Parliament at the moment it is doing it by stealth. The Commonwealth Minister for Industry, Senator Minchin, said that he would amend by regulation to allow BP to double the number of stations that the company operates. Apparently, he is planning to do the same for Caltex. This will be a body blow for country motorists and will further limit competition in petrol retailing.

Director-General, Environmental Protection Agency

Mr LESTER: I refer the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources to an advertisement in the Government Gazette of 7 May this year in which the position of director-general of the environmental protection authority was advertised at a CEO2 level with a salary rage of $180,993 to $198,393, and I ask: why has the Minister appointed the acting Director-General, Mr Barry Carbon, to that position at a CEO3 level with a salary package of between $209,992 and $227,392—almost $30,000 more than the advertised rate?

Mr WELFORD: I remind the honourable member that it is the Environmental Protection

Agency to which Mr Carbon has been appointed, not the "environmental protection authority". I am very proud of this Government's initiative in creating the Environmental Protection Agency. It is the first agency of its kind in Queensland. Indeed, in its current structure it is the first of its kind in Australia, because it looks forward into the 21st century and takes a constructive and proactive planning approach to our State's environmental future. It does that in a way that does not depend, as Government's have in the past—including past coalition Governments—on either regulation or weak-kneed compliance with the demands of development interests. The Environmental Protection Agency is taking a responsible, commonsense and constructive approach to long-term environmental planning in our State.

The director-general of the department has been appointed entirely on the basis of merit and in circumstances that do not involve the Minister whatsoever.

Mr Borbidge: $30,000 more than advertised—five year contract.

Mr WELFORD: These matters are negotiated directly between the person who is proposed for appointment and the Office of the Public Service. The Opposition Leader would know that very well, unless, of course, he interfered personally in the appointment of directors-general and interfered personally and politically in the salaries of directors-general. If that is what the Leader of the Opposition did when in Government, more shame on him. I certainly have not had anything to do with the contractual arrangements and conditions agreed between the director-general and the Office of the Public Service.

The appointment of Mr Carbon has been one of the most outstanding appointments at a senior level of this Government. The EPA will continue to play a very important role on a whole-of-Government basis by contributing to the long-term quality of life of all Queenslanders.

Employment, Education Department

Mr PITT: I refer the Honourable Minister for Education to media reports attributed to the member for Merrimac, and I ask: is it true that the Minister is allowing his department to rip teachers out of classrooms and replace them with pen-pushers at head office?

Mr WELLS: The honourable member for Merrimac has been telling fibs again. To put it another way, the honourable member for Merrimac is so deeply committed to the conservation of the truth that he only uses half of it in any one statement.

There has been an increase in the number of people employed by the Education Department. We have been creating jobs in education and creating jobs is what this Government is all about. Of the people employed, 405 are trainees who are employed largely in schools. This jobs plan is a whole-of-Government program that is funded at a whole-of-Government level.

The people who are employed in schools do a variety of different jobs. They work as janitors or as AO2s, who relieve principals of administrative duties so that the principals can concentrate on behaviour management. They work in the information technology field. Eleven additional groundspersons have been employed in schools and 21 therapy positions have been appointed under the Education for All initiative. Forty-seven school-funded positions have been created and, again, these are in a variety of areas—AO2s, computer technicians, janitor/groundspersons and those sorts of positions. These jobs are adding to the educational outcomes that we are achieving in the Queensland school system. The Queensland Government is proud of its record in generating jobs; this is a fine Labor Government program.

I do not know how the honourable member for Merrimac arrived at the figure he published as being the cost of the imaginary additional pen-pushers in Mary Street. I take it that he did so by multiplying the figure 571 by the salary rate of a highly-paid public servant. But, of course, that has absolutely nothing to do with it, and it yields only a totally imaginary figure.

As I understand it, the figures quoted by the honourable member did not include the additional $17m that we took out of his Leading Schools money and put into establishing a better literacy program in our schools. The hundreds of additional teacher aides who were employed as a result of that have already led to an enhancement of our literacy outcomes. I understand that this week our primary school students are sitting for the national benchmark tests. I am sure all honourable members in the House wish them well.

Overseas Visit by Deputy Premier

Mr SLACK: I refer the Deputy Premier to his exclusive visit to South Africa in the company of Mr Giam Swieggers, Brisbane managing partner of Deloitte Touche

Tohmatsu, which also involved Deloitte consultant and former Labor Premier Wayne Goss, and I ask: recognising the recent substantial growth in business migration and capital investment into Queensland from South Africa, will he acknowledge and accept that Wayne Goss, his clients and Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu charge fees for professional services in assisting business migration and investment into Queensland, that Deloittes and its agents stand to gain considerable financial reward from this activity and that his presence as Deputy Premier at functions exclusively organised by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and its employees gives it an unwarranted commercial advantage and opportunity for maximum financial return in these lucrative and rapidly expanding markets?

Mr ELDER: I did go to South Africa. As I have said in the Parliament, I did so in the company of Deloittes and would go in the company of any of the top five that offered me direct access to the commercial sectors of any country through its business lists. I make no apologies for that. I met with representatives from over 200 companies in the space of a week. That would have otherwise taken me six or seven trips.

Mr Borbidge: Minister for hire.

Mr ELDER: The Leader of the Opposition has always had delusions of adequacy; he should live up to them.

The fact of the matter is that it offered me the opportunity to raise our business, export and investment profiles in South Africa that no-one else could. It is the top accounting firm in South Africa. Yes, I will admit that I took advantage of that. Along the way, if Deloittes happens to gain some commercial advantage, I do not particularly care, because I am looking after Queensland's interests—jobs and investment for Queenslanders. Unlike the former Tourism, Small Business and Industry Minister, who also went to South Africa, my activities centred on the boardrooms of South Africa and not its game parks. Unlike the former Minister, I did manage to bring back a rhino. It is a shame that I do not have it in the House. I did not claim that I would bring back any rhinos, but I certainly managed to find one on my trip, which is more than the former Minister did in the time he spent wandering around South African game parks on his chase for the elusive rhino.

At seminars I spoke to South African companies, from small businesses right through to multinationals, about investment opportunities and followed up those seminars with individual meetings the next day at which we worked through those opportunities. If the Opposition is going to criticise me for that, that is fine; I will take that criticism every day of the week. When I travel to other parts of world doing the same thing with other companies, the Opposition is welcome to criticise me for that also. However, at the end of the day what will be delivered is investment, export and job opportunities for Queenslanders. That is my focus and it will always be my focus. If the Opposition member wants to start raising in a partisan fashion the way in which we go about our trade activity, he should keep it up; he will lose out, because sooner or later I might just touch on his escapades in Shanghai.

Mr SLACK: I rise to a point of order. An inference can be drawn from that. I would like to hear what the Minister is talking about.

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

Quigley Street Night Shelter

Ms BOYLE: I ask the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care: does she have any information in relation to recent allegations made by the Leader of the Liberal Party, Dr David Watson, that a homeless shelter in Cairns was being exploited by backpackers and foreign travellers?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Cairns for the question. Unlike the temporary Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Cairns has shown an ongoing and informed interest in the issue of homelessness in the Cairns region. It would appear that Dr Watson just cannot help himself when it comes to attacking the needy and poor in our community. We have heard his views on public housing. We have heard that he believes that people who live in public housing are not fit to live in the suburbs of Paddington. Now it appears that Dr Watson believes that Australians born in other countries or foreigners who find themselves in dire straits are not fit to access emergency accommodation services. He just cannot help himself. We do not have just a one-time offender against the poor and needy here, what we have is a serial offender. Dr Watson is a serial snob. His actions in relation to this matter are disgraceful.

Earlier this month, Dr Watson accused a Cairns-based shelter which provides food and emergency accommodation to homeless people in the Cairns area of harbouring backpackers and of using it as a bed and breakfast. Dr Watson said that the books showed that people born in other countries

had stayed there and he touted this as evidence that it was a backpacker hostel. Perhaps Dr Watson does not realise that we live in a multicultural society. It is possible that people born in other countries can become Australian citizens.

What did the manager of that service have to say? Recently on Cairns radio the manager of the service stated—

> "The one from Tonga is a naturalised Australian. The fellow from Canada is a naturalised Australian and, apart from the fact that they were all there for meals, none of them stayed the night. They were not even residents"—

of the facility. When his lies on this matter were exposed, he changed tack. He then said that his real problem with the service was that it was not a diversionary centre for people affected by alcohol. Worse, in my view, than his serial snobbery, however, is his total ineptitude and failure to even grasp why the facility was set up under his Ministry in the first place.

A number of problems have been raised in relation to the operation of the Quigley Street shelter. These are not easy services to run, but we are taking the concerns of local residents seriously. I congratulate the member for Cairns and others for working constructively with a range of Government departments, the Cairns City Council and local residents to resolve the difficult issues surrounding the location of this facility in a suburban neighbourhood. I am confident that her careful and considered approach will make a lasting contribution to this issue, unlike the contribution of Dr Watson—the serial snob—who was rightly dubbed by my colleague the member for Rockhampton the "Marquis of Moggill".

Tree-Clearing Guidelines

Mr BLACK: I ask the Minister for Natural Resources: in relation to vegetation preservation regulations, the responsibility for which currently rests with individual local government councils, will the Minister confirm or deny that it is his intention to move this authority across to the State Government? Is it the intention of his department to usurp this jurisdiction for the express purpose of imposing a Statewide ban on tree clearing on private freehold land?

Mr WELFORD: As the honourable member and other members of the House are aware, for some months now I have had a high-level Vegetation Management Advisory Committee working on the issue of how to best manage vegetation across the landscape to ensure that the productivity of our rural lands is maintained and to ensure the long-term sustainability of land throughout the State. The Vegetation Management Advisory Committee has on it expert representatives from a range of organisations, both rural industry organisations and the conservation movement as well as local government and the urban development industry.

The committee has now had five meetings and has made substantial progress in its work. I am aware, as the honourable member has pointed out, that a number of local governments do have vegetation ordinances in relation to local government areas, but a limited number of local governments, in fact, have them and most of them relate to urban areas.

The real issue that we have to confront as a State in the face of what has occurred in Victoria, New South Wales, the Murray-Darling Basin and Western Australia in relation to salinity and land degradation generally is that the continued reduction in vegetation cover of the landscape will in the longer term generate very serious economic impacts for rural industry in our State. We need to address that in a responsible and commonsense way, and I am very pleased that the work of the Vegetation Management Advisory Committee has made substantial progress in advising me on how we as a Government and as a State and how regional communities can be involved in ensuring that we can make significant progress in better managing native vegetation across the State to protect the landscape and maintain the productivity of our rural lands.

The issue of regulations is something that the committee will be advising me on. We are already conducting a range of regional forums with regional communities at this very time to better inform regional communities of the basis for a consistent framework for the protection of vegetation across the landscape. We expect that the outcome will be a framework which will have the support of regional communities and local government, because it will support the very best practices that many rural land-holders are already applying in protecting their land by protecting native vegetation.

Sunshine Coast Police; Comments by Member for Toowoomba South

Mr MUSGROVE: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to criticism by the member for Toowoomba South of a Sunshine Coast police decision not to detain

two men found with illegal firearms and drugs last week, and I ask: can he explain what processes the police have to go through when deciding whether to detain people or release them with notices to appear?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for the question, because it has been 120 days since I have had a question from the shadow Minister. In that period, the member opposite has asked two questions of the Premier and two questions of the Minister for Health. He seems to think that he is still currently the shadow Minister for Health. It may well be that he is just bone lazy or it may be that the Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to let him ask any questions in case he lifts his profile a little and is ready for another challenge. The real reason may be that the member still does not understand the issues or the legislation related to this portfolio.

The latest example is one that has been raised by my colleague in this question. It is true that the Sunshine Coast police decided not to detain two men charged with firearm and drug offences. On the face of it, it may seem that it was an incorrect decision, and people can certainly question that and are justified in raising some concerns. But police have to make these value judgments every day of the week. Whenever they arrest someone they have all of the facts before them. They have the appropriate discretion under the legislation. They make an informed judgment about whether to issue a notice to appear or whether to actually make an arrest. I would rather put my trust in the police out there in the field than in the views of the shadow Minister and member for Toowoomba South.

The police do not need politicians leaning over their shoulder every day when they have to make these decisions and they certainly do not need shadow Ministers for Police out there bagging them publicly in the local press whenever they have to make these tough decisions. The member, like other National Party members before him, obviously still does not understand the separation of powers doctrine. The member's answer to the problem was to suggest amendments to the legislation to make it clear what the police responsibilities are and when they arrest people. I am not sure whether the member was aware—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toowoomba South.

Mr BARTON:—that he was criticising the Government of which he was a part. The actual Police Powers and Responsibilities Act—

Mr Horan interjected.

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

Mr BARTON:—that is relevant to this issue was actually introduced by his good friend the member for Crows Nest, the previous Minister, with the support of the Labor Opposition at that point, and it came into force in April last year. The legislation was drawn up. Of course, the member is now saying that there should be mandatory arrests. These are issues where the police have the clear powers; they have the discretion. The provisions are very clear. Perhaps the member for Crows Nest would like to take his colleague aside and tell him what the provisions are so that the member will not get another big case of foot-in-mouth disease such as this.

The Sunshine Coast police did all that they needed to do on this occasion. They made appropriate value judgments. They obviously had good reasons for them. I support their decision to issue a notice to appear. It is a great pity that the member did not take the time to find out the provisions of his Government's own legislation.

Regional Business Adviser, Beaudesert

Mr LINGARD: I direct a question to the Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade. Recently I asked the Minister why the Queensland regional advisory service was withdrawing funding for the regional business adviser in Beaudesert. After outlining what he was doing in coastal areas, such as Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and the Gold Coast, the Minister told the House that he would give the matter the "benefit of my wisdom". He then wrote back and he advised that he would contact the Beaudesert officer to ensure "an early transition of responsibilities and outstanding work issues upon conclusion of the current contract". I ask: how can rural areas in Queensland survive when he makes decisions such as that?

Mr ELDER: The fact of the matter is that the member wrote and asked a question and raised a question in the Parliament on whether or not we would be continuing those services in that centre. We have continued and we have enhanced regional industry and business services right through the State. The fact of the matter is that I wrote back to the member and said that it would be seen in the broader context of the Gold Coast region; it would be run out of the Gold Coast office; and

Beaudesert would get the same services that it had, but would get it through the Gold Coast regional centre.

If the member got on with actually looking after the interests of his electorate and spent some time there and if he got on with looking after the interests of his business community and supporting the programs in place, he might get somewhere. The fact of the matter is that they are getting the same service and they are getting them through the Gold Coast centre.

Mr Borbidge: Have you looked at a map?

Mr ELDER: What is the Leader of the Opposition saying, that the Gold Coast centre is not a satisfactory centre? He has just knocked the Gold Coast State Development Centre and the services that it is providing for the Gold Coast region. It is typical.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr ELDER: The member as the acting Leader of the Opposition continually sets low standards and he lives right up to them. The fact of the matter is that that service is being provided and it is being provided through the State Development Centre on the Gold Coast.

Employment, Training and Industrial Relations 1300 Info Line Service

Mr MULHERIN: I ask the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations: could he outline the improved access to services provided by his department through the introduction of a 1300 info line service?

Mr BRADDY: One of the important items on the agenda of the Beattie Labor Government on being elected a little over a year ago was to communicate well with the Queensland people. The greatest example of that has been the regional Cabinets and our ability to listen to and talk to people regularly across the State. There are, of course, other ways of communicating and it was important, I believe, for our department to make sure that communication was available on a regular basis, particularly for regional Queensland.

We have set up these four new 1300 numbers which deal with the very important aspects of the department: workplace health and safety, employment, training and industrial relations—Wageline. The idea of this, of course, is that people can ring in from around the State and not only do they get information, but they get it locally—they talk to people who understand their local conditions. For example, if a farmer in Blackall wants to call the department in relation to a matter, by use of these 1300 numbers that farmer will speak to a departmental officer in the Emerald office, not one in Brisbane. So we have a capacity for people all over Queensland to ring in. Wageline, the industrial relations line, recorded over 600,000 calls—much larger than any other division. That is why we made sure that there were four different numbers for people who had different concerns.

Services and information that can be accessed and are being accessed increasingly and in large numbers relate to incentives of the Government to employ apprentices and trainees and incentives to employ long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups. And that is why we are actually employing more people than ever before and why the unemployment rate in Queensland is falling.

There is also the capacity for people to talk about the recognition of skills and overseas qualifications, educational programs, Queensland training awards and, of course, the ever-increasing workplace health and safety information—an area where we are having a blitz to make sure that it improves from the state it was in when we came to Government.

The people of Queensland increasingly appreciate the Beattie Government's ability to communicate, and my department is making a real effort in relation to getting information to people in a way which costs them nothing and which it is appropriate for them to know.

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

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (11.30 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1945 and other Acts."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (11.30 a.m.): I move—

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

On 20 July this year I informed the House that the Queensland Cabinet had authorised the preparation of legislation amending the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1945 and the Corrective Services Act 1988. I am pleased to say that the Bill now before the House will present a fair and balanced reform of the law with respect to the disclosure of all sex offences committed by certain persons convicted of sex offences against children aged under 16 years. This reform adopts the scheme of the existing legislation but puts it on a more effective professional basis in the interests of protecting the community.

The Bill will amend section 19, that is, the section under which certain offenders can now be ordered to report their address and change of address where the court forms the view that the offender presents a substantial risk of re-offending. The amendment will give the court an added power to order the offender to report his or her change of name. This amendment is designed in response to the fact that paedophiles sometimes change their names to avoid detection or scrutiny and to enable them to get close to children even after having been convicted.

Also, subsection (5) will be repealed so that if a rehabilitation period is capable of running under the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986 in relation to a conviction for which a reporting order is made under section 19(1), then the expiration of that period will no longer override the reporting order. This is not to deny the importance of rehabilitation. Rather it is to ensure that the sentencing court's intention will be given effect to.

The court is uniquely placed to give due weight both to the rehabilitation of the offender and to the protection of the community and thereupon to make the appropriate reporting period under section 19. If a court orders an offender to report for a lengthy period, it will not be cut short by the rehabilitation period.

It is also our intention that the new laws will apply to all orders made under section 19, whether made before or after the commencement of the amending Act, and the Bill says so. The fact that an existing reporting order was made against an offender some years ago will not of itself prevent the release of information about that offender.

Section 20 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1945 is the section under which people can now seek the release of information about an offender against whom a reporting order under section 19(1) is made. We will amend section 20 by replacing the Attorney-General with the Queensland Community Corrections Board as the body which can release information under that section.

As I said in this House on 20 July, this change will ensure the administration of criminal justice in Queensland occurs at arm's length from the political process. The board will be able release the information on application only. The applicant will be either a police officer or a corrective services officer or a person claiming to have a legitimate and sufficient interest in having the information.

As well as information about any offence of a sexual nature of which the person subject to a reporting order under section 19 has been convicted, as the law currently stands, the section will allow the board to release other relevant information such as the address of the offender, any change of name of an offender and his or her modus operandi.

The board will be able to release the information to either a person nominated in the application if the person has a legitimate and sufficient interest in having it or to any other person who the board, on considering the application, considers has a legitimate and sufficient interest in having the information. The board may decide, for example, that a school principal should have the information released to him or her, but it will also retain the power to release the information subject to terms and conditions, breach of which will remain a summary offence.

Therefore, a school principal, or anyone else, to whom the board releases the information will be able to make management arrangements as they see fit to deal with the consequences of receiving the information, but they will not have a power or duty to pass it on without the express approval of the board. Also, to remove any doubt about the interpretation of the section, it will state that when a convicted child sex offender is ordered to report, all sex offences committed by that person become relevant for the purpose of deciding what information, if any, should be released.

Section 139 of the Corrective Services Act 1988 will be amended by this Bill to extend the power of the Minister to issue guidelines for the exercise of functions conferred on the board by another Act. This will enable ministerial guidelines, similar to those issued in respect of parole decisions, to be issued by the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, the Honourable Tom Barton.

A new section 22 will be inserted to declare that the expiration of a rehabilitation period under the Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986 in relation to a conviction mentioned in section 19(1) has no effect on the power to make an order, the effect of an order, the obligation of an offender to comply with an order or the provision of information under section 20. Also, the clause will ensure that a rehabilitation period will not prevent the release of information under section 20 about offences other than the offence that triggers a section 19(1) reporting order to be made.

As stated in the Explanatory Notes, it is intended that the board should be able to release information about other sex offences, irrespective of whether a rehabilitation period has expired for that offence. Otherwise, the board would be restricted to releasing information about only those other sex offences for which a rehabilitation period has not expired.

As I undertook on 20 July, the amendments will provide a fair, reasoned and balanced way of collecting and releasing such information, without letting people take the law into their own hands and without whipping up the hysteria we have seen in recent time in other places. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL (No. 3)

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (11.36 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend Acts administered by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (11.36 a.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of the Justice Legislation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 3) 1999 is to amend a number of items of legislation administered by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The legislation amended includes the Bail Act 1980, Justices Act 1886, and Penalties and Sentences Act 1992.

The Bill provides an opportunity to make amendments that, taken alone, would be of insufficient importance to justify separate legislation. However, the cumulative effect of the amendments has an overall impact on the operational efficiency of the department and on the quality of the legislation administered within this portfolio.

The amendments made by this Bill were identified during the business process design phase of the courts modernisation project, CMP. The CMP is a major upgrade and replacement of this department's technology infrastructure. It will automate many court processes presently performed manually. It will facilitate the movement of documents and the exchange of information within the department and between other Government agencies instead of in paper form. Generally, these amendments are sought to simplify current requirements of the legislation and allow for the performance of these requirements electronically.

Other amendments address deficiencies in the current legislation. To briefly explain the amendments to the relevant Acts—

Bail Act 1980

On occasions, persons to whom bail has been granted leave the precincts of the court before signing any necessary undertaking documents or otherwise fulfilling a condition upon which bail is granted. The amendments address this deficiency in the Act. It allows the issue of a warrant to apprehend a defendant and allows a police officer to apprehend a defendant without warrant.

Section 651 of the Criminal Code enables summary matters to be transmitted to a Supreme or District Court—the "receiving court"—to be dealt with. Where matters are transmitted and the person is already on bail to appear on those charges, currently the person is still under an obligation to appear before the court of summary jurisdiction. The new section 34A addresses the bail provisions in those circumstances so that an obligation to appear before the court of summary jurisdiction becomes an obligation to appear before the "receiving court".

However, where the receiving court decides, for any of the reasons mentioned in

section 653(2) of the Criminal Code, that the summary matters should be decided by the court exercising summary jurisdiction and the receiving court sends them back, the obligation to appear under the original bail undertaking again becomes an obligation to appear before the court of summary jurisdiction. The provisions have been drafted in this manner so that the bail obligations continue under the original undertaking and obviate the necessity for the court to order, and the defendant to enter into, fresh undertaking. In other words, the original bail undertaking is "rolled over". The date and the court before which the defendant is required to appear change. A defendant will always be legally represented when this occurs—see the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code. Where this occurs, the Bill allows for the issue of a warrant to apprehend a defendant who fails to appear.

Justices Act 1886

The Bill does away with the requirement for a clerk of the court to sign the notice of conviction or order posted to a person. It also elevates compensation, restitution, damages and fixed portion of a penalty—that may be ordered to be paid to a party; previously referred to as moiety—above all other categories. This will be of obvious benefit to victims of crime who sometimes have missed out in cases of part payment of a penalty. It reflects the provisions of sections 112 and 113 of the State Penalties Enforcement Bill 1999.

Penalties and Sentences Act 1992

The amendment of the definition of "proper officer" will allow any proper officer for the relevant jurisdiction to make an appropriate order regardless of where the application is made. For example, where a person makes an application for a fine option order, etc., to a proper officer at a place other than the place where the original order was made, the proper officer to whom the application is made can deal with the application in respect of any order or orders made at another place or places.

The Bill also does away with the requirement for the certificate given by the Department of Corrective Services to be signed to enable these certificates to be given electronically. The Bill also gives a clear power to a proper officer to recall a warrant and issue a new warrant on part payment of a penalty. The CMP will enable the automation of this process and it will reduce the incidence of failure to recall warrants where full or part payment has been made. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

LAND COURT BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (11.42 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to establish the Land Court, and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (11.43 a.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is designed to provide a short, separate piece of legislation to govern the constitution, composition, jurisdiction and powers of the Land Court. The Land Appeal Court is also constituted—and continued—under the Bill with power to hear appeals from the Land Court. Further appeals, on questions of law only, can be taken to the Court of Appeal.

The Land Court is presently established under provisions of the Land Act 1962. These provisions were not incorporated into the current Land Act 1994 because of the uncertainty which then existed as to the precise future of the court. Inclusion of the court in Land Acts of the past—from 1897 onwards—is probably more of an historical reasoning. The court jurisdiction then was largely to do with rentals, freeholding and other miscellaneous matters of Crown land administration. These matters are now of much less relative significance in the current court's jurisdiction and workload. A myriad of other legislation now confers jurisdiction on the court. The creation of a separate Act to cover the court's operation is consistent with the practice adopted for various interstate bodies with similar jurisdiction.

The Land Court Bill makes little substantive change to the present law. The main purpose is to provide the legislative base for extensive new procedural rules to govern

the court's operation. The proposals for these new procedures were the subject of a report on the powers, rules and procedures of the Land Court presented by the court president to the Minister for Natural Resources in the previous Government in October 1996.

While the term "Land Court" has historically been used to describe the body being constituted, it does not strictly meet all the recognised criteria necessary to qualify for "court" status. While its decisions are "determinations" rather than "recommendations", its members are not appointed to permanent tenure. The existing practice of making "permanent" appointments for 15-year—renewable—terms is to remain.

While the term "Land Court" is to remain, its precise legal status as a "specialised judicial tribunal" is to be stated more clearly in the Bill. The Bill preserves the existing Land Court and rights of its members as well as retaining the references under Aboriginal land legislation. The provisions relating to the operation of a Queensland Native Title Tribunal are not carried over here. The Land and Resources Tribunal established under the Land and Resources Tribunal Act 1999 now covers this aspect.

Procedure of the court is to continue to be governed by equity and good conscience with the strict rules of evidence not applying. New features include the following. Firstly, uniform time limits of 42 days for the lodgement of appeals under the various Acts conferring jurisdiction will be maintained in this legislation. There presently exist variations in the time limits governing appeals in the range of Acts conferring jurisdiction. These appear to be more of historical origin than of present need. To avoid confusion by court users and to promote uniformity, a single time limit of 42 days is to apply.

Secondly, in relation to a right of appeal to the Land Appeal Court from all decisions of the Land Court, some legislation conferring appeal rights prevents any appeal to a higher level than the Land Court, for example, the Water Resources Act. Aggrieved persons who have wanted to further appeal have been using alternative and inappropriate mechanisms such as judicial review as a means of taking their case beyond the Land Court decision. The proposal now is for all cases which are entitled to go to the Land Court also to have the right to appeal through that appeal path rather than alternatives.

Thirdly, a hearing by the Land Appeal Court is to be essentially a rehearing of the evidence already presented in the Land Court with very limited scope for additional evidence. Rather than have the Land Appeal Court hearing as a fresh hearing—as was the case prior to 1994—or allow additional evidence with the consent of both sides, strict limitations are now to apply to any appeal. The Land Appeal Court will have the discretion to allow new evidence only if its admission is necessary to avoid grave injustice and there is adequate reason as to why the evidence was not previously given. Such conditions will ensure that the initial Land Court hearing is not merely a trial run and will preserve valuable judicial time at the Land Appeal Court level.

Fourthly, appeal from the Land Appeal Court to the Court of Appeal would be by leave only. This is similar to the appeal provisions in the Integrated Planning Act 1997. As any case sought to be taken to the Court of Appeal will already have been through two levels of hearing, it is considered appropriate that further appeal should be on issues of law—as is the case now—and only with leave. Citizens' rights will still be preserved but the Court of Appeal will ensure that only appropriate cases proceed to it for full appeal hearing.

Fifthly, creation of a new Judicial Registrar position to deal with the new case management and alternative dispute resolution issues is incorporated. This is consistent with new enhanced powers of registrars in the new uniform court rules prepared by the Justice Department and the judiciary. While the Judicial Registrar position is effectively a new one, the functions of the position should relieve some of the workload presently placed on the five full-time members. Two of the members are temporary only. The need for additional permanent members can be assessed once the new procedural processes—especially case management and mediation—largely to be the responsibility of the Judicial Registrar, have been implemented.

The Justice Department, in close consultation with the judiciary, has recently finalised uniform procedural rules for the Supreme, District and Magistrates Courts—such rules commenced operation on 1 July this year. New rules for the Land Court to follow this Bill will be consistent with such uniform rules as far as possible. Some areas can be adopted—by reference—with little or no change. However, due to the specialist nature of the Land Court, additional provisions will be necessary in the Land Court rules. With modern techniques of case management—including alternative dispute resolution—to be adopted in the subsequent court rules, there is likely to be an overall cost saving— both in the

court's operational costs and to the wider community. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lester, adjourned.

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND WATER BOARD (REFORM FACILITATION) BILL

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (11.50 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to enable the South East Queensland Water Board to transfer its undertaking to a company wholly owned by the State and particular local governments and incorporated under the Corporations Law, to amend the Water Resources Act 1989, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (11.51 a.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is designed to establish a process which enables the South East Queensland Water Board, subject to ministerial powers of direction, to transfer its business to a company incorporated under the Corporations Law. The company will be wholly owned by the State in conjunction with local governments.

Upon completion of the transfer, certain transitional amendments to the Water Resources Act 1989 will come into force. These amendments will apply some regulatory controls over the company that are currently found in the South East Queensland Water Board Act 1979. After transfer, the board will be wound up and the South East Queensland Water Board Act 1979 repealed.

The South East Queensland Water Board is presently established under provisions of the South East Queensland Water Board Act 1979. Under this current institutional structure, the board is a statutory authority that supplies untreated water to local governments and electricity generating authorities. The board also provides flood mitigation services to the Brisbane Valley.

Although the South East Queensland Water Board was established by the State, its board of control is predominantly made up of members from local government councils who direct operations. However, as a statutory authority, the State remains legally responsible for the activities without control over the board's operations.

This structure does not adequately reflect the risks and responsibilities associated with the entity's commercial and strategic operations; nor is it the best structure for the business into the future, particularly at a time when significant changes are occurring within the water supply industry in Queensland.

Both the State and local governments believe the present institutional structure is not appropriate for this new environment. This Bill facilitates a change to a structure where legal responsibility and operational control are aligned with risk. The strategic significance of the board and its assets is reflected in the size of the population it services and the value of its assets. The South East Queensland Water Board supplies 12 local government customer councils, which in turn distribute treated water to almost half the State's population. Since it was established, the board has assumed control over approximately $400m of publicly owned assets. Among these assets are the Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine Dams.

Complex arrangements of legal responsibility and control have characterised the south-east Queensland bulk water supply system over the past 90 years. On several occasions, the business has been a State responsibility, while on others it has been owned and controlled by councils. On many occasions, tensions and divisions accompanied these changes in responsibility. One of the unique aspects of this Bill is that it has the support of the State and local governments.

The proposed joint State/local government ownership of an incorporated South East Queensland Water Board is a natural extension of the current model between the two levels of government for the management of these south-east Queensland bulk water assets. The proposal maintains public ownership of these assets, while focusing that ownership with those governments in whose localities the resources are located and used. Shared ownership between the State and local governments more properly allocates the risks and

responsibilities of these resources between these bodies.

I want to emphasise that this corporate structure is unique to these particular circumstances and does not set a precedent for other assets currently under the legal responsibility of the State Government. The South East Queensland Water Board is to be transferred from a statutory authority into a joint State/local government owned company incorporated under the Corporations Law.

The new entity will have three shareholders, namely:

Shares

- the Queensland Government—20%
- the Brisbane City Council—45%
- the other 11 local government South East Queensland Water Board customers—35%

Establishing an incorporated company means that the new entity will be granted an unambiguous commercial mandate. Its new structure will remove a number of legislative and administrative restrictions to enable the new entity to improve its performance over the longer term.

This will also fully satisfy our obligations under the National Competition Policy. More importantly, it means that dividends from the improved performance will return to the owners of the assets—that is, the State and local governments. This Bill ensures sufficient powers are given to the board for it to enter into a transfer contract with the new company. At the same time, the Bill is intended to ensure that the actions of the board remain subject to ministerial power of direction and operate in accordance with the directions of the Queensland Government while negotiations take place.

This condition is necessary because the Government will continue to have legal responsibility for the board's actions and it will need to protect its interest during this critical time. The Bill thereby ensures that appropriate public accountability mechanisms remain in place throughout the process of incorporation.

Further, it will be required that satisfactory resolution of certain tax issues occur before the transfer proceeds. This requirement is necessary for both the State and local governments as future shareholders, and the new company. Once the transfer of the business to the company is complete, the other parts of the Bill that deal with regulatory controls over the company come into force.

Principally, these relate to flood mitigation operation procedures, and a power for the State to make regulations governing land use in the catchment. Both these provisions exist in the current Act, albeit in a slightly different form. It is worth noting, however, that the powers over land use in the current Act have never been used and that land use decisions in the catchment that may affect water quality have in the past been dealt with on a cooperative basis between the board and the councils. Ultimately, the company will be subject to new regulatory controls for the water industry that are being developed by the Government.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lester, adjourned.

STATE COUNTER-DISASTER ORGANISATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (11.58 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend the State Counter-Disaster Organisation Act 1975."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (11.59 a.m.): I move—

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

This Bill that I present to the House today is a vital step in ensuring that the safety and protection afforded to Queensland communities continues into the new millennium. I am sure that honourable members will agree that Queensland's disaster management system is a very sound one that has successfully managed many natural disasters in the past. However, in today's complex world new challenges would be presented if any of our essential services suffered a major disruption or malfunction. A failure in an essential service could have serious ripple effects on other essential services and infrastructure systems.

Under the current legislation, such an event—a technological or man-made event—would not be sufficient for activation of our disaster management system. Under the current arrangements, there would be no legal basis for the operation of the State Emergency Service; no indemnity for action taken in good faith to protect lives or property. Local government would not be mandated to respond; nor the disaster districts; nor our State Counter-Disaster Organisation. Certainly, Queenslanders can be assured the disaster response would come, but without the legislative support of the State Counter-Disaster Organisation Act.

This Act, which created both the State Counter Disaster Organisation and the State Emergency Service in 1975, provides the definition of "disaster" to which the Act is applicable. And it is this definition which is inadequate. Honourable members, particularly those from northern electorates, are well aware that disruptions occur during our tropical cyclone season. The Act currently has a natural disaster focus and does not include factors such as failures in essential services and infrastructure that could occur. A disaster under the current definition can include a flood, earthquake, seismic sea wave, cyclone, storm, tornado, eruption or other natural happening. It can be an infestation, plague or epidemic. It can be a fire or oil spill.

This amendment ensures that the definition of "disaster" in the Act is broadened to allow for appropriate disaster response to be undertaken at any time in the future should an essential service or infrastructure system fail or be disrupted. It also ensures that an event "may be natural or caused by human acts or omissions". A change in the definition of "disaster" will have no impact on current arrangements to declare a state of disaster or natural disaster relief arrangements. The new definition would cover other possibilities, such as dam failures, the collapse of a freeway system, terrorist acts against an electricity distribution system or possible failures in essential services caused by Y2K problems at the turn of the century.

A failure in an essential service such as water or sewerage or power could have a significant adverse impact on the operations of Government and the private sector. It could have serious ripple effects on other essential services and infrastructure systems. The Department of Emergency Services is coordinating the development of a Year 2000 State disaster contingency plan to mitigate against possible problems.

The amendment Bill also gives a clearer legal basis to disaster contingency planning currently being undertaken by local governments and disaster districts. It extends indemnity provisions to volunteer and permanent operational staff conducting response and recovery activities related to failures in essential services and infrastructure systems. This is an important issue to volunteers and members of this House should show support for these dedicated volunteers by supporting the Bill. Furthermore, the proposed amendment Bill appropriately extends the authority to declare a state of disaster in accordance with the broader amended definition of the term "disaster" in the Act. We are leaving nothing to chance. If something does go wrong as the clock ticks over from 1999 to 2000, the Government will be ready for action.

We are being super cautious. We are taking out insurance; we are drawing up a plan we believe will never be necessary. But we must be prepared. It is vital that Queensland's disaster management system is ready for any challenges that arise at any time. Part of that preparation is ensuring that the disaster management system can respond to a problem in an essential service or infrastructure system with the protection and power that applies to natural disasters under the existing legislation.

This amendment Bill reinforces the Government's commitment to ensuring the safety of Queenslanders and provides more support to communities and the volunteers who protect them. I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Malone, adjourned.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (12.04 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

> "That leave be granted to bring in a Bill for an Act to amend legislation administered by the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads."

Motion agreed to.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark) read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (12.05 p.m.): I move—

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

The objective of this Bill is to provide for a range of amendments to a number of Acts administered by my Departments of Transport and Main Roads. They are the Traffic Act 1949, Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995, Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and the repeal of the Sea Carriage of Goods (State) Act 1930. The continued use of transport legislation amendment Bills allows the various amendments to my portfolio's legislation to be consolidated into one Bill rather than progressed as a series of Bills.

This Bill amends the Traffic Act 1949 by omitting from that Act provisions relating to fare evasion and offences where fares are not paid. The Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 is amended in this Bill to provide for these matters and is the appropriate Act to deal with what is essentially a public transport issue.

This Bill also seeks to amend various components of the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994. I will briefly outline the key issues addressed. Firstly, amendments are made to the Department of Main Roads' powers with respect to controlling access to State-controlled limited access roads. Accesses on those roads have a significant effect on the safety and operational efficiency of the road network. The issues dealt with by these amendments go to some detail as the scheme for regulating access to roads has been rewritten. Importantly though, the key principle of ensuring compensation is available to those who have their access rights diminished is preserved. The amendments give the chief executive the power to declare a limited access road, to approve access arrangements and to develop and apply departmental policies regarding access to limited access roads. This will be done on a road-specific basis and incorporate where appropriate any existing arrangements which were developed under previous legislation. Access policies will be retained by the Department of Main Roads and can be inspected free of charge by any person. A policy will be a living document and will allow flexibility to make changes to the policy. Any major changes are required under the Bill to be gazetted.

The circumstances when the chief executive can personally initiate action concerning limiting access has been expanded to include safety, traffic operations and emergency situations. Previously, this was limited to situations which represented a traffic hazard or where a means of access had become an obstacle to the carrying out of roadworks. The revised provisions allow for notices to be given to future owners and occupiers and other persons so that they are made aware of decisions regarding access. Where a decision to limit access is made, works to restore the functionality of a property may be negotiated between the property owner, an occupier and the chief executive. Where agreement cannot be reached, there is provision for compensation to be claimed by an owner or occupier of a property.

The legislation provides for a more comprehensive scheme of compensation where access to a road is affected. For example, the current legislation is deficient in that it does not specifically provide for compensation where a property is isolated by road development and the property did not have an approved access arrangement. Under the proposed provisions, compensation will be payable in such circumstances. One area clarified is that businesses will not be compensated for loss of access to a specific traffic stream, provided that their on-site functionality is not affected by changes in the road. For example, if a bypass road is constructed away from a town, those businesses which suffer a commercial loss through deprivation of access to traffic streams are not compensated for that loss. This confirms what has been existing practice for many years. Any exposure to this form of compensation would be unsustainable for the State.

The Transport Infrastructure Act is also amended by placing the air transport infrastructure funding program on a statutory basis. No mention of air transport infrastructure is currently made in the Act. In recent years, the Commonwealth has progressively handed over ownership and responsibility for nearly all local airports to local government. In response, Queensland Transport has created the Rural and Remote Airport Development Program to assist in improving and providing air transport infrastructure. In support of the program and

as a result of discussions held with the aviation industry over some time, an aviation plan has been developed by Queensland Transport. Agreement has been reached with respect to this plan and it reflects Queensland Transport's evolving role in air transport infrastructure. The development of funding programs for the Minister's approval facilitates basic access to air transport services for Queenslanders. The program is required to be supported by legislation and will state how Government funding is to be used for the upgrading of runways, landing strips and ancillary works.

This Act will also be amended with respect to marine infrastructure. The Bill provides for new legislation dealing with public marine facilities and the management of waterways. Subject to the passing of the Bill, new regulations will be proposed to support this legislation. One regulation will deal with public marine facilities such as Crown boat harbours, jetties and boat ramps, etc. Another will concern regulating transport issues on the Gold Coast Waterway. This will supplement other laws which currently apply. The passage of this legislation will enable the final repeal of transitional provisions relating to the preservation of aspects of the old Harbours Act 1955 and its obsolete by-laws and regulations.

The Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 will be amended. The overall objective of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 is to provide the best possible public passenger transport services at a reasonable cost to the community and Government while keeping government regulation to a minimum. All forms of public transport, including bus, taxi, limousine, air and ferry services are regulated pursuant to this Act. The amendments proposed affect a broad range of subject matter across the Act and cover the introduction of some new provisions and reforms to existing provisions which require clarification or require amendment to better reflect current industry needs and practices.

Key issues addressed in the Bill include amendments to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 to provide for an additional scheme for driver authorisation for courtesy and community transport services. This is referred to in the Bill as restricted driver authorisation. Without restricted driver authorisation, courtesy and community transport services would be subject to full driver authorisation following the expiry of the current exemption. The objective of restricted driver authorisation is to retain the benefits of regulating driver standards for community and courtesy services without imposing the undue burden that would apply if full driver authorisation requirements were imposed. This reflects the unique requirements of community and courtesy services that often rely on itinerant workers or are provided on a voluntary basis with a correspondingly high staff turnover. Importantly, neither restricted nor full driver authorisation will apply where a transport service is provided that excludes access by the general public. An example is a junior football club which uses a bus solely to transport players to and from games. This will not be subject to restricted driver authorisation.

The meaning of "operator" of a public passenger service is clarified. In some prosecution actions against operators, it has been necessary to prove that the person is an operator. It has not been enough to simply demonstrate that they are operators because they are accredited under the Act. Proving that a person is an operator is time consuming for both the department and the court. Accordingly, the amendment provides that if a person is accredited to operate a public passenger service under the Act then this is evidence that the person is an operator of the service.

The Bill clarifies that service contracts can be entered into for the provision of long distance scheduled passenger services. Service contracts for long distance scheduled passenger services had previously been enabled through regulation. Also, service contracts will be required to provide scheduled ferry services in specific areas that may be stated by the chief executive. Contracts can be used to ensure minimum service levels and approved Government subsidised concession fares.

The department currently has power to enter into contracts with ferry operators proposing to provide services and this enables a minimum standard of service to be set. However, without the proposed amendments, the department has no power to prevent services if the operator chooses not to enter into a service contract. The proposed amendments will allow my department to stop an uncontracted operator from providing a service. Also, a fine may be applied to an operator each time a service is provided other than under a contract.

School service contracts are an integral part of my department's administration of public passenger services in Queensland. School children's transportation does not fit easily into the more general contractual provisions of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 used for

scheduled passenger services. Following a review conducted by my department, existing provisions concerning the contracting of school services have been modified to ease difficulties that have occurred with the administration of school service contracts. The amendments simplify issues such as tendering for and termination of contracts. The amendments provide for easier splitting of contracts to allow for specific routes to be sold and a faster, less bureaucratic tendering system for new contracts. None of the existing entitlements of school bus operators are affected by the proposed amendments.

This Bill will also amend the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 as a consequence of implementing further national scheme legislation in Queensland. The Act presently refers to an owner as the person in whose name a vehicle is registered and, consequently, the State has not been able to adopt the term "registered operator" in a Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Vehicle) regulation that is presently being redrafted by the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel. A registered operator means the person in whose name the vehicle is registered under the Transport Act or a corresponding law, or a person who has given notice to the chief executive for the purpose of having the vehicle registered in the person's name. The adoption of this definition assists in ending any confusion about legal ownership and ensures the State is meeting commitments to nationally uniform legislation.

The Bill also repeals the Sea Carriage of Goods (State) Act 1930, which is now of no relevance to Queensland or its economy. This Act was enacted when Government policy was to intervene to limit the potential liability of certain industries. The Act based liability limits on a gold standard that is outdated and impractical. The interests of shippers are far better served by repealing the Act in its entirety and allowing common law to determine a fair level of compensation for cargo damage, loss or delay. This repeal will bring Queensland into line with four other Australian jurisdictions, thereby making a majority of Australian States uniform in their treatment of compensation for cargo loss, damage or delay.

In summary, this Bill amends legislation administered by my portfolio to the benefit of all Queenslanders. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

ROAD TRANSPORT REFORM BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 24 April (see p. 3423).

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (12.15 p.m.): I rise to comment on and provide strong support for this Bill, which will improve a range of transport-related issues for the people of Queensland. I would like to comment in particular on the provisions within the Bill by which the Government is making a positive contribution to road safety by reducing the number of drink-drivers on our roads and ensuring tough but fair penalties for those who break the law.

Under the current law, a person who is convicted of drink-driving can apply to the magistrate for a restricted driver licence that allows them to drive for work purposes only. Drink-driving is a significant problem in our community and the provision of a work licence under section 20A of the Traffic Act is a concession that the State makes to people convicted of drink-driving offences to ensure that, in certain circumstances, they are not deprived of the means of earning their livelihood. Otherwise, to allow the law to operate would mean that whilst one person who is guilty of a drink-driving offence would receive a fine and disqualification, as they should, another person who needs their licence for work would also lose their job. That would be a far greater penalty that would also penalise their families, who would be innocent people. The new provisions will ensure that only low-level offenders can be granted this special privilege where exceptional circumstances warrant consideration.

Alcohol is a factor in 30% of fatal road accidents in Queensland. The social costs, both in human and property terms, of those accidents are extreme, reaching into the hundreds of millions of dollars every year. Nearly 20,000 drink-drivers are convicted in Queensland each year. There is a strong community awareness of the dangers of drink-driving and to do so is highly irresponsible. Important initiatives such as reducing the blood alcohol concentration limit, random breath-testing and public education campaigns have reduced the level of drink-driving on Queensland roads and made a significant contribution to saving lives.

Over the years, we have seen a significant shift to greater personal responsibility for managing social occasions to avoid mixing alcohol and the steering wheel, with nominated drivers and non-alcoholic drinks now the social norm. Certainly the current situation is that if someone at a party is

under the influence of alcohol and is attempting to drive a vehicle, the social pressure applied by others and the disdain in which they would be held is an added and much welcome pressure.

Mr Wilson: And so it should be.

Mr LUCAS: So it should be. Unfortunately, there are still those who choose to flout the law and they put not only themselves but also their passengers and other road users at risk. We cannot afford to become complacent about road safety or reducing the road toll. We must continue to seek solutions to the problems that drink-drivers present.

To reduce the level of drink-driving on Queensland roads, this Government is working to deliver a comprehensive package of initiatives that includes enforcement activity, public education programs and a stricter penalties and sanctions regime. The success of any one of the components of this package depends on the other elements. Appropriate penalties and sanctions are the important final step to reinforce the message and impact of education and enforcement campaigns. Fair and certain penalties play a key role in deterring people from breaking the law. Road safety research has shown that penalties for illegal driving behaviours are more effective if people believe that there is a greater risk of getting caught or of being dealt with firmly.

The opportunity to apply for a work licence following a conviction for drink-driving has been identified as undermining the certainty of licence loss for this offence and thus reduced its impact as a deterrent to drink-driving. The opportunity to apply for a restricted provincial licence following a conviction for a drink-driving offence was introduced in 1984 as a special privilege to assist people in exceptional circumstances only. As I indicated before, one of the problems was that people who needed their licences to get to and from work, such as farmers or tradespeople, suffered not only the penalty that other offenders suffered, that is, disqualification and a fine, but also they lost their jobs. That was not the intention of the legislation. In addition, their families suffered as a result of their actions. This was sensible legislation, but it is important that the privilege of a work licence is granted only in very exceptional circumstances where the magistrate is sure that the people who receive the benefit of such a licence will comply with the law and will not constitute any risk.

The Queensland work licence provision is a far better one than that in New South Wales, which in my opinion is ridiculous, under which in certain circumstances people can be convicted of drink-driving and not be disqualified at all because they may need a licence for their work. That is wrong, because people should suffer a significant penalty for drink-driving. The idea of the proposed amendment to section 20A of the Traffic Act is to ensure that in appropriate circumstances people can apply for a work licence. However, the circumstances must reflect the seriousness of the situation and the interests of other road users.

The new provisions in this Bill will make it more certain that a personal will pay a fair penalty for drink-driving. The Government aims to drive home the seriousness of drink-driving and protect the community by ensuring as far as possible that people who are not suitable to be granted work licences, and whose past history shows them to be unsuitable, will not be granted that privilege. The provisions do that in two ways: firstly, by making the application criteria more stringent so that fewer people are eligible to apply in the first place; and, secondly, by tightening the parameters within which a magistrate can consider those applications. The opportunity to apply for a work licence will be available only to those people who do not present a wider road safety risk to the community.

The eligibility criteria have been tightened to exclude serious offenders and people with a poor driving history. Only those applicants who record a blood alcohol concentration of less than 0.15% will be eligible to apply for a work licence. People who drink to excess and then drive will not have access to this special privilege. In addition, anyone who has lost their driver licence in the previous five years due to accumulation of demerit points would not be eligible to apply. This is in addition to the current restriction on people who have been convicted of drink-driving in the previous five years.

The new provisions also establish a fair framework for consideration of the application by magistrates. Applicants will be required to submit to the court confirmed details of why they need their driver licence for their work and an affidavit from their employer outlining their job responsibilities. As a former legal practitioner, it was my experience that sometimes people would think it was enough to supply a letter from their employer to be tabled before the court. It was generally my practice to encourage people to get an affidavit from their employer, because I believe an employer should have to swear to the fact that employees would lose their job if they are not granted a work licence. What people will

write on a piece of paper and what people are prepared to swear to in an affidavit under the pain of the penalty of perjury is a different matter. That is why I welcome this provision that requires the evidence with respect to livelihood to be deposed to by affidavit, in other words, in a sworn document before the court.

These provisions provide sufficient flexibility for magistrates to continue taking into consideration the available public transport options and the particular needs of people in rural communities. The new provisions will send a clear and strong message to those members of the community who adopt dangerous driving habits. This is an important road safety initiative which has strong support from a range of agencies committed to road safety, such as the RACQ, the driver training industry, medical professionals, the transport industry and community agencies.

I am keenly aware that the majority of people within our communities rely heavily on their driver licence not only for work but also for most activities outside the home. I appreciate that this new law may impact negatively on some members of our community. However, it is important never to lose sight of the real issue here, and that is that drink-driving kills. People need to take responsibility for their actions and know that if they drink and drive they must face the consequences, including the probable loss of their driver licence. These new provisions enable the Government to address the serious issue of drink-driving while ensuring that those people who may suffer extreme hardship can still have their case considered by a magistrate.

There are two other matters that I wish to raise in relation to the legislation. One matter relates to the provision for the adoption of the Australian Road Rules as from 1 December this year. The national road rules contain a very important provision, and I welcome strongly its reinsertion into the law of Queensland. In my electorate there has been a significant number of complaints from people in the community who have been upset because heavy vehicles have been parked in residential streets. They are not only dangerous but also unsightly. Their comings and goings at all hours of the morning are not proper in a residential community. Transport operators should be encouraged to leave heavy vehicles in appropriately zoned and designated transport yards. This issue has been a constant subject of complaints to my electorate office. Local governments are expected and have the power to take action in relation to this matter. Unfortunately, for various reasons they have not always done so. This provision, which will become law after 1 December this year when the national road rules are adopted, will ensure that the driver of a heavy vehicle—that is, a vehicle above 12.5 tonnes; a fairly large vehicle—must not stop on a length of road in a built-up area for longer than one hour, unless the driver is allowed to stop on that length of road for longer than one hour by information on or with a traffic control device. Importantly, that provision is being legislated to preserve the amenity and safety of our neighbourhoods.

The other matter that I wish to speak about does not relate to this Bill but is an important issue with respect to transport legislation. A number of years ago, the Parliament revoked the provisions of the Traffic Act that precluded people from riding bicycles on footpaths. That was done for a number of reasons, the most important of which was that evidence showed that children in particular were being injured and killed because of their inability to ride bicycles on footpaths. They were having to ride their bikes on dangerous roads.

The vast majority of footpaths in my electorate and in most areas are perfectly safe for both children and people to ride bicycles on and for pedestrians to walk upon. There is no difficulty with that, because they are not heavily trafficked. I strongly support that. However, a problem arises in shopping centre areas, for example, strip shopping centres such as Wynnum Central, when irresponsible people, whether they be children or adults, ride bicycles in those areas and strike elderly people who are walking along or trying to do their shopping, with the result that they are injured. That behaviour is totally irresponsible. Councils now have the power to regulate in this regard. I understand that the Redland Shire Council is in the process of doing that. I strongly call on all local authorities to take action in that regard.

Mr Fenlon: Coorparoo is an example.

Mr LUCAS: As the member for Greenslopes points out, Coorparoo is another example. I know that he is very interested in these issues also. There is more than enough room for children to ride on footpaths. I ride bicycles extensively with my children. When we ride to the foreshore from my house at Wynnum West, we generally ride on the footpath until we get to the Wynnum shopping centre and then we either dismount and wheel the bicycles along the footpath or, alternatively, we ride on the road. That is the appropriate course for people to take. I urge

local government to encourage that practice. Elderly people in particular have a right to use footpaths in shopping centres unharassed and in safety. They can become very scared, upset and concerned for their safety, and I do not blame them for that at all. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (12.26 p.m.): I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate on the Road Transport Reform Bill 1999 which, as the shadow Minister indicated, the coalition is supporting, although we intend to raise a number of issues at the Committee stage. I will take this opportunity to make a number of comments regarding the road transport industry in Queensland and the situation with respect to roads in Queensland generally, especially the roads in rural and regional Queensland.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister stated that the Road Transport Reform Bill will deliver significant long-term economic, safety and efficiency benefits to Queenslanders. Even allowing for the Minister's regular flights of fancy and given that this Bill does contain some worthy areas of regulation change, that statement can only be seen as a gross exaggeration.

Mr Bredhauer: When you wake up tomorrow, why don't you roll over on the other side?

Mr SEENEY: I would be quiet, if I were the honourable member.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! The member will continue.

Mr SEENEY: The only thing that will deliver significant long-term economic, safety and efficiency benefits to Queensland is a major increase in the amount of funding that is committed to the building and the maintenance of roads by both the State Government and the Federal Government. I spent seven years in local government and I know that it is an ongoing and continuing concern to local governments all over Queensland that the level of road funding continually lags behind the amounts that are needed to keep pace with the developing transport industry. In fact, it is fair to say that in many areas the amount of money that is allocated to road maintenance falls short of what is needed to maintain the status quo let alone make allowance for the ever-increasing road usage.

The construction of better roads and transport infrastructure needs a much higher priority in Government spending programs. It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of the road network to rural and regional Queensland. It is critical that the whole of Government realises the extent to which the future of rural and regional Queensland depends on the further development of that road network as budget allocations are negotiated for the upcoming State Budget. That is the real challenge for the Transport Minister. When he can come into this House and deliver major increases in road funding—the types of increases that are needed to build the types of roads that Queenslanders deserve—then he will be able to talk about delivering significant long-term economic, safety and efficiency benefits to Queenslanders.

We in the coalition will be watching closely in the upcoming Budget to determine just what the real level of road funding is. Already there are whispers out there in local government circles that many of the road funding projects are being reviewed. Already there is a growing fear in local government circles that the increasing levels of funding that were put in place by the coalition Government are being cut back in real terms. Already there is a growing fear that the projects for which so many of us have waited for so long to be completed will have to wait for further periods. There is a growing fear that this Government, under financial pressure from other areas, will cut road funding in real terms.

It is becoming increasingly important that the need for that significant increase in road funding is recognised now in the Budget preparation process. In the upcoming State Budget there needs to be not just a maintenance of the current levels of funding, but a major increase to ensure that Queensland's roads are maintained and are improved to match the continuing developments in the road transport industry and the continuing needs of Queenslanders who must use those roads on a daily basis. It is a simple matter of mathematics to determine that, unless we have that ongoing increase in road funding, Queensland roads will very quickly reach a crisis point.

The Burnett Highway, which runs from Nanango to Rockhampton through my electorate, is a classic case in point. I drove the full length of this road last weekend, a distance of 600 kilometres. I counted five reconstruction and realignment jobs totalling about 10 kilometres. Without exception, those jobs were planned and approved while the coalition was in Government and the member for Gregory was the Minister. The rest of the highway is a patchwork quilt of sections that have been patched and repatched and

repatched again and sections that are very ordinary indeed. There are some classic examples of alignments that are carryovers from the days of coaches and horses.

Two right angle corners at Binjour and at the Wetheron intersection are classic cases of road alignments that are 50 years overdue for correction. There is no way that the current level of spending will maintain this road, let alone take account of the increasing traffic volumes and heavy vehicle tonnages. There are many other minor main roads in my electorate in worse shape. The Eidsvold-Cracow-Theodore road that services the developing Dawson Valley is badly in need of a major upgrade—not a bandaid, patch-up job, but a major injection of funds to bring this east-west road up to a 1990s standard.

The other issue of critical importance to many local governments in many areas is bridges. Many bridges were built in the 1920s and 1930s and are seriously past their effective life—no example more so than the bridge across the Dawson River at Theodore. This is a low-level bridge that is regularly inundated, cutting the Leichhardt Highway for periods of 7 to 10 days. The resulting inconvenience to the large volumes of north-south traffic is just not acceptable in today's business environment.

More unacceptable is the need to transport schoolchildren to school in flood boats across the Dawson River for extended periods. I suggest to the Minister and members opposite that they should come up to Theodore, or Baralaba where the same thing has to be done, and see the operation—see how 50 or 60 schoolchildren are brought across a flooded river in a flood boat. I guarantee that they would come away with a different attitude to road and bridge funding. To get 50 or 60 schoolkids across a river in a small boat six at a time twice a day for up to 10 days at a time is an incredible task for those who have to achieve it. The adults give their own time—they volunteer—to try to ensure at least some level of safety.

No-one would suggest that this is acceptable to the children who must get to school, nor is the disruption to business in Theodore and Baralaba acceptable to the hard-pressed business owners there, nor is the damage to shire roads caused by heavy traffic as they seek alternative routes acceptable to the Banana Shire Council and local road users. The Dawson River bridge situation at Theodore is critical. The project needs to be fast-tracked and is just quite simply not tolerable any longer. I appeal to the Minister today to include an allocation in this year's budget to get that project up and running. I know the planning is well advanced by Main Roads in Rockhampton, but we need a dedicated allocation of funds to ensure that construction of a new flood-free crossing of the Dawson River at Theodore gets under way this year.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the road network across the State is currently severely underfunded. One needs only to do the sums and to take the number of kilometres of Queensland roads that are currently being rebuilt or realigned and divide that into the total number of roads and work out the number of years it is going to take to replace or to rejuvenate the roads in rural and regional Queensland to get some understanding of the problem we face. There is no way that the current level of spending can keep pace. There is no way that the current level of spending will ever see any major improvement in the overall road situation. We must eventually reach a crunch point as road usage increases. That is something of which every local government up and down the State is critically aware.

At the same time we have seen dramatic increases in both the amount of heavy road transport and the weight-bearing capacity of that heavy road transport. This Labor Government is approaching its first real Budget, considering that last year it took the previous coalition's Budget and transposed it. Because of the obvious lead time for road construction, all of the current projects were planned and funded by the coalition. This will be the first real Budget for the Labor Government and it will be the first real test for the Transport Minister.

I take this opportunity to call for an increase—a major increase—in road funding which would constitute the single greatest boost to rural and regional Queensland. However, as I said before, the stories out there in the community are the exact opposite. Already there is grave concern amongst local authorities that their road funding is to be cut. Already there is grave concern that many of the jobs that are not completed are going to be carried over into next year, effectively reducing the total amount of road funding for the year.

It is critically important for local authorities up and down the State that they can rely from year to year on constant funding from Main Roads. These councils are quite often the major employers in their particular communities and that Main Roads funding is vital for them

to maintain that workforce. Those jobs are critically important to those small communities.

The State Government must realise the importance of roads infrastructure. If we can allocate a greater amount of money to the improvement and reconstruction of the road network, we can build more than just roads. Better roads will mean better communities. Better roads will mean better and stronger industries, and better roads will mean more opportunities in rural and regional Queensland—more opportunities for the people who live in rural and regional Queensland to take control of their own futures and to travel more easily for business and for private reasons.

It is very often said and never too often repeated in rural Queensland that everything we use and everything we produce must be transported. Everything we use must be transported to where we live and everything we produce must be transported out to where the markets are. That need for transport has led to the development of a major industry. I refer, of course, to the heavy road transport industry. It is to the operation of that industry that this particular piece of legislation applies.

This particular piece of legislation will ensure the implementation of national uniformity in road transport and the practical implementation of the Australian Road Rules and of the national driver licence. These national laws have our support, as has been indicated by the shadow Minister. They will be of benefit to the road transport industry. But we also need a national commitment to funding the road network on which this industry depends. That is what is most needed to ensure the road transport industry can play an important role in ensuring Australia's industries can compete on the world stage.

The Bill also introduces reforms that will allow Queensland Transport to better manage heavy vehicle operators. That, too, will have the support of all sensible Queenslanders. The road transport industry is a very competitive one. There are a great many very professional operators within that industry. Unfortunately, the competitiveness of the industry means that the professional operators are sometimes at the mercy of being undercut by those who take a less professional view of the regulations. It is in everybody's interest—both the professional operators in the industry and the general public who share the roads with the heavy transport—that the standards within the heavy vehicle transport industry are appropriate and are properly enforced.

As I said, there are many great operators in the heavy vehicle transport industry. There are some very professional drivers whom I know personally who have made a very professional career within the industry, transporting a wide range of products both to rural and regional industries and transporting the product that earns this country its export income. Their future in the industry will be enhanced and will be better guaranteed by the reforms in this legislation. However, this legislation contains very strict penalties for the operators of heavy vehicles who consistently overload to extreme levels. That too, will be welcome news to the local authorities up and down the State who have to deal with the damage that such operators do to main roads and also to council roads.

As is the case in so many other areas, it is an extremely small minority of grossly overloaded vehicles that causes the majority of the damage to roads and bridges. In his second-reading speech the Minister identified that minority as being 0.06% of heavy vehicles. Everyone within the industry and in the road using community generally would support the thrust of this legislation to ensure that that very small minority can no longer cause significant damage to the road network and make the job more difficult for professional operators.

This legislation also establishes new employment criteria for school pedestrian crossing supervisors. I take this opportunity to comment positively on the job that these people do. In a number of communities within my electorate, large numbers of schoolchildren need to cross major highways to get to and from school. In one place, schoolchildren need to cross a major highway to attend sporting functions. With the increase in traffic on these highways, especially heavy vehicle traffic, that groups of small children have to cross these highways is enough to cause any of us who are parents to worry. Every parent with small children in such situations can feel a lot more comfortable about their children's safety because of the great job that has been done and will continue to be done by these school pedestrian crossing supervisors.

I commend the Minister for establishing the new employment criteria for school crossing supervisors and for imposing a mandatory requirement of disclosure of any criminal history or disqualifying offence. This will ensure that parents and teachers can continue to have total confidence in this program, which has brought a lot of peace of mind to parents throughout the State. I commend each and every one of the school

crossing supervisors, who work in all sorts of weather to ensure that the children cross safely to and from school.

In conclusion, I repeat my call for a major increase in road funding. It is of such significance to regional Queensland that it cannot be repeated often enough. All Queenslanders and Queensland communities will benefit from a major increase in road funding. All Queensland industries will be in a stronger position if the roads they need to transport their product are improved.

Ms Struthers: John Howard has cut the budget by $640m over four years. We can't fill that gap.

Mr SEENEY: It is a shame that the member for Archerfield was not in the House earlier, because I made the point that this has to be a joint effort between the State and Federal Governments. I am the first to acknowledge that and I would be the first to be part of a joint effort to make sure road funding is increased. I do not believe the question of underfunding of our State roads is something we should take a totally party political attitude towards. I agree that there needs to be a much greater commitment by the Federal Government. I assure the House that I and members on this side of the House would be part of any effort to ensure that that happens.

Such an increase in road funding would provide the jobs that this Labor Government talks about so much—not only in road construction but also in the communities and the industries that depend so much on that road network. We will be watching closely during the Budget process to determine just how sincere this State Government is about its job targets by looking at its commitment to improving this State's road network.

As everyone in rural and regional Queensland knows only too well, the record in this area of Labor Governments in this State is not good. Every local government remembers the last time Labor held Government in this State. They all endured cutbacks—not only in capital works but also in maintenance and in the way maintenance was delivered.

This Government and this Minister are big on rhetoric. When the Budget is introduced we will see how much substance is behind the words. It is easy to come in here and make speeches about jobs, jobs, jobs, but everyone in Queensland wants to see something done that will provide real results. The real challenge for the Minister is to provide in the upcoming Budget the increased levels of road funding that Queensland needs. I look forward with some anticipation to the presentation of the Budget.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (12.44 p.m.): As the shadow Minister has indicated, the coalition proposes to support this legislation, which makes way for the adoption of a nationally uniform transport legislation framework. It is very appropriate that we are considering this legislation today because, unfortunately, we are facing a disturbing increase in the number of road fatalities in Queensland. At the moment the road toll comprises 14 deaths more than at this time last year. This year, 177 lives have been sacrificed to our communities' commitment to the motor vehicle.

It is unfortunate that a number of these deaths have resulted from incidents involving heavy vehicles. It is worth mentioning, though, as was emphasised by the member for Gregory, that many of the provisions in the legislation introduced by the Minister have been initiated by the road transport industry in an effort to improve the safety of heavy vehicles.

All too often, however, it seems that road conditions play a part in heavy vehicle accidents in particular. On many occasions I have stressed my concern about road conditions in the Charters Towers electorate, especially with the increase in heavy traffic due mainly to the mining industry and stock being transported along the highway. The road is noted to be full bitumen but it has narrow sections. I have stressed on many occasions that it is dangerous. I add my voice to those of the Minister, the shadow Minister and the many others asking the Commonwealth to increase funding for our roads. We know that it is somewhere in the vicinity of $400m and—

Ms Struthers: Have you written to him?

Mr MITCHELL: Yes, I have.

Ms Struthers interjected.

Mr MITCHELL: I forget, but we are not going to get it at this stage. I know that the shadow Minister has also made personal representations. I, the Minister, the shadow Minister and others hope that the money is forthcoming.

I am also concerned that the forthcoming Beattie Budget will bring about a reduction in road funding in Queensland in real terms. I certainly hope that is not the case. The people of rural and remote Queensland are already very apprehensive that we will see a shift in funding away from those areas in the State that desperately need basic trafficable roads just to be able to go about their daily lives, let

alone allow the development of commerce, which the previous speaker spoke about at length.

I am fully aware of the problems that the Minister faces in his own electorate in respect of roads. I have travelled some of the roads in his electorate a couple of times over the last four or five years, and they are terrible. But a lot of other roads are in the same condition. I could mention the mail contractor in the Minister's electorate who had to resort to delivering mail on horseback. I could also mention the criticism by the recently elected senator from north Queensland about the state of the roads in that area. I will not go any further with these examples. I know that the Minister knows about these instances and I will not spend any more of the time of the House on them.

There are some shocking roads in the Minister's electorate. I am sure that the Minister is doing his best to beat off the Treasury hounds to protect or enhance road funding in Cook. I ask the Minister to use the same amount of influence in respect of the rest of rural and remote Queensland.

As the Minister will be aware, present road funding priorities are set out in a five-year road implementation program. I believe that is a good system. The purpose of this program spanning five years is to allow local authorities in particular to plan their work programs to use their work forces effectively. It is important that this program does remain in Main Roads budgets. I am sure that the Minister will be aware that any dramatic change to this program can have a significant impact on local communities.

I acknowledge the reality that the next edition of the roads implementation program will reflect the priorities of the Beattie Labor Government. I certainly hope that there are not many changes, because a lot of work has been put into this good program. I am quite happy with the situation in my electorate. If the funding keeps coming, in that five-year period we will eventually get to all of our roads. I caution the Minister, however, that his administration will be judged on this program and on its impact on rural and regional Queensland in particular.

I note that this legislation includes enhanced provisions for enforcement in areas such as speeding and overloading of heavy vehicles. Again I acknowledge that many of these provisions have been initiated by the road transport industry itself, but there is one aspect of speed and heavy vehicles on which I often get adverse comments. Many vehicles these days carry signage from other jurisdictions that they are speed limited at 100 kilometres per hour, yet I have received many complaints that these vehicles are clearly capable of speeds well in excess of these limits. And by that I do not mean just downhill. Some of those heavy vehicles out there are very speedy.

By far the most intimidating aspect of heavy vehicle usage relates to the drivers following other vehicles too closely, although this does not relate only to heavy vehicle drivers. Some of these "terrorists", as some heavy vehicle drivers call them—tourists—cause a lot of difficulties for heavy vehicle drivers. I know that there are a whole lot of reasons that tailgating occurs, including motorists not appreciating—

Mr McGrady: That is not an attack on the tourists, is it?

Mr MITCHELL: In some respects, yes, but not as long as they learn the conditions of the road. I gave a speech on tourists just yesterday. We need more of them, but they need to take care on some of our roads. Motorists do not appreciate the need for heavy vehicles to maintain their momentum. I have experienced this on many occasions on some roads, especially the Gregory Developmental Road north and south of Charters Towers.

For about 18 months I tried to get some signs erected along narrow stretches of bitumen to let tourists know what the road conditions are like, and in the past two months those signs have been erected. In the last two weeks, I have travelled on the Gregory Developmental Road twice, and I notice that those signs have had an effect. People towing caravans and those in motor vans are actually pulling over to the side of the road and giving heavy vehicles more leeway. Because of the width of many roads, drivers of heavy vehicles encounter difficulties when they have to get over into the soft dirt at the side of the road, especially when carrying a load of cattle, and this can have drastic consequences. So it is pleasing to see that motorists are heeding those signs that I requested about 18 months ago. I hope that they serve their purpose until those roads are widened.

In these days of road rage, I believe that it is appropriate for me to merely remind some of our professional drivers that they are the public image of the road transport industry and that they need to be sympathetic to the image that they present. I appreciate the plight of heavy vehicle owners and drivers, because it is a very competitive market out there, especially in the stock cartage sector, and they have an

important need to keep those wheels rolling just to make a living and to keep their heads above water.

Over the past few weeks, I have had discussions with many livestock operators in the west about the undercutting of prices—especially with Government subsidised rail transport—for trucking cattle to export markets and abattoirs. Rail has been quoted as carting for about 65c per deck per kilometre, compared with $1 for road transport. That is the minimum that they can charge to cover their transport costs or overhead costs.

Mr Bredhauer: They should use rail wherever they can.

Mr MITCHELL: No. We still have to keep the industry viable out there. People have been in that business for a long time. We cannot shun them just because rail is undercutting their prices. They are a big industry in many of our small towns. The Minister should rethink that a little. It is getting harder by the day for them to compete on this unlevel playing field. The existence of a Government subsidised entity makes it harder for people to use road transport. There are at least three or four carters in my electorate who are struggling and will struggle even further. The Minister needs to rethink that. I am very concerned about the future of many of those road transport carriers. I would not like to think that the Minister is pushing more and more for rail transport, as he just indicated. We have to think of the livelihood of many families and others who have been in those areas for a long time.

Mr Bredhauer: I'm thinking of the people who get killed on the roads in traffic accidents, too.

Mr MITCHELL: The Minister has got it wrong.

There is no doubt that addressing the chain of responsibility identified in this legislation will also assist in making it easier for professional drivers to remain professional in the way they interact with other motorists.

I am also concerned that this legislation does make transport operators responsible for the actions of others. I accept—as does the industry—that they have to be accountable for the consequences of their actions and, for that matter, any directions that they give. What I am uncomfortable about is the extent to which someone can be responsible for someone else's actions. Most heavy vehicle drivers are very courteous. They look for motorists, and they are always indicating or signalling to them when it is safe for them to overtake. They are responsible in their driving, and people should be aware of that. Many people who drive on our roads are not aware of the road conditions or the traffic signalling done by drivers of heavy vehicles.

The shadow Minister raised the hypothetical case of someone deliberately setting out to destroy someone else's business. There is no doubt that this would be an extreme circumstance. But let us not kid ourselves; these cases can occur. One has only to look at the actions of some persons during recent industrial disputes to understand what can occur.

Having expressed these reservations, I nonetheless support the provisions of this legislation because I know that it has the strong support of the transport industry. However, I seek assurances from the Minister that he is satisfied that there are appropriate protections in place, and I hope that I do not have to remind him of them in the future.

In common with the shadow Minister, I am also concerned that the change to the definition of a road has massive implications to a raft of legislation in this State. Again, my particular concern is the implication in regional and remote Queensland. I note, however, that the proposed definition of a road requires that it is developed for, or has as one of its main uses, the driving of a motor vehicle. I must say that I am not confident that some of the so-called roads around the State will meet this definition, let alone some of the tracks and trails that are regularly used by the Queensland taxpayers. I, too, await the Minister's explanation of how the rule of law will prevail over some of this country without passing yet another level of administration on to local government without appropriate resources.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee of this House has quite rightly expressed concern about the scope of the regulation-making power under the legislation, and I concur with that concern. I am concerned that the Minister is writing a blank cheque for the bureaucracy, although I am advised by the shadow Minister—and, I am sure, by the present Minister—that they are all honourable people. I do not want to knock them, because I know that a couple of them are here and they do a wonderful job. My concern stems from the fact that the regulation-making powers are very broad but that, in addition, we will not see the Queensland version of the national regulations until quite late in the year.

I note that, in his second-reading speech, the Minister has assured Queenslanders that

there will be an extensive communication campaign to ensure that drivers are well aware of these changes. I remind the Minister that the clock is ticking and there is not much time left before the regulations will need to be submitted—which I presume will need to be done before any advertising is done at all. That does not leave the Minister much time in which to let all drivers know what this new legislation will provide. I know that the changes are fairly minimal, but I propose to close my remarks by impressing upon the Minister the importance of getting this communication campaign going as soon as possible and as widely as possible to all drivers right across Queensland, not just those along the eastern seaboard. We have to get the message to all the people who use those roads.

Mr Bredhauer: I'm from the Government. I'm here to help you.

Mr MITCHELL: I certainly hope that is the case, because sometimes the consultation processes do not reach very far at all. I have been there and done that, and nothing happens. Consultation is supposed to be widespread.

Mr Bredhauer: What about under your lot?

Mr MITCHELL: A fair few things have happened under this Government, which I can relate to the Minister on another occasion.

The coalition is looking forward to the Minister's responses to the matters raised. And provided that the Minister is able to provide satisfactory responses—and I might add that I was not very happy with one of his responses about road transport operators in the west, and he should rethink that, because not every death or every accident on the roads is caused by heavy vehicles—

Mr BREDHAUER: I rise to a point of order. I never said that. I find it offensive, and I ask the member to withdraw that.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! The member will withdraw the comment.

Mr MITCHELL: I withdraw. Provided the Minister is able to provide a satisfactory response—

Mr Bredhauer: I never said anything of the sort.

Mr MITCHELL: The Minister should rethink his thoughts about the road transport operators in rural and regional Queensland. All drivers and commuters must be responsible for their actions on the roads. That extra signage in my electorate will let tourists in particular know exactly what to expect on those roads. I like to see tourists in my electorate. But if they are going to run into trouble because they do not know what the road conditions are like out there, that will be detrimental.

As the shadow Minister has already indicated, the Opposition intends to support this important legislation.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (2.30 p.m.): I wish to make some comments about the proposed new penalties relating to the overloading of heavy vehicles. Firstly, I commend the road transport industry for its positive contribution to the recent road transport reforms. The industry has undergone much change of late and has been both responsible and responsive to these necessary reforms. The proposals that I will be outlining today have the support of the Road Freight Industry Council and the Transport Workers Union, both of whom understand the need to target the activities of a minority of irresponsible operators within the transport industry. This minority has no place in the industry, which is largely represented by honest and diligent operators.

The Road Transport Reform Bill represents a complete restructuring of the approach to heavy vehicle overloading. Previously, the notion of an overloaded vehicle travelling on the State's roads was perceived as an insignificant transgression. Moreover, there seems to have been a general expectation that the degree of overloading on Queensland roads was only of modest concern. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Trucks have been detected on our road system that have been overloaded by up to 30 tonnes. In addition, in Queensland, up to 14% of all heavy vehicles are frequently overloaded. There are three harmful outcomes that this imposes on the community. Firstly, it imposes an intolerable risk to community safety.

Mr Bredhauer: We had one picked up the other day—a B-double—21 tonnes over the limit.

Mr ROBERTS: As I said, that poses an intolerable risk to public safety on our roads.

Secondly, overloading seriously deteriorates the quality of the State's roads and bridges, causing a significant drain on the public purse to meet maintenance costs. As has been pointed out by a number of speakers, there is always a need to spend more on maintenance. In particular, it has

been highlighted that the Federal Government seems to be sadly lacking in coming forward with the money in that field. Thirdly, people who overload are unfairly undercutting honest truckies by carrying more freight at a lower price. Such unfair competition as a result of this undesirable practice puts pressure on honest operators to also break the law or face being forced out of business.

A semitrailer loaded to 160% of its legal mass limit, travelling at 100 kilometres per hour, requires a total of 225 metres to come to a complete halt upon the commencement of braking. That is a 68-tonne juggernaut needing nearly a quarter of a kilometre in which to effectively stop. A person consciously choosing to load a vehicle to this level has forgone the right to use our road network, and certainly has no right to endanger the lives of the community in general. The State therefore needs a penalty system that strongly discourages rogue operators from carrying out such dangerous practices. Fewer overloaded heavy vehicles on our road network will reduce the threat of serious injury or death for all road users, enabling all motorists to travel more safely.

It is often forgotten that one of this State's biggest public assets is our roads and bridges. These assets are paid for by all Queensland taxpayers. The Department of Main Roads estimates that overloaded heavy vehicles cause approximately $40m in damage per year to our road infrastructure. That is $40m which could be better spent on hospitals and in our education system.

The road transport industry is well known for being one of the most competitive industries in Australia. Profit margins are tight and every opportunity to gain an advantage has to be considered. In this environment, an unscrupulous operator willing to carry 20%, 40% or 60% more than the legal limit gains a considerable commercial advantage. Overloading is an unfair and undesirable practice, and reducing the level of overloaded heavy vehicles will ensure a fair go for all those involved in the road transport industry. These new penalties are supported by the industry because they target irresponsible operators who are willing to take as much as double their legal load. Each dangerous double load takes away an entire job from a legitimate operator who is not willing to put profit before safety.

Unfortunately, information collected over the last two to three years indicates that the incidence of heavy vehicles carrying more than their legal capacity has increased. I note with concern that the Commonwealth Government has determined that from 1 July 1999 all heavy vehicles covered by the Federal interstate registration scheme will be granted a load limit increase. This has been agreed to without due consideration and funding support for the impact on Queensland's road infrastructure. The Government is proposing to implement realistic and equitable sanctions to deter operators from acting illegally. Queensland will have the toughest, yet fairest, penalty provisions relating to the overloading of heavy vehicles in Australia. The Bill sets out a three-tier approach to tackle the issue.

The highest and most dangerous category is that small minority of vehicles with extreme overloads. In this category, where a heavy vehicle is carrying greater than 160% of its regulated mass limit, not only is infrastructure damage extremely high but also the safety of other road users is grossly compromised. At this level, there can be no misunderstanding by the operator that he is not complying with the legislation. Accordingly, an appropriate penalty should exist to act as a disincentive for this most serious of offences. It is proposed that a maximum fine of $6,000 for an individual and $30,000 for a company will apply. It is further considered necessary that, upon conviction under this section, provision be made for Queensland Transport to be able to apply to the court for an order that the vehicle used in the commission of the offence be forfeited.

The second most severe offence relates to vehicles carrying more than 120% of their regulated mass limit, without exceeding 160%. At approximately 120% of regulated mass, most vehicles have exceeded their manufacturer's rating and, as such, not only are there road wear implications but also public safety has been seriously compromised. It is proposed that a new maximum penalty of $6,000 for an individual and $30,000 for a company will apply. Where an operator is caught carrying up to 120% of his regulated legal load, the current penalty is a paltry maximum of $360. A significant deterrent has been introduced in this Bill. To more accurately reflect the damage done to our road network, a new penalty infringement notice carrying a maximum penalty of $1,180 will apply. This penalty is more commensurate with the actual cost incurred by the community through damage to infrastructure.

I urge the House to recognise the timeliness, necessity and sense of these provisions. The road transport industry recognises that irresponsible operators cannot be tolerated. I applaud the industry for its support. It is not acceptable that a small

percentage of our road users create such large problems for the majority.

As honourable members would be aware, Queensland's road toll last year was the lowest in 42 years. Not since 1956 have so few lives been lost on our roads. The proposals that I have outlined will help continue this trend. The Government is determined to lead the way with regard to road safety initiatives. The new offences for overloaded heavy vehicles will ensure that the incentive for carrying more than legal loads is reduced and, in turn, will see fewer illegally loaded vehicles on our roads.

Mr Sullivan: Two minutes to go.

Mr ROBERTS: In my final two minutes, I want to say something about the cut and cover option at Nundah. Firstly, I welcome the commencement of the construction activities, which are now well under way. I acknowledge the role of the former Minister in facilitating this project. Of the people who were there back in December 1995—and the members for Clayfield and Chermside were there—who could forget that historic day when the Labor Government, through then Minister Jim Elder, in the park behind the Nundah Post Office announced that the cut and cover tunnel was to go ahead. The overwhelming majority of people in my electorate and in the electorates of the members for Clayfield and Chermside are right behind this project. We all look forward to the tunnel's speedy construction and opening.

I want to recognise briefly a couple of local community organisations that played a significant role in seeing this project to this point: firstly, Nundah's Organisation To Improve Our Neighbourhood—or NOTION—currently headed by President Greg Ferrington, and its members, including local community stalwart Norah Bennett. In addition, the Citizens Reference Group, chaired by Scott Taylor and ably supported by the other members, including local businessperson Margaret Pritchard. Both of those organisations and their members have ably represented the community's views on this very important project for the northern suburbs. Accordingly, I believe that they should play a prominent role in the tunnel's opening ceremony. I know that recently NOTION in particular has written to the Minister on this matter and I hope that he is able to ensure that that organisation in particular receives due recognition at the appropriate time when the tunnel is opened.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (2.41 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Road Transport Reform Bill, at the outset I say that it is not before time. I am sure that the Minister recognises that it is not the fault of this Government, nor was it the fault of the previous coalition Government, that this whole process has taken a long and tedious time. I congratulate both Ministers on eventually putting together the legislation which, as a result of discussions over many, many years, will finally see some uniformity in our road laws throughout this nation.

In the time that I have allocated to me, I want to talk about a couple of issues, some of them fairly close to home in my own electorate. One of those issues is the second range crossing. At this point, I thank the Minister for allowing members of his staff and also departmental people to give the member for Toowoomba South, the member for Crows Nest and me a very comprehensive briefing earlier today in relation to that issue.

Mr Bredhauer: I would have been there myself, except I had to be in here.

Mr HEALY: I realise that. Again, I thank the Minister for making those staff members available. I can remember talking about this issue in this Parliament as long ago as 1994. I know that the member for Toowoomba South has spoken quite a fair bit about it, as have other members from the Darling Downs area. We realise the problems facing the department. We realise that there is a Federal Government component in this road as well. The information that we received today at the briefing indicates that there is a level of cooperation between the State and Federal Governments to try to ensure that this project not only goes ahead but also that there may be some chance that at least the initial $25m that is required for the design and planning of this particular project be forthcoming. It is no secret that this project is a massive road-building project. Without the design process, the figure that has been bandied around of $250m could, in fact, blow out to somewhere between $300m and $350m. We do not know. The ballpark figure of $250m that was touted some years ago has been the figure that we have been working on. It is a massive project. We have to make sure that the initial allocation of at least that $25m is forthcoming so that the design and the planning can be completed.

This piece of road is an absolutely vital link between not only western Queensland and Brisbane but also between Melbourne and the port of Brisbane. In recent times, some major and horrific accidents have occurred on the Toowoomba range road. A few months ago, one particular incident had Toowoomba

blocked off from the east for up to 12 hours. I can recall the incident very well, because I was returning to Brisbane with the parliamentary Travelsafe Committee. I was at Brisbane Airport and when I got in my car I heard that there had been a major accident on the Toowoomba range. That was at about 4.30 in the afternoon. It had happened much earlier in the day. I thought that by the time I got there the accident would have been cleared. It certainly had not. By the time I got to the Toowoomba range, all traffic was being diverted up some very, very narrow alternative roads that lead up to and around the city. The conditions on those roads were absolutely horrific. Those smaller roads had to carry the level of traffic that normally traverses the Toowoomba range. That included trucks, buses and motor vehicles.

Such accidents are frequent on the range road. We all realise the importance of getting the initial planning stages done for that road. That road carries a huge amount of heavy transport. When an incident such as the one I have mentioned takes place on the range, the range is not only blocked off from Brisbane but also absolute chaos is caused within the City of Toowoomba. One of the main east-west streets in Toowoomba, James Street, is absolutely clogged. There are eight sets of traffic lights from one end of that street to the other. Not only that, heavy transport is backed up for hours and hours and hours.

The existing range crossing carries more than 13,000 vehicles per day; 2,000 of them heavy trucks. In around 10 to 12 years' time, the number of vehicles using the road is estimated to increase to around 29,000 vehicles a day, with 4,600 of those estimated to be heavy vehicles. That will greatly exceed the carrying capacity of this steep range road.

As I say, the Deputy Director-General of Main Roads, Don Muir, and his staff certainly gave the member for Crows Nest, the member for Toowoomba South and me some hope. We know that they are on side and that they are trying to do as much as they can. A couple of weeks ago in Rockhampton, the members whom I have just mentioned met with the Federal Transport Minister, John Anderson, to discuss with him this issue. I have had meetings with the former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, on this matter. In fact, I was able to show the Deputy Prime Minister some fairly graphic and horrific photographs of one of the major incidents that took place on that range several months ago. I think that even he was shocked at just how much carnage can take place.

Mr Mulherin: Did you ask him for some money.

Mr HEALY: I did. I asked him for some more money, as I ask the State Minister for more money all the time—as most members do. However, this matter has to be a combined effort between the State and Federal Governments. I realise that the Toowoomba range crossing has been declared a future national highway in the future national highway project. That is good. That is important. However, the road will continue to be an issue in my area. I am sure that all the Ministers, both Federal and State, are very much aware of the importance of at least getting the detailed planning of this project under way.

In relation to the legislation that we are debating, the Road Transport Reform Bill, in his second-reading speech the Minister outlined the fact—and I also recall the member for Gregory outlining this matter in his very good contribution to this debate—that the national rules will also have a major benefit for the tourism industry in that they will make it easier for tourists to travel around Australia. The difference in the road rules has always been a problem for people travelling interstate. More often than not, people who drive interstate to enjoy themselves at their holiday destinations find themselves in trouble with the law in that State because the road rules are different. It is not really their fault. They are probably not well educated on the road rules of that State before they head to their holiday destination. The differences in each State's road rules also present a problem when international tourists hire a motor vehicle.

Mr Schwarten: They are used to travelling on the wrong side of the road.

Mr HEALY: Some of them are used to travelling on the wrong side of the road. When they come here, without thinking about it, their natural instinct is to head off on the wrong side of the road and they can end up in strife.

Mr Nuttall: It's like some of the racehorses you back; they end up on the wrong side of the road.

Mr HEALY: My record in that regard is a lot better than that of the member for Sandgate. His track record is not all that flash.

In yesterday's debate on the Tourism Legislation Amendment Bill, I took the opportunity to talk briefly about a symposium that was held at Parliament House some months ago. The symposium was organised by CARRSQ from QUT and addressed the issue of tourists and their safety on our roads. Paul Blake represented Queensland Transport

at the seminar. It was interesting to hear some of the statistics from the various States in relation to keeping tourists alive on our roads, most of whom are not used to the conditions. They have not been schooled in what it is like on our roads. They think that after a fairly lengthy air flight they can simply get into a motor vehicle and drive from one part of Australia to another. We need to further educate people to ensure that when tourists come to Queensland they are safe on our roads and they know what conditions to expect. With the introduction of national road rules, that will be very important indeed.

I wish to briefly talk about an issue that may or may not have something to do with the national driver licence scheme. I was surprised when I read an article in the Courier-Mail the other day about the percentage of young drivers who fail their driving tests and how much that varies across the State. I was absolutely astounded to see that the State average of drivers declared ready to drive at their first attempt is only 61%. That is down 7% on the 1997-98 figures.

The Courier-Mail article said that learner drivers in Townsville and Stanthorpe are the State's worst. Driving tutors in Townsville had their own theories as to why they had low pass rates. One particular driving school proprietor said that the pressure hit students. He said that students had asthma and sweating attacks which were brought on because of nervousness, and that is why they tended to fail. Another driving school proprietor in Townsville said that the examiners were too picky and failed people for little things. I was really surprised about the variance across the State of young drivers who fail the first time that they do their driving test. I was also a little concerned when I read that the President of the Australian Driver Trainers Association of Queensland, Peter Tuck, said that there would be more unlicensed drives on the road as a result. I do not know that it will result in more unlicensed drivers on the road. I am a member of the parliamentary Travelsafe Committee and we have just completed our report into unlicensed driving and unregistered vehicles, so I know that it is a concern that the incidence of unlicensed drivers and unregistered vehicles is on the increase. We need to have a good close look at how the new driving tests are faring. New tests have been introduced, but it seems incredible that there is such a difference across-the-board.

Mr Bredhauer: There is a review currently under way.

Mr HEALY: I realise that and I would be interested to see the results of it. Just the other day a constituent of mine came into my office, voicing her concerns about her daughter who is nearly 18 and has been having driving lessons with a driving school. She is about to have her fifth attempt at getting her licence. The driving instructor says that there is no problem with her driving. The problem is that the cost for booking the test is $29, which is payable every time that the test is undertaken. The other day I was talking to a group of high school students and that was one of the issues that they raised with me. A lot of them had to go for their driving tests three or four times and they have to come up with the money. In many cases, 17-year-olds rely less and less on pocket money from mum and dad. They may have a part-time job at a bakery, Woolies or K mart and they are paying for the tests themselves.

Mr Johnson: My daughter had to take out a bank loan!

Mr HEALY: I would never suggest that the honourable member for Gregory's daughter was a poor driver, but that is an interesting observation. It is a problem. I would hate to think that in some areas it may be regarded as a money making venture for the department. It is of major concern to young people, particularly when the driving instructors—and we have some very good driving instructors throughout the State—cannot explain why these people have to go back three and four times to try to get their licences.

A couple of issues regarding Queensland Rail have come up in my electorate recently, and thankfully we have had a fairly good outcome on them. One relates to Queensland Rail's need to improve train movement efficiencies. I can understand that need, certainly considering the contracts that Queensland Rail has with organisations such as Grainco and the Australian Wheat Board. Huge amounts of grain such as wheat are transported by rail from my area to the port of Brisbane.

In its wisdom or otherwise, Queensland Rail decided that it would initiate something other than the refuelling of diesels at the main Willowburn diesel centre in Toowoomba. Instead, it was to begin operations for mainline train refuelling. The diesel trains would not be uncoupled but would be refuelled on the line with the use of fairly large refuelling trucks. I can see the economics in that and I can see the importance of increased efficiencies as far

as train movements are concerned. However, what Queensland Rail did not really identify, perhaps through a lack of consultation, was the fact that residents would be affected not only by the smell of diesel fumes but also by the noise of trains stopping and starting anything up to six or seven times a night at Harlaxton.

I am extremely pleased with the amount of contact that I have had with Queensland Rail, particularly Mr Glen Dawe, who spent quite a bit of time in Toowoomba before he moved to Brisbane to take on a fairly senior position with Queensland Rail. We were able to put a stop to that proposal and Queensland Rail has agreed to look at some alternatives. A lesson that has been well learned in my area is that it does not matter which Government department it is, consultation has to be undertaken and the views of the people have to be taken into consideration. This proposal would have had a dramatic impact on the quality of life of residents who live in an area where other industrial projects are sited, including a quarry. They have been used to the quarry noise and dust for many years so, of course, that particular proposal would not have been the icing on the cake by any means. It would have caused enormous concern. I give credit where credit is due: the Queensland Rail hierarchy has agreed to look again at that proposal, which has certainly eased the minds of a lot of people in that community.

The other day, I received a very comprehensive briefing—and I understand that the Minister did as well—in relation to a study that is being done on upgrading the rail line from Gowrie to Grandchester. This is part of the rail upgrade of a line that came into existence in about 1865. At that time, the range rail crossing was the most significant engineering project anywhere in the world. When we are looking at train movement efficiencies and efficiencies for Queensland Rail, it makes sense to me that we push ahead with those plans. It may still be 10 or 15 years down the track, but it is one of those projects that needs a lot of thought and planning because we need a decent rail corridor between Toowoomba and Brisbane. It amazes me and it amazes some of the people whom I know who come to Toowoomba from Sydney that we do not have an efficient passenger train service between Toowoomba and Brisbane. That trip normally takes three hours in a train and an hour and half by motor vehicle. I am sure that if anybody could catch a train from Toowoomba to Brisbane that took only an hour and a half, they would patronise it.

I was pleased to receive that briefing the other day, and hopefully things will progress. I told the people involved that whatever study they are doing should include any plans that may be forthcoming from ATEC, Everald Compton's group. As honourable members would be aware, there has been a lot of publicity about the Melbourne to Darwin standard gauge rail line.

Mr Rowell: It is an interesting concept.

Mr HEALY: It is a great concept. It is a visionary plan. I cannot agree with the member for Townsville, who said that it will have dramatic effects on Townsville. This is the sort of project about which we cannot be too parochial, because it will be of benefit to the whole economy and will open up the inland parts of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Studies are being undertaken into a new rail line between Toowoomba and Brisbane, and I hope that groups such as ATEC are consulted so that there might be talk of a common corridor or perhaps a dual-gauge line. We have to at least make sure that those people are kept in the loop when discussions take place in relation to that project.

I support the legislation. As I said, it is legislation that I know the former Transport Minister knew a lot about and discussed with many of us on this side of the House. It has been a long time coming but, hopefully, the initiatives in this piece of legislation will make sure that people on our roads, whether they be in heavy vehicles or passenger vehicles, will be able to drive in a safer environment. Certainly, the legislation will afford protection to people on the road from unscrupulous people who tend to do the wrong thing on our roads. I believe the increased penalty provisions within the legislation augur well for those of us who use our road, rail and other transport networks, which are vital to this State.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! I call the member for Clayfield.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (3.01 p.m.): I will not take the interjection from the honourable member for Fitzroy, who again proves himself to be rather idiotic.

The Road Transport Reform Bill contains a number of worthwhile initiatives, many of which were progressed by my friend and colleague the member for Gregory while he was the Minister. I think the current Minister owes the member for Gregory some thanks for having competently presided over his department for two and a half years and taking such a proactive stance on road safety. It is in

no small measure due to the energy, initiative and vision of the member for Gregory that Queensland remains at the forefront of road safety initiatives in Australia.

I am pleased that the Minister's second-reading speech outlined clearly what this Bill was intended to achieve. This clarity was in contrast to the Explanatory Notes circulated, which did not, as is usually the case, contain an explanation of the policy objectives of the Bill, how the Bill will achieve those policy objectives, the estimated cost to the Government of implementing the reforms, whether the Bill was consistent with fundamental legislative principles, and the nature of consultation that has occurred. Instead the Explanatory Notes just barrelled into a not particularly helpful synopsis of the legislation. I suggest to the Minister that, before he introduces any further legislation into the Chamber, especially in respect of important initiatives such as this one, he ensures that his department at least follows the guidelines and assists this Parliament by providing the requisite information.

As the Minister said in his second-reading speech, this Bill has a number of objectives. The first is to support the practical implementation of the Australian Road Rules and the national driver licence scheme. The introduction of simple, practical and uniform road laws is a very worthwhile goal. Any person who has travelled around Australia would be only too aware of the confusion and problems that can arise because of the multiplicity of traffic laws. This is a particular problem for people who transport goods for a living and, to the extent that these reforms will result in a more sensible road law regime, they are to be welcomed.

One recent development has been the implementation in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria of new rules governing truck driving hours. The fact that drivers are now permitted to drive set hours and there is a transitional fatigue management scheme in place both assist safety, competition and transport flexibility. In common with other members of the Opposition, I welcome this initiative.

The second objective is to target the heavy vehicle operators and drivers who consistently and deliberately flout the law and display a pattern of irresponsible behaviour. This is also a very important initiative, especially given the ongoing problem of heavy vehicles that speed and are overloaded. Recently, there was a tragic accident close to my electorate in which a heavy vehicle overturned onto a passenger vehicle. Unfortunately, the driver of the passenger vehicle was killed. No doubt investigations are still proceeding, but one of the causes of the accident was that the load on the heavy vehicle moved, causing it to become unbalanced. That tragedy brought home to me and to many others the inherent dangers on our roads posed by the loading—and not necessarily the overloading—of heavy vehicles.

The proposal in the Bill that the chain of responsibility be expanded to cover the owner of the vehicles as well as the driver is appropriate. The expansion of the sphere of responsibility should provide a much more practical incentive for the owners of heavy vehicles to ensure that their drivers are properly trained, that appropriate safety measures are implemented and that only responsible drivers are employed in the first place. I am not one to readily agree that the civil rights of anybody should be limited, especially when what is proposed is placing a statutory burden on a person who may not even be physically present when the law is breached. However, the idea of vicarious responsibility in our legal system is not new and, when lives are at risk, this Parliament has the right and responsibility to ensure that appropriate and proactive road safety legislation is in place.

In particular, the power proposed to be given to the court to order that a motor vehicle used to commit the offence be forfeited to the State will provide a very practical incentive to owners to ensure that their drivers do not overload their vehicles. However, I am pleased that the Bill does provide that, before making a forfeiture order, the court is to take into account the issue of hardship that would be caused by making such an order. It is plain that any automatic forfeiture without consideration of the economic harm that such an order would cause would be unjust and counterproductive. Accordingly, I hope that this power is used sparingly and is limited to the very worst types of cases. The support given to this initiative by the Queensland Road Transport Association is indicative of the merits of the proposals. As Peter Garske, the association's executive director, pointed out, it is those people overloading their vehicles by up to 60% who create dangers on the roads and ruin the viability of honest operators.

The third aspect of the Bill deals with changes to the provisions allowing drink-drivers to obtain licences. Work licences have been allowed since 1984, when it was recognised that, if a family breadwinner lost his or her

licence which was necessary for earning a living, it would place a harsh and unfair burden on the family of the convicted driver. Each year approximately 2,500 licences are granted. This represents around 13% of all persons convicted of drink-driving. Before such a conditional licence can be granted, the applicant must satisfy the court of a number of matters which are currently set out in section 20A of the Traffic Act. This Bill is aimed at toughening up the law and follows the release in 1999 of a discussion paper.

Previous studies have suggested that section 20A work licences undermined the certainty of licence disqualifications and their value as a deterrent to drink-driving. It was also suggested that breaches of the conditions of restricted licences were common among drivers with restricted provisional licences. This Bill provides that any person obtaining a section 20A licence will be prohibited from driving with a blood alcohol content greater than zero. In addition, before a work licence is granted the magistrate must be satisfied that at no time within the previous five years has the applicant's driver licence been suspended or cancelled or the applicant has been disqualified from holding or obtaining a driver licence.

The Bill also proposes to upgrade the evidence required to be produced by an applicant claiming extreme hardship to ensure that, where such an applicant is an employee, he or she must produce to the court an affidavit from the employer confirming that without a section 20A licence the applicant would be deprived of the means of earning a living. I am personally very supportive of the ability of people to seek a 20A licence. But the amendments proposed ensure that the balance that must be struck between public safety and drink-driving deterrence and individual fairness and equity is maintained. None of these amendments is unfair and they should not disadvantage genuine 20A applicants. As always, I do have residual concerns about zero blood alcohol requirements, especially when so many medicines and other substances have an alcohol content and a person may quite innocently have a very low blood alcohol level as a result. One hopes that problems do not arise in this area and that this particular area of implementation is kept under review.

I wish also to touch briefly on the provisions dealing with school crossing supervisors. The Bill requires that a person seeking to become a supervisor and current supervisors must give information relative to their criminal history. A disqualifying offence is one of those enumerated in proposed Schedule 2 and the types of offences that are set out are very serious, mostly of a sexual nature, although some involve crimes of extreme violence.

School crossing supervisors obviously come into contact with little children all the time. That is the very nature of their jobs. These provisions are certainly desirable and appropriate and should produce tangible benefits for school communities and parents who are worried about the safety of their children. As I read this aspect of the Bill, I feel that it will ensure that critical information is provided up front and will result in certain undesirable elements not being placed in a situation in which they can have access to young and vulnerable juveniles. For these reasons, I strongly support this initiative.

This Bill also gives me an opportunity to discuss a range of other matters, and I will seek to outline some of them. First, I have some very serious concerns about clause 24, which protects from legal liability or professional misconduct charges a health professional who gives information in good faith to a chief executive about a person's medical fitness or their ability to continue to hold a driver licence. I have some sympathy with the proposition that, if a doctor is aware that one of their patients is potentially medically unfit and should not be driving, the doctor be in a position to disclose that fact to the proper authorities. Similar duties already exist with respect to both sexually transmitted diseases and child abuse.

However, I agree with the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, which said in Alert Digest No. 6—

> "There are, however, strong reasons for the existence of professional confidentiality obligations. Patients might, for example, be less likely to seek assistance from health professionals if they feared that the information might be immediately relayed to the driver's licence authorities."

This could be a particular problem when it comes to older drivers who are sight impaired or suffer from any number of medical ailments. As I said, I am not without sympathy for the proposition that the duty of confidentiality is second to the wider duty of public safety. But I question whether the insertion of this provision takes the matter too far. Once this Parliament starts cutting down professional confidentiality no matter how immediately attractive its given circumstances may be, we start to undermine the whole concept of professional/client

relations. I would like the Minister to address this point and, in particular, inform this House what has motivated this initiative and what are the views of the medical profession.

A few weeks ago the Travelsafe Committee issued a report on the road safety implications of unlicensed driving and driving of unregistered vehicles. It is a very good report and highlights that between 1992 and 1996 in Queensland some 6.1% of all drivers and an amazing 20% of all motorcycle drivers involved in fatal accidents were unlicensed. Throughout Australia in 1992 to 1994 some 9% of all road fatalities were in crashes involving unlicensed drivers. The committee also highlighted the fact that unlicensed drivers involved in traffic accidents were two and a half to three times more likely than licensed drivers to have used drugs or consumed liquor or to have been speeding. Of even more concern,for motorcycle drivers that ratio increased to four to one.

One of the recommendations of the committee is that all classes of drivers be required to carry their licences when driving. The committee, however, urged that the police be required to exercise discretion when enforcing licence carriage requirements. I hope that the Minister thinks long and hard before rushing into legislation on this matter. As serious as unlicensed driving is, I am not sure that penalising a mother taking her kids to school in the morning and who, in the rush to get everything together, forgets her purse with her driver licence is either just or smart. Just how would this help deal with the drunk and unlicensed who cause accidents? It could quickly turn into a revenue raising exercise that could alienate law abiding citizens.

Mr Reeves: Are you stopping?

Mr SANTORO: I am still carrying some of that sickness that cut me short last week in terms of my contributions to this place.

Perhaps particular classes of motorists should be required to carry their licences. Care should be taken to target the problem and not approach the matter by legislating in a scatter gun fashion that hits both the innocent and the guilty.

Road safety is as much to do with unsafe driving as it is with unsafe road conditions. Ensuring that our road system is up to date and that road traffic flows are managed properly is critical to minimising road accidents. I am a very strong supporter of upgrading our roads by encouraging greater use of public transport and an array of other initiatives. For example, I was very pleased to be part of the coalition Government that initiated the Briztram project. It gives me no pleasure to say that, since the last election, this project seems to be losing its way.

I again point out to the Minister that the ridiculous suggestion that was advanced by one of two senior executives in his department, and which he foolishly adopted, of using narrow gauge tracks will come back to haunt this Government and his department. Our rail system in the inner city is already heavily used and will become even more congested over the next decade. To assume that slower moving trams should be integrated with heavier and faster moving trains with different electrical currents demonstrates an abysmal ignorance of our rail system, of safety factors and of the need for trams to be integrated with our bus system.

Nowhere else in Australia has narrow gauge ever been used for light rail. The old three foot six inch gauge, which we still use for our trains, is an anachronism. This Government is pushing our light rail system back 100 years. The builders of Brisbane light rail at least had the foresight in 1897 to use standard gauge. It is almost beyond belief that, as the new millennium approaches, this Government and the Department of Transport intend to bequeath to future to generations a narrow gauge system.

I say to the Minister that he has received dud advice. The Minister should have insisted, as we did when we were in Government, that light rail be embedded into the busway system. Instead, the Minister has been snowed, I believe, by his department, and his light rail vision is hopelessly misconceived. This is simply a matter that will not go away, and I hope that before all is lost this Government obtains some further and professional advice.

Already the talk around town is that this project is full of problems and, as the Minister knows, in his rush to rewrite history and call the initiative "Brisbane Light Rail", his department ran into business name problems with a consortium which had already secured that name. I just hope, from the viewpoint of the coalition, that the Minister continues to blindly accept the advice from the same bureaucrats who convinced the unlamented previous Minister and current bench sitter the member for Ipswich to proceed with the south-east motorway. Perhaps the Department of Transport, if it tries hard enough, can help to bring down two Labor administrations in a row.

As I said, I support road safety, and normally I would rise in this House and speak in favour of any sensible road project designed to minimise traffic congestion. However, the

City/Valley bypass is a case study in how not to approach such matters. Here we have a project that was aimed at dealing with one of the major traffic issues facing Brisbane, namely, the passage of heavy traffic through the CBD and the Valley. The Valley, in particular, has reached gridlock and urgent action is required from a traffic planning viewpoint, an environmental viewpoint, an amenity viewpoint and from an urban and retailing renewal perspective. Yet, in many respects, the City/Valley bypass is a case study of what is wrong with this Minister and this Government.

First, the consultation process has been a sham. Residents of the inner suburbs of Brisbane, whether they be the inner western or inner northern suburbs, have been drip-fed with selective information and most of their legitimate concerns have been fobbed off. What has been held up as an inclusive town planning process has, in fact, been a monumental con job. Second, the legitimate concerns of north side residents in the Ascot, Hamilton and surrounding suburbs have been almost ignored. The impact of the construction of the bypass on traffic in these areas—Kingsford Smith Drive in particular—has been overlooked. There will be an increase of 19% to 50% in traffic caused by the construction of the bypass, and the amenity of residents and the viability of many small businesses will be impacted upon. Property values will be affected, and for a Minister introducing Bills aimed at reducing traffic risks, I point out that there will be a significant increase in so-called rat-running from Kingsford Smith Drive into the abutting streets which service suburbs.

I have already pointed out to this House the failure of the consultation process and the price that not only the residents of Hamilton, Ascot, Hendra and Albion will pay for this myopia but also the residents of Milton, Paddington, Ashgrove and The Gap. Of course, the third concern I have is the Labor mates' rates approach to this whole exercise. Instead of this Minister and this Government coming out and owning up to the fact that they are financially underpinning this project, they hide their support via a $470m financial transport package. $100m of that package is clearly earmarked for the City/Valley bypass—a fact which the Minister singularly failed to mention to this House when he announced the package in November last year. So I say to the Minister and to anybody listening to or reading this speech that there is a great necessity to come clean about this project but, most importantly, to indulge in some meaningful consultation with the residents, particularly in my electorate and elsewhere, before this project progresses much further.

Just before I conclude, I also wish to refer to the Nundah bottleneck project. I listened very carefully to what my friend and colleague the honourable member for Nudgee had to say about this project. In common with the honourable member for Nudgee, I also remember when the honourable member for Capalaba, then the Minister for Transport, came to Buckland Park and announced under the rotunda during that very rainy day the cut and cover option as being the favoured option for the Nundah bottleneck.

What the honourable member for Nudgee did not say is that, although the Minister committed to the favoured community option, the option favoured by all the local politicians, the community and, indeed, the consultants—everybody involved in the project—it was up to the member for Gregory and the then Minister for Transport to commit in the Budget, under a very specific line item, the very big bucks that in fact made that project a reality. It does not matter what the current Minister and the member for Nudgee say. It was under a coalition Government, after very lengthy and constructive consultation with the community—some people say perhaps too lengthy—that the whole project was able to take off.

I acknowledge the contribution of people such as Mr Taylor and Ms Pritchard—indeed, the whole community. Many good community members made a significant contribution to resolving that particular community problem. One outstanding issue has arisen from recent activities, that is, the destruction of the pink cassia trees on the fence line of the maternal and child welfare facility. It is important that some serious attempt be made to replace those very mature trees of 50 years' standing with new trees.

This Bill is a testament to the hard work of the member for Gregory, who, more than any other Minister, has done much to improve road safety. I give him 10 out of 10 for not blindly following sometimes not very reliable departmental advice. I believe that the Bill does deserve support. It has many initiatives worthy of greater public debate. I commend the former Minister for his efforts.

Time expired.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (3.21 p.m.): I give my wholehearted support to the Road Transport Reform Bill, which contains some significant benefits to road safety in Queensland. We have worked hard for a proud road safety record, with last year's road

toll of 279 the lowest since 1955. We must strive to maintain this proud record and continually lead the way in road safety, protecting the lives and livelihoods of Queenslanders.

The heavy vehicle transport industry is an institution in Australia. As I think the member for Gregory would agree and as the Minister said, it is a part of the Australian way. Many involved in it are the great characters of our country. I have great admiration for those truckies who spend hours upon hours driving kilometre after kilometre across the length and breadth of Australia.

Whilst some might like to see a curtailing of the heavy vehicle industry, I think they are dreaming. It would be physically impossible to transport goods around this huge State without our heavy vehicles. These comments do not mean that everything is perfect with the heavy vehicle industry, but I believe that those within it are more conscious of the need to work with all stakeholders. Stakeholders such as the TWU and the QRTA play a vital role in managing and formulating solutions to problems of this industry. From my observation, this industry more than most is willing to question how it does things and to look for solutions. I know first-hand of the openness and willingness to discuss issues of the QRTA under chief executive Peter Garske. The issue close to my heart—that is, Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road—is a perfect example.

It is important for me to comment on a speech made in Federal Parliament two days ago by the Federal member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave, regarding Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. If this matter were not so serious, his ignorance on the issue would be laughable. Truck usage of this road has a major effect on the quality on life of many of my constituents. His ignorance should be noted here.

First, Mr Hardgrave fails to face up to the fact that Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road is supposedly a federally funded road. The buck stops with his Government, but he and his cohorts fall short every time. Secondly, I challenge Gary Hardgrave to put on the record what he has actually done in relation to this issue since becoming the Federal member some four years ago. I am not talking about the cheap political stunts he gets involved in.

Mr Schwarten: He doesn't even live in the area.

Mr REEVES: That is exactly right. We should be able to compare his record with mine and those of other State members. For the record, I will inform the House what I and other State members—the members for Mount Gravatt, Sunnybank and Archerfield—have done on the issue.

Prior to being elected, I had a number of meetings with the then shadow Minister for Transport and now Deputy Premier, the member for Mount Gravatt, the member for Sunnybank and the then member for Archerfield, Len Ardill. At these meetings I discussed a range of measures to address traffic problems, in particular truck usage of Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. I also conducted public meetings on the changes to traffic signals at the intersection of Mount Gravatt-Capalaba/Kessels and Logan Roads. At these meetings, attended by the member for Mount Gravatt, the specific issue plus the broad problem of Mount Gravatt-Capalaba/Kessels Road were discussed. Further, I made representation to the Main Roads Department on behalf of the residents.

That is what I did prior to the election. Since being elected I have pursued this issue more than any other. I have no doubt that the Main Roads district office and the Minister's office would believe that I have a one-track mind because of my constant representation on this issue. I have to say: they are probably right. I have made representation after representation on the issue and I am happy to say that these have borne fruit.

I have also spoken at length about this issue with one of the key stakeholders—the QRTA. I hosted a lunch here at Parliament House with representatives of the QRTA, in particular those directors of companies who have trucks using the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road route. This meeting gave me a good grasp of some of the reasons they are using Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. I passed this information to the Minister to consider in his deliberations. I have also hosted tours of the road for advisers of the Minister. This enabled them to experience the problem first-hand.

I have continued to communicate with my electorate on this issue and I will continue to push for real long-term strategies on the problems of Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road until I am blue in the face. Now let us look at what the Federal member for Moreton has not only done but achieved.

Last week the Minister announced the removal of the dangerous goods route from Mount Gravatt-Capalaba/Kessels Road. I can inform the House that I have been absolutely overwhelmed by the positive response of my constituents to this decision, but I must say that I am not surprised. We have also recently commenced a major truck origin and destination survey, which will not rely on

hunches or beliefs by the Federal member for Moreton but will give us solid data we can use to plan long-term strategies for this road.

The inference that the Federal member for Moreton made, that other State members and I are not aware of the situation, is an absolute fallacy. I remind this member that I have lived directly off Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road all of my life. I have personally seen and been adversely affected by the growth of Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road traffic. In fact, my electoral office is on this road and I encounter the problems of it every single day—unlike the member, whose office and residence are a long way from Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road.

I give the Federal member for Moreton the same message I gave to the member for Callide yesterday: put up or shut up. The people of my electorate do not want political stunts; they just want action. I am pleased to say that we have a Minister who fully understands and is acting by introducing real, effective strategies to address our concerns. I say to the Federal member for Moreton: watch this space, and actions speak louder than words.

On behalf of my constituents I thank the Minister for taking important steps to improve the quality of life for many of the residents who live in Wishart, Upper Mount Gravatt and Mansfield.

Mr Musgrove: They have a great local member.

Mr REEVES: I thank the member for Springwood. I will focus on two initiatives in this Bill for improving safety in the road transport industry. These initiatives especially affect heavy trucks and buses.

Queensland has the most road freight intensive economy of any State in Australia. It is vital that we continue to facilitate good practice within the industry and effectively discourage unsafe and illegal behaviour. This Bill provides for two initiatives which will support the transport industry's commitment to safety—initiatives which will protect fair competition whilst ensuring efficient and safe practice. They are the speeding heavy vehicles policy and the managing heavy vehicles access policy.

These new powers will allow Queensland to suspend a vehicle's registration, remove the right to use an interstate vehicle on Queensland roads and remove a person's right to drive in Queensland. These sanctions will be applied when a specific driver or vehicle is repeatedly involved in breaches of transport law. They will reinforce the responsibility required of heavy vehicle operators and get tougher on rogue operators who systematically disobey transport laws and endanger public safety.

The speeding heavy vehicles policy specifically targets vehicles which are required to be speed limited. Since 1991 it has been compulsory for new trucks over 12 tonnes and buses over five tonnes to be speed limited to 100 kilometres per hour. New trucks and buses are now manufactured with speed limiters prefitted. However, there is evidence that some supposedly speed limited vehicles can still travel far quicker than 100 kilometres per hour, despite the signs they bear which say otherwise. In these cases it may be that the speed limiter is not working properly or has been tampered with deliberately.

Currently, speeding drivers attract a fine and demerit points against their licence, but the owner of the vehicle suffers no penalty, even though it is the owner who is responsible for maintaining the vehicle and its speed limiter and it is the owner who is responsible for ensuring deadlines can be met by legal speeds and driving hours.

The speeding heavy vehicles policy introduces the concept of a chain of responsibility. While a speeding driver will still receive their ticket, the operator of the vehicle will no longer escape their proper responsibility. The new staged penalties will require the owners of vehicles that speed to ensure their speed limiters are working properly. Repeated speeding will result in the removal of the truck or bus from the road for up to three months by suspending its registration. The speeding heavy vehicles policy has the strong support of the Queensland Road Transport Association and the Transport Workers Union. Similar laws are now being adopted in all other States and Territories in Australia.

This Government needs to send a strong message that this behaviour is unacceptable. This Bill will allow Queensland to deal effectively with these serial offenders. Drivers and vehicles involved repeatedly in these offences will be removed from the roads, making them safer for all users. As I said, these policies are not an extra burden on the industry and penalise operators only when existing laws are broken. Honest businesses will benefit from Queensland cracking down on unscrupulous competitors who undercut them by breaking the law.

Queensland must take every opportunity to reduce the personal tragedy and social cost of the road toll. This Bill provides such an

opportunity. This legislation seeks to encourage heavy vehicle operators to ensure that their vehicles are operated within the law, and to appropriately penalise those operators who systematically flout the law. It will ensure fairer and safer competition in an industry which is vital to our economy. By cracking down on operators who repeatedly break laws based on the principles of road safety, we can make Queensland's roads safer for everyone. This House should therefore give its full support to this Bill.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.31 p.m.): This Bill is quite important. A lot of the work was done initially by the member for Gregory when he was Transport Minister. It is good that the current Government has seen fit to introduce many of these measures that are important to the heavy vehicle transport industry.

I would like to speak in particular about the northern area of this State and the sugar roads, which are one of the major concerns in north Queensland. I am sure that the Minister—coming from that part of the State—would be very much aware of the need for good road construction, particularly because many heavy vehicles use the roads in that part of the State at various times of the year.

One of the major problems facing heavy transport is the wet weather in that area. Heavy transport certainly can be very detrimental to the condition of our road system. Over the past couple of years, and particularly last year, we have experienced really extraordinary wet weather the likes of which we have not seen for some time.

Mr Bredhauer: Just like the old days.

Mr ROWELL: We got a bit more than we have in past wet seasons. From August last year the weather was extremely unseasonal. For a period of about eight or nine months there was an absolute saturation of that road system. Some of the road construction that was done in that area 15 and 20 years ago was inferior to the roads that are being constructed these days. As a consequence, many of those roads broke up under heavy transport. I have to say that the Federal Government bears a high level of responsibility for that. I have been on its back to make sure that we get adequate road funding. It is quite important that we do not have to continually patch up those roads, and that is effectively what has happened over the years; it has been a patch-up job. Of course, the State is also involved in making sure that our roads are in good condition, but sometimes we are not rewarded as well as we should be.

I would like to return to the subject of the roads over which sugar is transported. Expansions in the sugar industry are occurring throughout the north of the State, and in my electorate in particular a lot of sugarcane is being transported by road. In fact, in the near future there will be a truck going past one particular point on the highway every 10 minutes. Because sugarmills are looking for additional areas into which to expand, there will be an enormous amount of traffic on the highway. State-controlled roads are very much part of that.

Many of our roads are not up to the standard required for B-doubles, and we have had to do something about that. When the member for Gregory was the Minister for Transport, he visited the Warrami area, which is just south of Tully. We went through an implementation process, with a consultant doing work on what was required. We looked at a range of options for those roads, including whether we could get the cane off the roads, particularly the main highway, and develop some sort of rail feeder system. The consultant looked at that process. But unfortunately, at the end of the day, the best short-term solution was to use semitrailers and B-double-type transport to get the cane to mills some 80 or 90 kilometres away. As a consequence, the roads got knocked around extremely badly. Intermingling B-doubles with school transport vehicles can be extremely dangerous, so it was important to develop a strategy for the future to enable us to provide some form of support for the councils. We certainly looked at the transport system in general with a view to taking cane transport off those roads, particularly the highway, and getting it onto some form of light rail or even Government rail. But unfortunately, Government rail proved to be unsatisfactory and, as I said, we had no alternative but to transport cane on the highway.

As the Minister would be aware, the tablelands are facing a similar situation. One mill in that area is wanting to expand in order to maintain its viability. It is a very good area for sugarcane growing. The mill is in the first process of crushing cane, and it is using the rail system—rather than road—to take the cane down the Kuranda Range to be processed at the Babinda mill and in Gordonvale. There are some advantages in using rail for that type of transport and eliminating trucks from our roads.

I also wish to mention the horticultural industry, which is very important to north Queensland. Bananas are worth probably $200m annually—sometimes more. Producers of bananas, pawpaws, mangoes and other fruit are very dependent on a good road system to get their product to market in a good state. That is one of their main criteria. They do not want to transport their produce over roads that break up; they need smooth roads, otherwise their fruit gets bruised and damaged and, as a consequence, the value of their product is diminished.

Many shires face major problems because of their bad economic circumstances. I mention in particular the Johnstone Shire, which is in the northern end of my electorate. The local government there cannot afford to maintain good bitumen roads. In some cases, it is being forced to tear up a bitumen road and return it to dirt. That is quite disastrous for that shire because of the level of rainfall that it receives.

There are also major problems associated with some 40-odd wooden bridges that were built many years ago—probably as long as 40 or 50 years ago. Because of an abundance of timber in the area at that time, a wooden bridge could be built at a fairly low cost. But those bridges cannot handle the weights that are now going over them. Often, if low-loader carrying a cane harvester has to cross one of those bridges, people are forced to off-load the cane harvester, let the low-loader go across, walk the cane harvester over the bridge and then reload it. So in some of those areas we are going back to Third World country status in some respects.

Another very important element of good roads and road transport is the fact that tourism is one of the major growth industries in north Queensland. I think the Minister would agree that north Queensland has a lot to offer. Enormous numbers of people travel to the north of the State during the winter. In fact, this year there seemed to be a mass exodus from the south because of cool weather down there. We find large groups of people travelling at low speeds—perhaps 70 km/h or 80 km/h—and causing difficulties. Inevitably we will have to look at installing passing lanes in certain areas otherwise the safety of people travelling on the highway will be at risk.

We also need better signage in certain areas. People who do not know the area need to know where they are going. We need sufficient signage to support the tourist industry. People who are looking around and who do not understand where they are going can cause a hazardous situation. They do not know whether to turn to the left or right and they are probably not taking sufficient notice of road conditions. The Minister might laugh at what I am saying, but I can assure him that it is a serious situation. People can be forced into doing things which they would not necessarily do under normal conditions.

I would like to refer to machinery inspectors. In north Queensland we have quite a lot of heavy machinery. On quite a few occasions I have written to the Minister regarding the necessity to address this situation. The machinery inspector for most of my electorate resides in and operates out of Innisfail. Appointments are made on a needs basis for the most part. People are required to ring the machinery inspector and make appointments, but it can take six weeks before an inspection can be effected. The machinery inspector visits Tully and Ingham, where he has facilities for carrying out inspections.

From time to time people find that they have defects in their vehicles and have to have them repaired by the competent operators whom we have in the area. The vehicle then has to be re-inspected. Previously, motorists had two months' grace in relation to their registration where machinery inspections were concerned. That is no longer the case. It is not always possible to gain the certificate in time to coincide with registration. That necessitates the owner undertaking costly re-registration of the vehicle. In some instances, people find that their vehicles are kept off the road for some time. People find that they have to wait three weeks to see the inspector and then have to keep the vehicle off the road for a further three weeks.

We are not well served with machinery inspectors. In one letter I wrote to the Minister I referred to the possibility of having local people acting as authorised inspectors who could undertake the second inspection. I believe this option is needed because we are keeping vehicles off the road. That can be detrimental to everyone concerned.

When the shaker used to go through the area we had 80 or 90 vehicles that had to be inspected. It took time to go through that process. He also had to carry out his normal work involving heavy vehicles. It was a long process and affected a lot of operators.

I would like to refer to drivers licence examiners. The member for Toowoomba North referred to young people who go to the licensing examiners for their first test. Very often they return several times. There are always people in the community who believe

that is simply a money-making exercise for the Department of Transport. I do not believe that that is the case. Young people must have a certificate of competency which allows them to drive motor vehicles. I have no problem with that. However, sometimes nit-picking occurs. For the most part, examiners come to my area from Townsville or Cairns. It takes the examiners some time to get to Ingham in order to carry out the examinations.

I have spoken to Bob Barton about this matter and I believe it would be beneficial if we had an examiner located in a more central area to undertake this work. If the examiner had time on his hands he could go to Townsville or Cairns and give some assistance in those areas. Sometimes people have to wait five or six weeks to undertake a driving test. People working on the cane haul-out who require a UD licence have had to wait. For the most part, these problems have been resolved, but it has been a process which has caused some angst. I believe a lot of the problems could be solved if we had an examiner stationed in a more central location.

One other matter I would like to mention concerns the Department of Transport's call centre. Many people have called me and complained about the service. I have also written to the Minister about the situation. The Minister has told us that there has been a large build-up in the numbers of people using the service and, as a consequence, there are extensive delays. I am told that sometimes the delays can extend to 40 minutes. My secretary has tried to get through and it has taken her up to 23 minutes to be successful. I do not know what the Minister can do about it.

People ring the number and have to wait for 30 or 40 minutes and, as a result, they become very uptight about the situation. The first thing they do when they get through to the number is spend a few minutes venting their spleen on the person who responds. That is not necessary, but it is the result of frustration. We have to find some mechanism whereby we can overcome this situation. The Minister must see what he can do to improve the situation.

Many people want to contact the department to arrange such things as vehicle inspections. Members of Parliament are not the only people who use the call service. People in business cannot afford to spend 20, 30 or even 40 minutes waiting on the phone for someone to respond. They have to conduct their businesses. They are not aware of the problems the department has as a result of the build-up in the number of calls. People do not want to spend their time in the fruitless pursuit of information. If one has work to do, one cannot sit there holding the telephone for a lengthy period of time.

I would like the Minister to take that matter on board because it is a serious situation. The previous Minister, the member for Gregory, installed a call centre at Emerald. Is that right?

Mr Johnson: Yes, at Emerald.

Mr ROWELL: It seems that that process has now been exhausted. Maybe we have to get back to involving local people within the department. Perhaps there has to be some cross-pollination. We do not want to waste the time of people in the department but we also do not want the public to be frustrated when they are trying to get through to the department.

I want to make some mention of local government. Local government plays a large part in providing roads. Local government has its role to play in safety issues. This is a group that works very hard with a minimal amount of finance. Local government does what it can in terms of providing good facilities and roads for trucks and passenger vehicles.

We have been through processes where they have contracted out work. I know that the previous Minister did a lot of work with the western councils to enable them to be able to get work on a contract basis. For the most part, that has worked particularly well. The department has still maintained a work force and a competitive spirit has been adopted in regard to much of the work that has been done. My summation of the process is that it has gone quite well. I really hope that it continues, because we cannot have western areas and northern areas losing out to contractors with better equipment who come in from the more populated areas to do the work. In some areas there is a need for that to occur, but as far as possible we have got to keep the jobs, jobs, jobs local. I think that the previous Minister did a lot of work to ensure exactly that.

Finally, I would like to speak briefly about Mourilyan Harbour, which is very important to transport in north Queensland. Pivot was very interested in using the harbour to bring in ships carrying fertiliser. The harbour could become a major distribution point. I know that $5m was required for the dredging of Mourilyan Harbour. We are working through that process. We need ports such as Mourilyan to relieve the burden from heavy transport, particularly rail and road, and so that we can have access to overseas destinations for the importation of fertiliser and so on into north Queensland.

Time expired.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (3.51 p.m.): In joining this debate on the Road Transport Reform Bill, I note that some of the main provisions of this Bill are to deliver uniform road reforms and drink-driving penalties. Many of those reforms are directed towards heavy vehicles on the roads. That is what I want to talk about in particular.

My colleague the member for Toowoomba North has already spoken about the proposed second crossing of the Great Dividing Range just north of Toowoomba. I know that the Minister was caught in the House and was not able to attend a recent meeting, but I would like to thank him for making his senior staff available to meet with us. It was a very satisfactory meeting. It is a big, ambitious project, a project that is of great importance to Australia, and we are slowly getting somewhere with it.

At the risk of being repetitive, I would like to tell the House about the importance of this second crossing of the range. The Warrego Highway carries the heaviest tonnage of any road in Australia, so it is important to our nation. It is the major route from south-eastern Queensland and, therefore, to the Brisbane ports and the various manufacturing areas of south-eastern Queensland. It is the major route from there through to Toowoomba, from Goondiwindi down through western New South Wales to Melbourne, and to South Australia. It is also the major route to western Queensland, north-western Queensland and to Darwin. So it is an extremely important road.

Currently, approximately 17,000 vehicles per day use that road. The Minister's department has counting devices on the road in an endeavour to get a more accurate assessment of the exact numbers of vehicles that use it and also to determine the percentage of heavy vehicles. The department estimates that currently 20% of that traffic is heavy vehicles. Of course, when those 20% of vehicles are crawling up the range in low gear, or crawling down the range in low gear, or having to use their J-brakes and so forth, the effect is that it seems that far more than 20% of the traffic is heavy vehicles.

It is well documented that on two occasions in the past couple of months Toowoomba has been isolated. The crashes that occur on the range are horrific. The alternative route, which is a little skinny road down through Murphy's Creek, is really not designed to take major transport. However, in one of those instances when Toowoomba was isolated, heavy transport was diverted down the Murphy's Creek road. It is proposed that this new road would have a lower gradient. Therefore, vehicles would be able to travel at about 80 km/h to 85 km/h, maybe even 90 km/h. I think that the saving in time and fuel would be of real significance. Also, the alternative route would be very convenient for those people who live in western Queensland and who have to take a long six to 10-hour trip. They would be able to bypass Toowoomba and save half an hour, three-quarters or an hour or more. Heavy transport would save at least an hour.

Toowoomba City has at least 100,000 people. The main east-west street of Toowoomba is James Street. In the CBD area of James Street alone there are eight sets of traffic lights. Along that street there is the main Catholic cathedral, two schools, the major turning-off point to the Toowoomba Base Hospital, a huge array of businesses on either side, and, where there are not businesses, there are houses. This road is carrying the heaviest tonnage of freight in Australia right through the centre of the city. It would be only a matter of time before it became totally clogged. Recently, I have taken the opportunity to sit on the corners of some of those intersections just to observe what is happening at the traffic lights. Probably a dozen or 15 B-doubles or semis pull up at the intersections. By the time the lights turn green and they all go through their gears, they travel one block and they hit the next set of lights. The whole system gets very close to being clogged. I know that some younger drivers, women drivers and older drivers—many people—get a bit nervous when they are caught among such a huge array of larger B-doubles, grain trucks, stock trucks and so forth. That is another important reason why we need this second range crossing.

It is also important to note that, to date, the cost of the range crossing is very substantial; it is somewhere in the order of $250m. A project of that size needs special Federal consideration. To get that sort of money out of the Federal and State funds that are currently going to a lot of programs would mean that many other projects around the State which are also very important would be wiped out for years.

Mr Bredhauer: We have only about $160m a year in national highway funding from the Commonwealth.

Mr HORAN: I take that point. The Federal Government gives $160m a year in national highway funding. I have talked in this House before about other important road projects such as the Gatton bypass, which, in recent

times, has been the site of 11 or 13 fatalities. I know that at the moment the Main Roads Department, with Federal money, is working on the Marburg section of that road, which is another dangerous single-lane road. We appreciate all of that work.

Recently in Rockhampton the member for Toowoomba North, the member for Crows Nest and I were able to meet with Federal Transport Minister John Anderson. I am pleased to say that he was very understanding. I think that he now has a proper appreciation of the situation. I have talked to some of the Minister's staff, and I understand that they feel that the Federal department is starting to take a little more notice. The Federal department has offered to meet with the Minister's staff in two weeks' time, which should be a gradual step forward.

There are three groups representing the people in Toowoomba and the Darling Downs who are working on this project. The Federal member for Groom, Mr McFarlane, is lobbying hard within Canberra; the local members, Mr Healy, Mr Cooper, Mr Elliott and I, are working through the State sphere, and the mayors of EDROC regularly attend our meetings. They are working through the Local Government Association in an endeavour to raise the profile of and the need for this particular project. When we consider that towns such as Pittsworth and Oakey are becoming real road transport towns, as is Toowoomba, we start to realise the importance of this road to those councils.

I am pleased that the department is doing an accurate traffic count on that road, because we can start to get an accurate figure on when the road is actually going to be at its capacity. Over the years various studies have shown that the capacity of that highway is somewhere between 24,000 and 26,000 vehicles, depending on the percentage of heavy transport. As I say, currently it is at least 17,000 vehicles. It would appear that some time around 2003 to 2005 it is going to be at full capacity. When we consider the time that it takes to carry out such a massive project—and it would be like a Snowy Mountains project, really—we realise that it is important to start doing the work now. It is important that we get the Commonwealth Government to commit to a special fund that does not detract from the other moneys that should come to Queensland for projects in the north-west, along the coastal roads and everywhere else where there is a need for road funding. It is important that work be started on the alternative route, because it would be dreadful to see the highway reach its full to capacity in 2005, funding not turn up until 2010 and the alternative route not completed till 2015, by which time we could have 7 to 10 years of chaos on the highway. Certainly Toowoomba would be clogged, because James Street cannot take many more trucks. It is a four-lane inner-city road not designed to take trucks. I do not think that many major Australian cities of 100,000 people would have a road carrying such heavy tonnage running straight through their centre.

Mr Johnson: None.

Mr HORAN: None, the shadow Minister tells me. The Minister's department has been investigating the Toowoomba Arterial Road Link Study, or TARLS, which looks at Cohoe, James, Davis, and Tor Streets, which are all the elements of James Street, and also the southern part of Ruthven Street from James to Alderley Streets. I congratulate the staff of Main Roads in Toowoomba on the way in which they have consulted exhaustively, despite the difficulties that they have had to face, which I know about because I have attended a couple of their meetings. When people may be affected by future planning, they get very concerned about issues such as traffic being able to access their business and their motels. People who own houses along parts of a road that may have to be widened get extremely concerned about property resumptions. Such issues have been handled in a very caring way by the staff who have undertaken exhaustive consultation.

The TARLS draft report will become the final document, depending upon the changes that may be put forward by any of the community bodies. However, because the consultation has been so exhaustive, there may not be too many adjustments to the document. One particular area of concern that the TARLS identifies is Tor Street. The TARLS document will become a planning framework for the future and some of the projects that it discusses may not commence until some time in the future. It is very difficult for people to plan their lives if their houses or businesses are on a road where there may or may not be resumptions. I commend the staff of the Main Roads Department for how they have been handling that problem. There have been some compassionate resumptions along portions of Tor Street.

The other issue that has been looked at, and which is a little contentious, is the alternative route to the New England Highway on the western side of Toowoomba. That road has been called the north-south bypass or the New England Highway alternative route study.

This project came to fruition for a couple of reasons. One reason is the proposal for a second range crossing and, associated with that are the moves that are afoot to develop major transport, warehousing and industrial hubs on the western side of the city. There are two proposals put forward there: one is that proposed by EDROC in consultation with the Transport Department for transport and warehousing alone, and the other is the proposal by private enterprise to site a project at Wellcamp.

That project caused the commencement of the study that is looking at ways of linking the New England Highway south of Toowoomba to the Warrego Highway. That link will impact upon the growing number of houses on the western side of the city around the showgrounds area and the Westbrook area. As a result, a number of local groups have done a considerable amount of work to identify zones of interest. One group in particular, led by Mr David Carey, did an enormous amount of work. The upshot of their efforts is that, at this stage, there appears to be no need for such a bypass. The figures were that out of about 6,000 vehicles that access that southern area of Toowoomba each day, only 300 would use a north-south bypass. Considerable pain and angst were going to be caused, whatever was decided.

I congratulate the local group that was led by David Carey on the amount of research that they undertook and I thank the Minister for making some of his officers available to take their submissions. They have determined a route. Even though they are very disappointed that nothing will probably happen for some foreseeable time, they have identified some very important planning issues for the western side of Toowoomba, such as the growth of housing which is quite substantial. Much of that area will be added to my electorate, and that is where a lot of growth is happening. Certainly, the work they did was outstanding in determining the liveability of that area and where such a road should go.

This study also came about because of the growing problem that the city has to face up to, which is that of road trains coming into Toowoomba. On the one hand, we need road trains because we have major saleyard complexes, a lot of grain handling terminals and a lot of western transport that comes into the city. It is important that road trains can access the south western part of Toowoomba. Ours is probably one of the few remaining major cities where road trains are able to come into parts of the city. When I used to be the manager of the Toowoomba showgrounds, the road train route crossed Glenvale Road where our patrons came out. The road trains would come in and turn right and left, and right and left again, and pass through all the new subdivisions. They would almost go over the corner of the footpaths, because the roads are so narrow. Now they are required to come in along Taylor Street and then turn right and go out towards the saleyards.

Toowoomba is a city that relies upon road transport. We need road train access, but we have to face up to this problem which some of the local groups on the western side of the city identified. It is not very pleasant for anyone to buy a half acre or a three-quarter acre block of land in a lovely area and then find that there is a possibility that road trains will be going by. The gradient up the western side of the range makes changing gears rather noisy. That is something that we will have to face up to.

I compliment the staff of the department for the way that they have addressed some very difficult issues and have listened to everything that people have told them. People get quite concerned and angry if they think that changes to the road systems will affect their businesses, as it can in inner city areas such as James Street and Ruthven Street. They very patiently and courteously listened to everybody and we are close to developing some important future planning for the city.

I wish to conclude by talking about the strategic importance of Toowoomba. Toowoomba lies right on the main highway of Australia in terms of tonnages carried. We have the second highest range in Australia, the highest being the range north of Tamworth. The only real range that has to be crossed between Melbourne and Brisbane is the Great Dividing Range at Toowoomba. Toowoomba is Australia's biggest inland city and the amount of transport that travels through the city is close to clogging our main east-west street. I do not think that that is fair on our citizens. There are huge benefits for the people of western Queensland and the rest of Australia if this highway can be improved.

I say to the Federal Government that it is time to show some national vision and look at undertaking a Snowy Mountains type project. An amount of $250m spent on this road would have unbelievable effects in terms of job creation, efficiencies within the heavy transport industry and the export opportunities that it would open up.

Mr Johnson: A gateway to the Territory.

Mr HORAN: Indeed, it will be a gateway to the Territory, South Australia, Brisbane and south-eastern Queensland. It is a project that

the Federal Government has to come to grips with. Some things need to be done. This project should be undertaken as a special additional project so that it will not impact in any way on our neighbours throughout Queensland who have pressing needs of their own, such as river crossings, road widening and so forth. Those projects are also essential and we recognise that.

In conclusion, I know that the Bill has been a long time coming. I join with other honourable members in congratulating the previous Minister and the current Minister on pulling together the four very important issues in this Bill. I am pleased to join with my colleagues in supporting it.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (4.09 p.m.): Road transport operators provide an essential service in delivering goods along the many highways and lonely roads across the State. Although we curse the truckies from time to time, particularly if we are stuck behind them in traffic, we know that we cannot do without them. In the main, road transport operators, many of whom are based in my electorate of Archerfield, run responsible and viable operations. I commend the road transport industry members who have worked cooperatively with the Minister and departmental officers in developing the Bill.

There is a high concentration of industrial and commercial activity in my electorate. In fact, the suburb of Acacia Ridge alone generates 10% of the economic activity of Brisbane. As honourable members can imagine, there are a lot of trucks coming and going in the area. It is essential that truck operators maintain high standards of safety. I am pleased to support this Bill, as it gives more tools to operators and to the Government to improve safety on our roads.

I have worked actively to ease traffic congestion on major roads in my electorate and to put an end to heavy vehicles being parked in residential areas. In the time available today, I wish to focus on the issue of heavy vehicle parking. Many residents in my area are fed up with big semitrailers and prime movers—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! There is far too much audible conversation.

Ms STRUTHERS:—being parked outside their homes. These people are worried about their safety, as the trucks block their streets and limit their visibility when they are driving. The Road Transport Reform Bill provides a remedy to this problem. Embedded in the Bill are the Australian Road Rules. These rules will prohibit heavy vehicles greater than 7.5 metres long and/or heavier than 4.5 tonnes from parking in designated urban areas for more than an hour. Further, the Bill provides the impetus for local governments to introduce their own more stringent local laws if they so desire.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind honourable members that, if they want to hold a conversation, there are other places in which to do so.

Ms STRUTHERS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have lots of interesting things to say. I would appreciate the attention of honourable members.

To their credit, the Logan and Ipswich City Councils have already implemented local laws to prohibit heavy vehicle parking in urban areas. The Brisbane City Council has recently developed a heavy vehicle parking local law that is likely to be introduced later this year. I accept that truck operators and owners may not be rapt about the proposed changes; they may incur additional costs and inconvenience. However, in my view, public safety outweighs the inconvenience to owners and operators because of the changes that they will need to make.

I commend the residents who have made submissions to me to fix the heavy vehicle parking problem. Many have taken photos, delivered them to my office and asked for urgent action. The Minister has been very responsive in dealing with these submissions, and I commend him for that. The residents have been determined to maintain the amenity and safety of their suburban streets. I have alerted the Minister to the problems and I have been working in cooperation with my local government colleague Councillor Kevin Bianchi to make our suburban streets safer.

I wish also to take this opportunity to promote the dedicated way in which Minister Judy Spence, the member for Mansfield and I are working to alleviate traffic congestion in our region—congestion that is compounded by the large volume of heavy vehicles needing to access the area and the lack of Federal funding to improve the national road network in our area. We have been seeking to work cooperatively with the Federal member for Moreton, Mr Gary Hardgrave, as the main problem arterial road in our region is a Federal Government responsibility. Rather than acknowledging that his own Government cut national highway funding by $620m over four

years from 1996-97, thereby limiting the capacity to fix these problems, Mr Hardgrave simply continues to bag us and bag the State Government. The public are sick and tired of buck passing on road issues. They want workable solutions, and that is what they are getting from the State Government. As elected members we do not always have wins on issues, but I am encouraged that the State Minister, Mr Bredhauer, has introduced a Bill that goes a long way towards fixing the heavy vehicle parking problem. The next step is to get our Federal colleagues on side and then we will be better placed to fix the other congestion problems. I know that the trucking industry is on side with this Bill and I welcome its cooperation in successfully implementing its provisions.

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (4.14 p.m.): The Road Transport Reform Bill will enable a uniform set of road rules to be introduced across our nation. As the member for Southport, I am very familiar with the number of tourists who cross the border in motor vehicles every day. Quite a number of drivers on the Gold Coast are from overseas and have rented motor vehicles to travel throughout Australia.

It is hard enough for Australian drivers moving around this nation to know how the road rules differ from State to State. However, the implementation of uniform Australian Road Rules will allow Governments to undertake more targeted education programs for tourists and commercial drivers, who regularly drive in different jurisdictions. I congratulate the former Minister for Transport, Mr Johnson. I think he did a marvellous job under difficult circumstances in many areas of transport. Members opposite must always remember that—and we are seeing a bit of this now—when the House was stacked equally it was a bit more difficult to get legislation through; it was very tight. And I am not blaming the Independent member for Gladstone.

Mr Welford: You had a dream run.

Mr VEIVERS: Is that what the honourable member calls a dream run?

Mr Welford: Yes.

Mr VEIVERS: I take that interjection from the Minister for Environment, who is not sitting in his correct seat. If he thinks that was a dream run, imagine what we could have achieved under more favourable circumstances. I congratulate the former Minister. It is good to see that the current Minister for Transport, who is not in the Chamber, is carrying on the work in some of these areas. However, I wish to pick him up in relation to a few points.

I am aware that the issue of road safety and overseas tourists is being examined by the Travelsafe Committee. I am sure that that committee also welcomes this initiative and looks forward to the education program that the Minister referred to in his second-reading speech. I would like the Minister to consider tourists in the development of the educational material that will be needed to inform people of the changes to the road rules. The shadow Minister and I believe that this will be an ideal opportunity to remind all drivers of the road rules generally and not just the changes.

Although I am probably putting in one of my relatives, I cite as an example an 87-year-old relative of mine—and I will not give her up—who just received her driver licence—

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I have given it away now. She is very proud that she has just received her driver licence for another five years. This lovely, Christian, straight up and down person phoned me and said, "I've got my licence for another five years." I immediately went out and put a bullbar on the front of my Mercedes. I feel that these people should have to undergo some tests.

Mr Lucas: Did you put a Saint Christopher medal on it as well?

Mr VEIVERS: I do not want to say too much; she might leave me out of her will! Obviously, the way she is going, I could be gone before her. Seriously, this is one issue that came to mind.

Mr Bredhauer: Only the good die young.

Mr VEIVERS: I could be gone tomorrow.

I heard the comment of the honourable member for Mansfield that the 100 km/h speed limiters on trucks are being tampered with. I do not know about that. The member might have forgotten that on some sections of road north of Brisbane the speed limit is 110 km/h. They have to ramp them up a bit to get up to 110 km/h.

Mr Bredhauer: But if they are speed limited, they are not meant to go 110.

Mr VEIVERS: I understand that. But they are being restricted to 100 km/h. I urge the Minister to raise the limit to 110 km/h in most areas when the Pacific Motorway is opened.

Mr Littleproud: You haven't got a pecuniary interest in this, have you?

Mr VEIVERS: I am not going into the trucking business. This morning I heard the

Minister saying that he is going to run transport business with his rail, so I will not be going into the road business. I just thought I would mention that—a 110 or even 120 zone—because it is a tourist road and the buses can get up and down. It will move the traffic brilliantly when it is completed.

One cannot live at the Gold Coast and travel to Brisbane without mentioning that magnificent Pacific Motorway project which was made possible by the coalition Government. I have to remind the Minister about the motorway that he now publicly acknowledges and has tried to grab the credit for, particularly in relation to stating on the sign how many jobs were created—jobs, jobs, jobs. We had hardly heard the Premier talking about jobs, jobs, jobs when the sign went up. We in the coalition Government were the people who put it in place and created those 1,600 to 1,800 jobs there. I thought I would remind the Minister about that.

Mr Purcell: To the winner go the spoils, brother.

Mr VEIVERS: You are not wrong, baby.

I have to remind the Minister. He is getting the credit. Of course, that was one of the most important public works programs undertaken in this State and I think it was a magnificent achievement of the former coalition Government. I need to remind the Minister also that this motorway was the road that Labor said could never be built. The now stood aside Treasurer in one of his many disasters was going to build the koala tunnel connection through the bayside because the Pacific Motorway could never be built to eight lanes plus the service roads. I have to tell him that it is almost there and it is looking good. It is nearly completed and will stand as a testament to Labor's inability to handle infrastructure projects in this State.

Electors should also remember that, during the year that Labor has had in office, it has not been able to announce a public works project similar to that. It has had over 12 months. Someone else, I believe, who drives on the motorway every day is the member for Currumbin. I note that in the House yesterday morning she made a statement about how well her Government does in disaster management. She might like to see the Premier; he might get her to adopt the stood aside Treasurer as a bit of a project.

Whilst this Pacific Motorway project is drawing to a close, I must say that I am also concerned that there is some evidence that the Beattie Government is doing some Budget cutting obviously to try to scrape the funds together in a vain attempt to balance that forthcoming Budget while pretending to meet its election promises. I note, for example, that the sound barriers along the residential precincts of Smith Street have now apparently been put on the backburner. I am particularly concerned for the residents opposite the Gold Coast bakery site who have to put up with the significant highway noise, which is increasing every day, without the benefit of sound barriers. Those sound barriers were promised in 1998. Part of them has been constructed.

Mr Bredhauer: About three weeks before the election.

Mr VEIVERS: No, part has been constructed down near the Musgrave Hill Special School. But they were there. It was ready to go. That was in June 1998.

Mr Bredhauer: Yes, two weeks before the election.

Mr VEIVERS: No, three—get it right.

Mr Bredhauer: What's the date?

Mr VEIVERS: It does not matter. The then Minister said—

> "I am confident that construction of the sound barriers will be completed early in 1999 at a total cost of approximately $1.5 million."

He also says at the bottom of the letter—and I appreciate this—

> "Thank you for your persistence ... on behalf of your community to resolve this problem."

Mr Bredhauer: What's the date?

Mr VEIVERS: I told the Minister: 10 June 1998. I asked a question of the Minister in the House and the answer was—

> "Noise barrier fencing works between Uplands Drive and Olsen Avenue are now programmed for construction in 2001."

I could have the pension and be gone by then. It continues—

> "There are higher priority works elsewhere in the Gold Coast area before noise amelioration works are undertaken in Smith Street."

They were really promised this some time ago. If the Minister could look at that, I would appreciate it because the people living in that area are having sleepless nights and that is not good.

I would also like to draw to the attention of the Minister the protracted Nerang bypass project. This is not in my area, but it is on the Gold Coast. It seemed to be progressing well,

but it seems to have hit a wall. I am just wondering whether that is an engineering problem. I know we blame the pouring rain. I used to say that the ambulances had trouble getting through the rain—and the Minister for Emergency Services agreed with me about two or three months ago. She said, "Yes, the ambulances have been held up in the rain." They did not believe me when I said it, but it was all right when she said that.

The Minister for Transport or his department are saying that the hold-up down there was due to the rain. I would like the Minister to inform the people down there that there was an engineering problem that held things up at the crossover at Nerang. I think it is on track now, but I wonder whether he could answer that.

Mr Purcell: You wouldn't expect workers to work in the rain and get injured, would you?

Mr VEIVERS: No, but that particular project has caused a lot of heartbreak for local traders and residents. About four of those businesses have gone broke because people cannot get across to them. In all fairness, the engineers have tried to get the traffic to cross, but it just has not worked. The works have also been prolonged. I just hope it is not because of any political shenanigans.

Whilst the Minister in this legislation is addressing a number of important transport issues, including the management of heavy vehicles, I would draw his attention to the traffic problems in Brisbane which have been caused by the inaction of the current Lord Mayor. I think the shadow Minister called him "Traffic Jam" Jim. I remind the Minister that he came to office on the back of criticisms of the Hale Street project, which now forms the backbone of the City/Valley bypass that the Premier and the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads pretend is not happening.

With the forthcoming Olympic soccer matches scheduled for the Gabba next year, we should also be applying for skydiving as a demonstration sport. That is about the only way that people are going to be able to get to the Gabba because the Lord Mayor and this Government will have dug up the rest of the roads for busways, light rail and bypasses. As the shadow Minister says, "Traffic Jam" Jim is trying to make up for years of inaction.

Mr Bredhauer: The busway to the Gabba will be finished by then.

Mr VEIVERS: I hope the mayor gets his act together because that could be a bottleneck.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: It is not that long away.

This legislation has been in the planning stages for quite some time. I think everyone said that today. Everyone has worked quite well together to get the legislation up to this point and it has the support of the coalition, provided the Minister is able to give assurances about a number of matters I have raised here.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (4.28 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on the Road Transport Reform Bill 1999. The Bill looks at various aspects of road use legislation, including speeding, overloading and drink-driving. They are all very important issues to be dealt with. Obviously, constant review of road regulations is required. One of the big challenges, of course, is to make sure that regulations are compatible from one State to another. It is frustrating when we in Queensland want to introduce something that we think is good for the State, but are held back until we get agreement from the other States. I guess this is one of the little frustrations that we have to put up with, because at the end of the day it is insupportable to have different regulations in each State. Different regulations confuse people, particularly our very valuable tourists.

Speeding is probably the first thing that comes to most people's minds when they think and talk about road regulations. I remind the House that it was a coalition Government, under the previous Minister the member for Gregory, that took the decision to introduce speed cameras to Queensland. Obviously some people in the community had a different point of view. I agreed very strongly with the introduction of speed cameras. They have had an obvious effect on the road toll. Those of us who read the reports issued by Queensland Transport relating to road accidents and road deaths can see that there was a very clear downturn in the road toll from the time speed cameras were introduced. The number of road deaths in Queensland is about as low as it has been for 30 years, notwithstanding the tremendous increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. It is a little disconcerting to see that the pattern established last year is not being followed this year. The road toll seems to be sneaking up again. Obviously this needs to be looked at to make sure we do not lose some of the benefit that was gained last year by the use of speed cameras and other initiatives.

Overloading on our roads, particularly on rural roads, is quite an issue. I have been

travelling around the State with colleagues from both sides of the House on the Public Works Committee, which is presently looking at the maintenance of roads in country areas. The input of councillors and council engineers has been interesting. They are very concerned about the effect of heavy vehicles on their roads. The loading of vehicles above the load they are registered to carry is obviously something that has to be followed up.

As is the case with speeding, the community is now far less inclined to condone drink-driving than it was several years ago. I think we have all been to functions at which some people will not drink alcohol at all. They will not even try to stay just under the limit; they will not have any alcohol because they will be driving. When my three children were attempting to gain their licences, the road toll was a lot higher than it is now. There were more people on the road who were driving under the influence of alcohol, there were more people speeding and the roads up to the Sunshine Coast were not as good as they are now. The four-lane road had just been built.

Mr Veivers: You don't look that old.

Mr LAMING: The member for Southport says that I do not look that old. Maybe that is because I do not worry about my children on the road as much as I would have had it not been for initiatives implemented by successive Governments in relation to improving roads on the north coast and addressing the issues of speeding and drink-driving. Perhaps that explains my youthful appearance.

The increase in road usage is a big issue. Obviously, public transport has been and will continue to be a contentious issue. It is one of those things we go around in circles on. Do we put public transport in place and hope that people use it or do we wait for the demand and then meet the need? I think we ought to consider whether public transport should be looked at from a user pays perspective or whether it should be looked at as a community service obligation of State or perhaps local government.

Whether it is public or private transport that is using the roads, they need to be expanded. The widening of roads always causes social or environmental problems. The creation of new corridors is even more difficult for Governments of any complexion to come to grips with because of both environmental problems and the social problems presented by people who live nearby.

I refer to the CAMCOS public transport corridor proposed to run into the north coast, basically into Maroochydore. I have been committed to this process for a number of years, even before I came into this place. I believe very strongly that we need such a corridor leading into the coast and hopefully right up to Noosa. Many concerns have been expressed about the planning process, which is a pity. Only last week, an editorial in the Sunshine Coast Daily suggested that this was an unnecessary service forced upon us. I was very saddened to read that in the newspaper, because other editorials in the same newspaper have stated that such a corridor is very necessary. Perhaps those comments are a symptom of the frustration some people feel about the route and the mode of transport to be used in the corridor. Perhaps it is not where the majority of people would like it to be. There is a feeling on the part of some in the community that, although there is a consultation process in place, people might be listening but not taking heed of what has been put forward.

As I said earlier, I am committed to a public transport corridor. I will refer a little later to whether rail or some other mode of transport should be used. In 20 years' time, when I expect to be enjoying my retirement on the Sunshine Coast, I do not want to hear people say, "I wish people in the late 1990s had planned for public transport and had planned for a better route through the Sunshine Coast. Then we would not have the problems that we now have." I do not want the Sunshine Coast to end up in the same situation as that faced by Buderim, which has only one road through it. In an engineering sense, it is almost impossible to do anything to overcome that problem. I am concerned that the route and the mode might be predetermined. I hope that the Minister, his advisers and the department are still open to suggestion as to the route, the ultimate destination and the mode of transport to be utilised. I have brought to the attention of the Minister the fact that the current proposed route crosses the Mooloolah River three times. That concerns me. I have a lot of interest in the Mooloolah River from an environmental point of view. It seems a pity that engineers tend to think in straight lines. I think there are cases where we should be—

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr LAMING: I will come to the issue of trains a little later.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr LAMING: I think even trains have the ability to turn corners to a certain extent and I would like to think that that possibility is being taken into account. The environment is not the

only consideration. Almost 20 years ago, a very important flood study of the Mooloolah River was carried out in order to ensure that the area around Mooloolaba and Kawana would not flood. I have written to the Minister in relation to that study and I hope that it and its recommendations will be taken into consideration when the route is decided upon and when it is determined how many times the Mooloolah River is to be crossed. There are three proposed routes through Mooloolaba. I really cannot understand why there are three. One is reasonable, the second is not very good at all and the third is terrible. I will nail my colours to the mast: I believe that the only route is a western route, which has much less impact on the people who live there, very little environmental impact and the advantage of being very close to the high school and the TAFE college. The TAFE college has put forward a very attractive proposition for a transit centre in the vicinity. Whether that is the right place for it is—

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr LAMING: The TAFE college at Mooloolaba.

Mr Welford: Which route is it?

Mr LAMING: The western route of the three alternatives through Mooloolaba.

Moving further north, there is the issue of where the terminus of the line would be—whether it is Maroochydore, on the motorway, or in the CBD. There seems to be very little public support for it to go into the CBD. Nobody to whom I have spoken seems to want it to go in there. There is also the effect that it might have on the Horton Park golf course, which is a very valuable green area in the centre of the CBD. It would be a great pity if that became non-viable because it lost some of its land to a transport corridor. I hope that all these issues are considered carefully.

I did promise the Minister that I would come back to the mode of transport. The consultation process talks about choices. I hope that the decision is not made to go with heavy rail. I believe that is the favoured option at the moment. I have looked at this and have done a bit of personal research. I believe that the various modes should be considered closely first, because there are different requirements in regard to the route. Some modes of transport can turn tight corners and avoid the hills and the sensitive environmental and social areas. The one to which I refer, of course, is the O-bahn, which is very popular in Adelaide. It is quiet, it is much cheaper, it is more flexible, and it does not have overhead powerlines. It is really popular in Adelaide. I would like to think that it is seriously being considered.

Mr Lucas: Why do you think they call the rail lines "whispering death"? Because they're so quiet.

Mr LAMING: Unfortunately, I do not have time to take many interjections. I usually enjoy them, but I have a bit more to get through.

It is a rail for the community. The community will be using it. It will be in their community, and they will pay for it. So the input of those people is very important in that regard. I do respect the opinion of engineers. But as an old councillor once told me when I was on the Caloundra council: engineers should be on tap but never on top.

I now return to an issue that I raised in this House last week, that is, the proposed Buderim supermarket. This proposal was appealed against by the Department of Main Roads three years ago. Since that time, I have been involved in countless meetings, deputations, correspondence and phone calls in an effort to express my concern regarding the possible impact of traffic congestion on Buderim's only—and I repeat "only"—through road, the Buderim-Mooloolaba Road, which happens to be a State-controlled road.

Last week, I requested from the Minister a briefing with DMR officers. That took place yesterday—and I appreciate that—with Mr Don Muir, Mr Steve Golding and Mr Gary Fisher. I appreciated the opportunity to be briefed on this issue. Mr Golding and Mr Fisher have been aware of my concern about the possible effects on traffic from this proposal for quite a long time. Unfortunately, this briefing has not entirely convinced me that my longstanding concerns are misplaced. I was advised that any move to withdraw the appeal would not occur this week but could be considered as early as next week. The Minister might like to confirm this with me. This will give the community representatives the opportunity to address the Minister at next Sunday's Community Cabinet deputation, which I understand has been arranged.

I was advised that the appeal was originally lodged because DMR had insufficient traffic information. This situation should never have occurred, and I hope that the more recent IPA legislation will avoid such situations occurring in the future. Notwithstanding this, many of the grounds for appeal were, I believe, valid. In fact, I was advised that, yes, there could be increased traffic and congestion, but that it would be manageable.

Another ground for appeal was that there would be more turning movements, aggravated by trucks. I was advised that there may be some increase and that there could be some impediment to the flow of pedestrians. Another ground for appeal was that vehicles would need to queue to access the site; and this, too, was acknowledged. I was assured that the department has not requested or been offered or received any funding contribution from the developer.

I believe that I have related the matters raised at the briefing accurately. If not, the Minister might like to clarify them during his reply. I have stated on other occasions that it was my belief that the building of the Ballinger/Lindsay Road roundabout at a total cost to Main Roads and council of over $1m was intended to address an existing traffic congestion problem, not to improve flow, so that further significant traffic-generating proposals could proceed, thus putting the traffic situation back to how it was previously.

I appreciate the position that DMR officers are in and would like to say that I enjoy a very good working relationship with them. They are often placed in a difficult position, and such is the position in relation to this matter. Their role now seems to be to make the best of a difficult situation. I table a Brameld report today on traffic, which independently seems to support the claim that traffic congestion will increase significantly. I am advised that the full report that was commissioned by the department is not available to me in case it is required in court. On asking during the briefing whether any guarantee could be given that there would be no significant increase in traffic or congestion, this was not forthcoming. And although I do understand the difficulty of separating out specific supermarket traffic, I believe that this could be done if it was not done in the traffic report.

There are those who do not oppose this development, and I make it clear that my only interest is in the traffic situation on the main road. With an ambulance station and a fire auxiliary feeding onto this road and a police station also proposed close by, I have a genuine concern regarding the ability of the road to stay reasonably free of avoidable congestion. It is clearly my responsibility, as the local State member on behalf of those I represent, to bring these concerns to the Minister's attention. I ask the Minister, when he meets with members of Buderim 2000 next Sunday, to listen to their concerns carefully and to assess the weight of their argument before finalising the appeal process. If a traffic plan has been devised that will solve this problem and thus avoid their concerns and mine, I trust that that plan will be made available on Sunday. If such a plan does not achieve this outcome, I believe it would be better to leave the appeal in place and allow the matter to be decided by the court.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (4.47 p.m.): I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on the Road Transport Reform Bill 1999. I notice that the Bill is focusing on improving road safety. I think that the wider community would welcome the initiatives that have been put in place over the years to bring down the road toll. The road toll is decreasing each year, and I understand that last year's figure was the lowest since 1955. That is because many of the measures that are in place are taking effect. We should commend the engineers at Main Roads for the excellent and improved road systems that they are providing for the motorists of Queensland.

There are many positive road safety initiatives that have been introduced since 1970 which have contributed to the reduction in road fatalities: in 1972, the compulsory seatbelt wearing for passengers in motor vehicles, which was followed in 1982 by a reduction of the legal blood alcohol level to 0.05; in 1988, the introduction of random breath-testing; in 1991, Random Road Watch; in 1992, compulsory helmet wearing for cyclists; and in 1997, speed management with speed cameras. All of these initiatives are positive commitments to road toll reduction.

As to the main feature of road traffic crashes in Queensland—a Transport Department study, established in 1997, found that the fatality figures were overrepresented for young adults and older road users. Road users aged between 17 and 20 years experienced fatality rates at almost three times the average for Queensland. That is tremendously significant in my electorate of Logan, which is a younger electorate. In fact, in the suburb of Crestmead over 60% of the people are under 25 years of age, and it is that group which needs to be targeted both with encouragement and, of course, with enforcement to obey the law.

The number of people driving under the influence of alcohol in the 17 to 24 year old age group has decreased significantly, but obviously we need to make sure that every effort is being made to ensure that people are driving safely and without being under the influence of alcohol.

Based on police opinion of the cause of traffic crashes, disregard for traffic rules was the largest contributor. That was 34% of fatal

crashes and 41% of all reported crashes. And although speed is a contributing factor in 4% of all reported road crashes, it also contributed to 16% of fatal crashes.

I want to commend the road safety people in the department, headed by Mike King, for the work that they are undertaking on behalf of the school communities in trying to raise community awareness about road safety and trying to bring about safer conditions outside schools. Recently, I met with people in the Road Safety Division over difficulties that were experienced at the Yugumbir School in Vansittart Road in Regents Park in my electorate where the preschool community were worried about people driving at excessive speeds at the changeover time for preschool students. Every effort is being made to work through that difficulty and to make sure that we have safer conditions on some of the streets that have a long run-up approach where unthinking motorists can be breaking the speed limit.

A similar situation exists outside the Crestmead State School in Augusta Street and also outside St Francis College school in Julie Street, Crestmead. I will soon be having discussions with the road safety people to see what we can do to bring about safer conditions along those streets to ensure that motorists are aware that school students may be crossing there. But I want to commend the work being done by the Road Safety Division with the school community to ensure that our children are able to get to school safely.

Today, I also want to raise the issue of the service road at Park Ridge State School. The school community at Park Ridge State School have been worried for some time about what will happen with the service road with the Mount Lindesay Highway upgrade. We have had a number of meetings on this matter. Their favourite option is to have a road around the back of the school. I understand that this is opposed by Logan City Council because of the fact that such a road would enter a particularly unsafe section of Park Ridge Road. I want to commend Bob Drew, the Main Roads engineer for the district, and also the school community at Park Ridge. We are having a meeting in a couple of weeks' time to see if we can make it even safer down there in the interim before the Mount Lindesay Highway upgrade begins.

The Bill mentions the incidence of heavy vehicles and attempts to make them safer. I draw the attention of the House to the 1997 study of heavy motor vehicles where it was found that fatal crashes involving heavy vehicles occurred proportionately more often at traffic lights and at give-way/stop signs. This is important because the Logan Motorway system, and now the new Browns Plains interchange, make it much safer for all vehicles, but the Logan Motorway southern bypass system makes it especially safe for heavy vehicles.

We have excellent roadworks in the southern outskirts of Brisbane and Logan City. We are starting to attract more industries to the area as a result. National Foods has announced a $26m project at Crestmead. Other factories are coming. Last week, I had discussions with somebody from Sydney who is currently building a factory at Crestmead. One of the reasons that he cited for that construction was the excellent and safe road system that we have in the area.

Because of the work being done on the Logan Motorway to duplicate the road system, beginning at Wembley Road in my electorate and going all the way through to the electorate of the Minister for Police, industrial estates are developing in close proximity to the Logan Motorway. This is also true for the Stapylton Road area—an area which is well represented in this House by the member for Archerfield. We have more and more job opportunities directly related to the improved road system. With the Browns Plains interchange nearing completion, I am very confident that the area to the west of the Mount Lindesay Highway will recover and will be the focus of major investment as a result of much improved road safety and an improved road system.

In mentioning the Browns Plains interchange, I want to commend all the workers and the engineers involved in that project. I think they have done an amazing job when we consider the work that they had to do. They had to cope with the heavy vehicle traffic that uses that road system of a morning and again in the afternoon as our commuters come back to Logan City and North Beaudesert. There has been some dislocation to local businesses but, as I said, the Main Roads engineers and officers from the Department of State Development have been working with the business community, letting them know the opportunities that exist for them once the road system is completed. I commend all the officers involved.

At the same time, we have to recognise that local residents have been inconvenienced. We have tried to work through that as best we can whilst at the same time building a road network at a cost of more than $30m. I commend the local residents for

their patience in that process. The engineers have managed to bring the roadwork in under the deadline that was set down. It means that Christmas trade, particularly in the Browns Plains area, will proceed uninterrupted.

The other important feature of that road system that the engineers have set down concerns the establishment and re-establishment of community links—the tunnelling system. It means that the people in the Regents Park area will be able to access other parts of the highway in the industrial or commercial estates without having to worry about road traffic. I commend the foresight of the Main Roads engineers in bringing about that possibility.

I know that the Mount Lindesay project is going to cost a bit, but I believe it is absolutely essential that we work hard to keep the community together through either bikeways programs or pedestrian programs. Whilst speaking about the Mount Lindesay Highway upgrade, I want to take this opportunity to urge the Minister to ensure that he is in there fighting the Federal Government especially for more road funding to continue to upgrade the Mount Lindesay Highway. I would like to see the Middle Road interchange project begin as soon as possible. If that means fighting for the money in Canberra, or fighting with our own State colleagues, then that is a fight that is well worth having on behalf of those communities. It is necessary to make sure that other Ministers are aware of just how important that project is for the people in West Logan.

Aligned with that, we have the area to the south of Logan City called Munruben. It has experienced rapid growth over the last couple of years and, because of that rapid growth, the planning of the road systems has not kept pace. What is needed now is some extra dollars devoted to making sure that residents who have to access the Granger Road area to the south of Logan City, and who have to access the Mount Lindesay Highway, can do so safely. It is necessary that these people have the same access to the highway as is enjoyed by other residents. Those are two important projects. I urge the Minister to ensure that his department is aware of them. I urge him to come up with the dollars to ensure that we can have safer road systems in the West Logan area and the North Beaudesert area.

It is not often realised that, if one is travelling north along the southern bypass and along the Gateway Motorway, the first set of lights one comes to is at Gympie. That is a magnificent achievement by Queensland's Main Roads Department. It gives us unsurpassed and uninterrupted and safer travel. For people going west along that road system, the first set of lights they will come to is either at Warwick, if they use the Cunningham Highway, or at Toowoomba, if they use the Warrego Highway. This is what is bringing jobs to the area, and safer roads are playing a vital part in that. In other words, the Logan area presents unique opportunities for businesses who are doing business both interstate and within Queensland. It also means that my electorate is pivotal to some of the initiatives that are outlined in this Bill.

One final point I wish to make in relation to road safety concerns a constituent of mine who was involved in an accident with a vehicle owned by a rent-a-car company. The company concerned, Rollo Rent-a-Car, appears to have given a car to somebody who allegedly did not have a drivers licence. As I understand it, the person may be charged with allegedly not having a driver's licence. The Minister's office may know the case I am talking about. With the Olympic Games coming up, we will have a lot of visitors to Queensland who will want to rent cars. I ask the officers to think about this: what regulations are in place to ensure that the person renting the car has a current drivers licence in either an Australian State or in the country that he comes from?

What this case exposed was that the person allegedly did not have a licence, and yet he was still given a motor vehicle. If proven, this is a real worry. It means that we need to check regulations in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. I urge the department to do that as a matter of urgency. In this particular instance I understand that there were not any roadworthy issues involved with the vehicle, but nevertheless it seems to me that there is a glitch in the system when somebody can drive away in a rent-a-car without an appropriate driver's licence. I know that the Government and the Transport officers cannot be there every time a car is rented out, but I believe there is a duty of care on behalf of rent-a-car companies to make sure that every effort is being made to ensure that the person they are handing the vehicle to does have a drivers licence.

I have been told that this Bill has been under discussion for a long while. It deserves to be supported. Queensland has experienced an uptake in tourism, and during the Olympics we are going to have a lot of tourists here. National driving rules make sense because of the huge number of people coming to Queensland. The major change in the national driver licence scheme is a new driver licence

classification. All of these things are welcome; they are tremendous initiatives.

For those reasons I support the Bill and I urge the Minister to maintain the fight that he has undertaken on behalf of my constituents to ensure that we have the road funding that we need to bring about safer roads and iron out some of the glitches that have occurred lately with the Logan City Council and Queensland Transport in relation to trying to get a bus service for the Crestmead community. However, I will talk about that on another day. For now, I commend the Bill to the House.

Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs—NPA) (5 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Road Transport Reform Bill in the later stages of this debate, I acknowledge that the Opposition has already indicated its support for the various initiatives in the legislation. I personally acknowledge that the construction of roads in Queensland and the regulation of road use is a vast task. Of course, it is made all the harder when we try to coordinate our efforts with those of the other States of Australia.

I want to raise a couple of issues that are relevant to my own electorate, firstly with regard to heavy transport. I notice the measures that this Bill takes to ensure that heavy transport is well regulated and that it is safe. I also note the comments of the member for Gregory, who referred to the efforts being made by the transport industry to make sure that things are operating as they should. Currently, most of the heavy transport going along the Warrego Highway are road trains rather than semitrailers. That is creating more danger for the drivers of other vehicles, especially those people who are not used to driving on western roads. The time and distance that is needed to be able to overtake a road train is much more than what was needed to overtake a semitrailer. I think that we need to take whatever opportunities we can to educate the public in terms of how to handle road trains. The other thing is that there is an expectation on the part of the Federal Government and the State Government that the width of our western roads and the road alignment are adequate for road trains and that other drivers are able to see well ahead to see what sort of vehicle they are coming up against.

I turn now to the Roma-Injune road through the Bungil Shire. Over recent years, both Governments have spent money on upgrading that road to make it the major access route between Melbourne and north Queensland. Sections of that road are now absolutely first class. However, some of the existing road through the Roma and Injune areas is of an old style and of an old alignment. I commend both the recent Governments because we are now putting some money towards realigning that road and making the road pavement wider. We have just to keep up the good work, because the increase in the amount of heavy transport going through that area is enormous. The local people have concerns about using that road in its present State when they travel backwards and forwards to Roma, which is their major centre.

While I am talking about that road, I want to say that the day before Easter this year I was travelling along that road to Emerald. On a section of the road where the alignment was not very good I came across a convoy of cotton vehicles, cotton module makers and cotton-pickers with an escort vehicle out in front. I know that that sort of thing happens on country roads all the time. However, I thought that the fact that it was happening on Easter Thursday was pretty crook. The people in the industry would point out quickly that the harvesting of cotton moves from the north to the south, that cotton picking had finished in the Emerald district and that these people, as contractors, were moving down onto the downs and into the St George area. However, I spoke to the local policeman and told him that I thought that it was not very wise to have that sort of transport on the road just before Easter. I was assured that they would not be travelling after dark. However, I think that we should do a bit more towards alerting the travelling public that, when they get to the west of the range, they are travelling through agricultural areas and that they should expect to come across wide loads, escorted loads and all of those sorts of things because it is the nature of the industry. Perhaps through the Travelsafe committee we can think more about whether those sorts of escorted loads should be stopped on days such as those before Easter and just after Easter.

The Minister will remember that some months ago I spoke to him about a section of the national highway, the Warrego Highway, just west of Dalby. I want to report that, yes, that piece of road now has been done up. At the time I suggested that, because the Federal Government intends to reroute the Warrego Highway through the Eurella road, that particular road that I am talking about from Dalby through to Ranges Bridge would become a State responsibility pretty soon and that it was best if the Federal Government

spent its money on doing it up. It looks like the Minister has been successful in that regard, because that piece of road has been done up. The Minister is probably also aware that there are recommendations coming from the Wambo Shire Council and the Dalby City Council about fixing up that section of the Warrego Highway east of Dalby—between Dalby and Bowenville—where the road surface is breaking up pretty badly. Water goes over that road from time to time. Anything that the Minister can do to keep the pressure on the Federal Government to upgrade that section of the road will be appreciated.

I also am pleased to advise the House that word came from the Federal member, the Honourable Bruce Scott, who represents the seat of Maranoa, that the Federal Government is going to spend $13m on rerouting the Warrego Highway west of Dalby along the Eurella road to get it away from the flood-prone Ranges Gully. He is going to insist that that money be spent. I hope that I do not see the Minister—

Mr Bredhauer: The first I heard about it was when Bruce Scott put it in the local paper. We have had nothing from the Commonwealth and we have got no extra money.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No, but he has—

Mr Bredhauer: I am in the process of writing to John Anderson now, because there is no extra money and the first I heard about it was when Bruce Scott—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I can tell the Minister that he has been in the papers out there saying that he has $13m over the next year and the year after.

Mr Bredhauer: I know he has. If he has got an extra $13m, I am happy but it is out of our hands—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I am happy, too, because he said that he has got it. So I am very happy. That work desperately needs to be done.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I just want to congratulate the member for Maranoa, because he has reported back that John Anderson said that there is $13m for the job. As the local member, I want to see that work happen. Today in this House there has been quite a bit said about the need for a second road up the range to Toowoomba. I support that, but not at the expense of doing up the Warrego Highway west of Chinchilla and west of Dalby. So I was delighted to see that indication from John Anderson that he is going to make available that $13m.

I want to raise a couple of other issues pertaining to my area. In relation to the Warrego Highway between Chinchilla and Miles, I understand the Federal Government was going to make money available—and part of the work was done by the Chinchilla Shire Council—to upgrade that road by taking out culverts and putting pipes under the road. The Federal Government was also going to give funds to broaden the pavement to allow road trains through. The Chinchilla Shire Council now has the contract and has put in the culverts but for about 12 or 13 miles the road pavement has not been done up, yet the road trains are coming through. I ask the Minister to bring some pressure to bear on the Federal Government and say, "You have done only half the job." The road trains are coming through on a piece of road where the shoulders are pretty sharp and the pavement is not very wide. I think that it would be in the interests of public safety if, in fact, the Federal Government gave the council the money for that 12 or 13 miles of road west of Chinchilla.

I turn now to road use management. Previously I have spoken to the Minister about these two issues that I raise again today. The Minister might want to refer to them in his reply. The first one relates to the people in Dalby who manufacture polythene tanks. They are pretty popular. They are replacing the old concrete tanks and the galvanised iron tanks. The Minister would be aware of that. They come in all sorts of sizes. At one stage, the biggest was 5,000 gallons, or 25,000 litres. Now, the tanks have gone up in size to 50,000 litres, or 10,000 gallons. Obviously, the diameter of those tanks is much greater. Of course, when these people try to transport those tanks around the west, they are running into problems with the current regulations because the tanks exceed the allowable load height. They are not very heavy tanks, the problem just relates to their height. However, the tanks do not have to go under bridges or tunnels out in those western areas. I have spoken to the Minister about this issue. He might like to report back in his reply as to what has gone on. These people are pretty big employers throughout Queensland, but they have an enormous base at Dalby. I think that their customers would be disadvantaged if they had to use the 25,000 litre tanks when they would rather have the 50,000 litre tanks. When those people who live in the drier areas have a thunderstorm, they want to catch all the water, not fill up a tank and then have a lot of the water go to waste.

The other issue that I have spoken to the Minister about, which he told me was still under review, related to vehicle transporters. They are mostly double-decker vehicles. Black Toyota are probably the biggest dealers of Toyota vehicles in Queensland. It is all right when they transport most of their fleet, but when they transport a truckload of Toyota Landcruisers, which are greater in height, the vehicles on the upper deck of the vehicle are above the allowable height. I know that the bloke in Dalby who has made a business out of transporting these vehicles for Black Toyota has done all he can already to lower the platform height of his vehicle. He has put the deck down below the axle as best he can. He has done all sorts of things. I think that the Minister has come up with some sort of a situation where he can continue operating under a permit system for the next six months, but then the situation has to be reviewed. I ask the Minister to give a report on that situation in his reply or to write to me about it. I just wanted to raise those two issues, because they are of importance to local industry in my electorate.

I commend the Minister for his efforts in continuing the upgrade of the Warrego Highway west to Dalby and past the cotton gin, which was in a terrible state. The Federal Government needs to fulfil its promise to finish the section of road between Chinchilla and Miles. That road is too narrow and its shoulders are too steep.

I ask the Minister to remember that I am concerned about the heavy transport vehicles that travel out west. It is important that we have adequate control over people driving in that area, because for many, especially city drivers, it is a new experience to overtake a road train rather than a semitrailer. One needs good alignment, a good line of sight and perhaps a bit of education to know that it will take a quite a few hundred yards to get around a road train. I support the Bill and thank the Minister for the opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (5.10 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill because of the benefits it will provide to all Queenslanders. I intend to highlight some of the key initiatives that relate to improving road safety and the concept of a chain of responsibility within the transport industry. The Bill sets in place the legislative framework for introducing reforms that I believe will bring significant benefits to Queenslanders and will continue the work of the Government in contributing to a reduction in the road toll and the trauma caused by road accidents.

The Australian Road Rules will introduce simple, practical and uniform road rules. By introducing these changes in Queensland, we will eliminate confusion and inconsistencies that presently exist between jurisdictions. We have all experienced the uncertainty of driving in other States when we have a lack of knowledge of local road rules. This initiative will have a major benefit, particularly for the Queensland tourist industry, by making it safer for tourists and reducing the number of accidents involving interstate drivers. Yet some local road rules will remain. For example, the queued right turn that is peculiar to the Melbourne City heart to accommodate the trams will stay in existence.

Introducing the Australian Road Rules will involve some modification of existing rules and additional road signs and markings. The details of the road rules will be contained in regulations brought down later this year. Another change involves the banning of the use of hand-held mobile phones while driving. This will not apply to those phones that are linked to a hands-free system within the vehicle.

To ensure that Queensland drivers are well aware of any changes, there will be an extensive Statewide communication campaign leading up the introduction of the new road rules that will commence on 1 December this year. I am pleased to see that Paul Blake, the Executive Director of the Land Transport and Safety Division within the Department of Transport, is present in the Chamber. He has road safety very much at the forefront of his work within the department.

Another initiative contained in the Bill that will contribute to road safety is the introduction of an amendment that will allow health professionals to report in good faith to the Transport Department health issues that relate to a person's fitness to hold a driver licence. The indemnity will apply to doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and optometrists. It is anticipated that under this arrangement the management of persons whose capacity to drive safely is either temporarily or permanently impaired will be improved for the benefit of all road users in Queensland. The Bill does not include any compulsory reporting requirements and it will still be at the practitioner's discretion whether or not to report to the department. Of course, licence holders are still required to self disclose at any time any medical conditions that may affect their driving.

Throughout Australian society we have an ageing population. Improvements in medical

procedures allow people to retain greater mobility and drive at a far greater age than would have been the case some decades ago. What is less easily able to be assessed is a driver's attention span and ability to react to extraordinary traffic circumstances, particularly when a driver is on medication, particularly a mix of prescription drugs. We all have stories of a relative with whom no family member wants to drive because of their erratic driving behaviour. Increasingly, health professionals are becoming aware that their duty of care for patients extends to activities outside the surgery or clinic, such as driving a vehicle. Health professionals need legal indemnity if there is to be an effective reporting system. This legislation provides that protection.

Another important initiative contained in the Bill is the concept of a chain of responsibility for the heavy vehicle transport industry. I say from the outset that many managers and workers in the road transport industry are to be commended for the continuing improvement of their road safety record. The aim of the chain of responsibility is to ensure that those who bear responsibility for conduct that breaches the law or that contributes to road trauma should be made accountable for their failure to discharge that responsibility. This concept has the support of the Road Freight Industry Council and the Transport Workers Union, which understand the need to hold accountable those who are responsible. The Bill also introduces two initiatives to support that concept: the speeding heavy vehicles policy and the managing heavy vehicles access policy, which have been discussed by previous speakers.

Some speakers from the other side of the House have spoken about the Nundah bottleneck. While I accept what the member for Gregory said in that regard, to a large degree I discount what the member for Clayfield said. I do not take him very seriously at any time, but particularly when he speaks about this issue, because he has spoken with a forked tongue on too many occasions. It is good to see that the former Transport Minister and the current Transport Minister are progressing this project to solve a problem that is almost four decades old. I congratulate the Minister, the previous Minister and the Minister before him for setting up the local area consultative group and the reference group to provide community input. As my colleague the member for Nudgee said earlier, people such as Margaret Pritchard and Norah Bennet, who have been members of those committees for years, have contributed significantly to that community input. I thank the Department of Transport for its ongoing links to the reference group, which I believe provides very good feedback and has led to a better project than would otherwise have resulted.

The proposals contained in the Bill, which I have outlined today, will benefit all road users in the State and will continue Queensland's deserved reputation for delivering road transport reforms that provide significant long-term economic and efficiency benefits to our fellow Queenslanders. Most importantly, the legislation will improve road safety on our transport network and will save lives. I support the Bill.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (5.15 p.m.): I rise to speak to this significant piece of legislation, the Road Transport Reform Bill. Yesterday, my colleague the shadow Minister for Transport and Main Roads mentioned the Traffic Regulations, and I endorse his comments. Road transport legislation is perhaps the most important legislation that this House deals with, because it is the legislation that the people of Queensland deal with every day. It is because of the importance of this legislation that I agree that uniformity between States is critical if we are to have a safe and efficient transport system. It is obviously also critical for commercial transport operations and the tourism industry, particularly leading up to the 2000 Olympics.

There are a number of issues that I would like to speak about as they impact on issues in my electorate, particularly in relation to the sugar industry. The shadow Minister raised the definition of "road" as proposed in the Bill. While I am sure that the definition proposed may be appropriate in other States, I am concerned that its application in Queensland may be a little different. I ask the Minister to consider how this definition is likely to impact on the current arrangements affecting the movement of vehicles on or between farms.

Mr Bredhauer: We are going to amend that. It is in the amendments. We have fixed that.

Mr MALONE: I am pleased about that. The definition of "road" will impact on whether vehicles are required to be registered or not. I point out to the Minister that in farming there is a heavy use of haul roads that traverse farms. They are not necessarily dedicated roads or even gazetted roads. Therefore, the legislation could impact fairly severely if farm vehicles have to be registered. I take on board what the Minister is saying. If amendments were not being made, there could be a huge economic impact on production in our area.

Under the new legislation, it will be interesting to see how the Traffic Regulations will apply in areas such as beaches that are currently regarded as roads. In common with the shadow Minister, I await the Minister's explanation of what is a very complex interrelationship with a large body of the Queensland legislation.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister emphasised that the Government would be undertaking an educational program to ensure that road users are made familiar with the changes to the regulations. I suggest to the Minister that the way that the information is communicated can be very important. Certain categories of road users, such as elderly drivers—and the previous speaker mentioned the same issue—will need specific attention to ensure that they are not confused by what will be essentially only a very small number of changes.

I also note that the Bill makes provision for the medical profession to take more specific action to ensure that drivers who are not capable of driving have their licence status reviewed. The legislation affords protection for medical practitioners in providing this information to the licensing authorities as a means of encouraging doctors to ensure that they take a broader view of medical conditions and their impact on road safety. That will certainly be a good thing. The coalition proposes to support this legislation provided that the Minister is able to give satisfactory explanations and assurances about how the changed definition of a "road" is likely to impact on the present arrangements. I take on board what he has said previously.

Road transport has a huge impact on the economic wellbeing of Queensland, as we are such a decentralised State. The haulage of freight and foodstuffs throughout the State at a reasonable cost is the cornerstone to small towns and rural communities maintaining an economic base and supporting the families who live in them. The introduction of the GST and reduced fuel costs for the transport industry will have a huge impact in terms of delivering benefits to rural communities.

However, I am sorry to have to say that the road infrastructure in rural Queensland does not seem to be able to keep pace with the basic need. Even though we are in support of the legislation, there are a number of issues that I wish to bring to the attention of the House. I know that other members have raised the concerns of the general public in relation to the free call centre in Queensland, from which callers are put on hold and made to listen to mind-dulling music or useless information. It is about time this was sorted out and the department delivered the service that Queenslanders deserve.

Another area of concern to me relates to the registration of heavy vehicles. There was a scheme in place that gave two months leeway for an owner to obtain a certificate of inspection. This Government has cancelled that initiative and owners now have to present a certificate of inspection before registration can be effected. This may be okay in Brisbane, where there are minimal waiting times for inspections. However, in areas such as Mackay—and I dare say in many other rural areas and regional centres—owners have to wait for up to six weeks for an inspection on their vehicle. If the vehicle does not pass the first inspection, they may have to wait for a further period—as I said, sometimes up to six weeks—for reinspection.

As honourable members can imagine this places a huge impost on owners of vehicles who are tied to a busy schedule. I believe that the process has to be more flexible. Going back to the old system may be worth while. Prime movers are expensive and cannot be held up from their work, especially line-haul work or where there is a schedule to be met. As I said earlier, I think that the system needs to be a bit more flexible. Haulage is a very competitive operation and the department needs to be aware of the imposts on operators through a lack of flexibility in this regard.

In 1992 the Sugar Act was proclaimed by the Goss Labor Government. It provided for the transferability of assignments on cane land between mill areas and, therefore, allowed the transport of large amounts of cane along highways and, probably more importantly, on secondary roads which were never really designed to carry semitrailers or B-doubles. Indeed, a lot of the secondary roads were graded and given a bitumen spray and have lasted for 20 years. But when heavy vehicles go over them, particularly in wet weather, they do not take long to break up.

In my electorate, local governments are experiencing great difficulty in dealing with this problem. My colleague the member for Hinchinbrook mentioned this as an issue in the northern areas. Local governments are having to rebuild ahead of time roads that were not in their capital works program. They are also having to rebuild bridges that are not due for replacement. As a last resort, they have placed load limits on roads, much to the annoyance of local residents and at great inconvenience to those people who have

utilised the provisions in the Sugar Act to expand their operations and grow sugarcane in areas where there has not previously been production.

This is a matter that should have been addressed at the time of introducing the Bill into the House. Provision should have been made at that time for looking at the impacts of the industry on that infrastructure. The current situation is not sustainable and is placing a huge impost on local government throughout the sugar growing areas of coastal Queensland. Under the Act, growers have the ability to produce cane within economic road haulage distances of a sugar mill without due consideration of the impact on the road system. The State and the Government have gained economic benefit from this, but there has been no commitment to expand the road system to cater for the additional cane haulage.

The national driver licensing scheme is long overdue and will lead to better policing and less confusion among the States. Also, the introduction of uniform road rules will make travelling throughout Australia far safer and enhance the peace of mind of local road users and interstate and overseas travellers.

The provision that gives a power to outlaw the use of hand-held mobile telephones while driving is to be commended. I believe that a lot of politicians will now have to rethink their communications strategies when working their electorate. I am fortunate enough to have a hands-free mobile phone, but it is an analogue and will be extinct in the near future. A lot of areas do not have mobile phone coverage so it does not really make much difference. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (5.25 p.m.): I thank the Minister for the advice and information on the Road Transport Reform Bill that he made available to my office. I appreciate the information given to my staff and me. In common with all electorates, the road network is critical to my electorate. Some would say that the Gladstone area has had its road network studied to death, but we still have issues of concern that need remedying.

I formally commend the Minister's officers in our region. In relation to the intersection of the Benaraby road with the road into Gladstone, where there has been a number of fatalities, a public meeting was organised by some residents at Boyne Island. That meeting was attended by some of the Minister's officers, who were both constructive and well informed. The police also offered their perspective and provided some very practical information on why the police have trouble policing that intersection for people contravening the traffic regulations. At the end of the night, we reached some very clear resolutions to the problem. They were not the big picture resolution, but they were fairly easy to achieve. The Minister's officers were very quick to implement them. Provided there is time to test those changes before there is another serious incident, I think it will be shown that the department has responded in a very timely and efficient manner. I congratulate the current Minister and the previous Minister; those officers have been a delight to work with.

As I said, our area is a heavy industry region and the road network is very important. I wish to endorse some comments that have been made today by other speakers. Wherever it is possible for any commodities, not necessarily only bulk commodities, to be transferred by rail, that is an option that should be pursued more rigorously. In my region and also in others there is road haulage that would be better directed to rail. I assume that the only reason for not doing that is that there is an argument about upfront costs versus long-term benefits.

For example—and this is an historical issue now—I cite the trees that go to Austicks from the Boyne Valley. This issue surfaced before the time of this Minister. There was discussion initially that they should go on the rail network from the Taragoola line, but they did not; they are transported by road. That commodity should have gone on rail. Most of the people in the local authority area at Calliope agreed with that. That did not occur, but it is certainly something that I and many others in the community would endorse.

We have a couple of very important road networks. On the Boyne Valley road, which is currently the subject of a study with the Water Board—and I commented on that yesterday—low-cost seals have been used over time. That community has found those very beneficial. To date the roads have stood up to the loads that they have been carrying, and the community can see some real improvements to the quality of its road network. I commend the Minister for that program.

The other road that is in dire need of some work is the Dawson Highway. Money has been allocated to the section within the Calliope township but, for many years now, there has been a problem from Calliope township out to the range. At times the surface is just about turned upside down with extended dry periods and then wet, which causes problems with the bitumen seal and

heavy transport travelling across it. That is a road that continues to need some money expended on it. If all 89 of us got up to speak, we would all have roads in our electorates about which we could say the same thing, but I do commend that road to the Minister for his consideration.

The other road that I mentioned earlier on is the Gladstone-Benaraby road. There have been a number of fatalities on that road, particularly on the T-junction corner. At the meeting that we had that afternoon, the police were able to point out that the majority of the problem had been caused through driver error. Again, I do commend the Minister and his officers for the work that has been done in relation to signage and reductions in speeds, etc. I think that will go a long way to reducing the number of incidents. There was a reduction in speed and very small signs were put up. People would drive through and not even realise that the speed had been reduced. Unfortunately, before the efficiency of that change could be tested, there was another serious accident. The community saw that the changes were not effective. One hopes that this time the changes will have time to take effect before there are any more incidents.

There are just a couple of issues in the Bill that I would like to raise with the Minister. Subsection 26 extends the time allowed for a defendant to appear from three days to not less than 14 days. This is stated in a couple of places in the Bill, and I commend the Minister for that. Often times if a person who wants to appear in a case—particularly if they are the aggrieved party—is not advised in time for them to be able to make that appearance, they feel quite frustrated and angry about that inability. Allowing the extra time I think will ensure that witnesses, as well as anyone else attached to the case, have the opportunity to attend, and I commend the Minister for that.

Clause 17 talks about notice of alleged offences. This is the ability for local authorities to attach infringement penalties to minor traffic offences. I just seek clarification from the Minister. It is my understanding that in certain circumstances a local government will be able to attach a dollar penalty—a penalty value—to an infringement. I seek a formal response as to what constraints will be placed on local government not to exceed what people would see as a fair fine for the infringement. Within the explanation that I have received, there does not appear to be any constraint. I just wonder what constraint will be placed on local government to ensure that the penalty does not, in the view of the community, exceed the seriousness of the offence. Some local authorities are very good, but some are accused at times of overstepping the mark when it comes to imposing fines, etc. I would be interested to know what constraint may be placed on the local authority in that instance.

The other issue that I want to raise is in relation to clause 21, which amends section 49.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! Usually it is in the Committee stage that we get into this sort of detail.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I am sorry, I have to disagree. I ask questions of the Ministers and they respond in their replies. I would clarify that by saying that sometimes the answers mean that the members go to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for amendments.

Section 49 talks about the fact that, if an ASA certificate is produced for a radar speed detection device stating that that radar device is not defective, that certificate is deemed to be effective for 12 months after the certificate is issued. I wonder what constraint might be placed on the operators of these radar machines to ensure that, if rough handling or some other mishap occurs, they are obligated to ensure that the operation of the radar device has not been affected. Sometimes there is rough handling, the equipment could be dropped, etc. One might wonder whether the equipment could be faulty but still be able to be operated under a certificate issued within the 12-month period.

Clause 23 states that a person who applies to be a children's crossing attendant has to write a report or a certificate outlining their criminal history. It says that the chief executive may request a report. Is that a discretion on the part of the chief executive? They are not obligated in every instance, I take it, to get a criminal history—only if there is an issue or circumstance that creates a concern or question in the chief executive's mind. It is in clause 23.

Mr Bredhauer: If a person indicated they had a previous criminal history, if it was for something which caused the chief executive to seek further information, that is what they would do. If it was for something totally unrelated to the work that a school crossing supervisor does, they may not need to get further details.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The circumstance that I was thinking of was different in that, if a person applying to be a crossing attendant did not have a criminal history or did have a criminal history and put

"none", could the chief executive exercise a discretion and clarify that? I know that this person contacts children in the open, but they do form a relationship with the child, too, which is probably where the concern arises as regards this person's criminal history.

The only other issue that I wanted to raise with the Minister about this Bill is in relation to clause 35, which amends section 78.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! I have actually consulted with the Clerk, who has confirmed my ruling. In this instance, I will let the member continue her speech. Perhaps she might like to give that consideration in future and seek clarification for herself.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: The only other issue that I wanted to raise was the fee that is to be charged for approved motorcycle rider training. Concerns were raised in my electorate about this mandatory training. Unless control is kept on the upper limit of the fee, it could place it out of the reach of many people attempting to get a motorcycle licence. I understand that an upper limit is proposed and human nature being what it is, that is what will be charged. However, that fee should not get to the point at which it precludes people from getting a motorcycle licence simply because they cannot afford the training fee. It was a concern that was expressed to me, and I pass that concern on to the Minister.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (5.37 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I take part in the debate on the Road Transport Reform Bill 1999. I place on record at the outset that I endorse all the positive aspects that have been mentioned by previous speakers in relation to moving towards a more uniform regulatory code for driving and licensing in the Commonwealth.

There are a couple of aspects that I would like to address in this debate. One is an issue that has been raised recently and concerns the aged community in my electorate. There have been reports in the newspapers recently of a proposal to move towards the testing and licensing of people aged 65 years and over on a more regular basis than the current five yearly period. The report implied that most people who were retired were bad drivers and, therefore, contributed to accidents and, presumably, the road toll. I do not know if this is based on statistics or if it is just based on the presumption that people in their later years drive more slowly, perhaps through caution. Perhaps their driving habits have changed as they aged. However, I believe that the number of accidents involving elderly drivers is proportionately lower than that of younger drivers.

Mr Bredhauer: There are no changes to the plan. If you are over 75, you get a five-year licence, but you have to carry an annual medical certificate with you. There are no changes planned to that licensing arrangement.

Mr HEGARTY: I thank the Minister for making that commitment and clearing up the point raised in the Sunday Mail a week or so ago.

I raise the issue of road funding. The Redland area, which I represent, has a growing population. The shire's population is now around 105,000 and it is increasing. The strategic plan brought down at the beginning of last year allowed for some farmland to be rezoned for urban development, and that is now progressively taking shape. This new development will mean greater pressure on the State owned arterial roads. I refer to roads in my electorate, in the southern part of the shire: Cleveland-Redland Bay Road, Boundary Road and Redland Bay Road leading to Capalaba.

A section of Boundary Road is currently being upgraded to dual lane at a cost of around $4m, budgeted for a year ago. The 1996-97 indicative roads program indicated that it was possible that funding could be made available in this year's Budget for work to be carried out on the remainder of that road, which is the eastern portion from the Panorama Drive intersection to the roundabout at Cleveland-Redland Bay Road. I will be pleasantly surprised if funding is made available, but I have been advised that that is highly unlikely because of requirements in other parts of the State.

That leads me to ask: is road funding being cut back? As I indicated, the Redland area is a very important part of the State in terms of population growth. The population will increase and the number of vehicle trips will increase. Currently, a journey to the city by either private transport or bus usually takes around 45 minutes. As a result, people are inclined to drive to Cleveland and take the train, which of course is what we want.

Mr Bredhauer: Excellent.

Mr HEGARTY: An excellent idea. But an extra time delay in getting to that station is experienced by people in the southern part of the shire because they are using a circuitous route. Admirably, people are using public transport, but the point I am coming to is that if we can provide a faster route by making those

roads dual lane, then those intending to use public transport will not be caught in traffic jams as they are now. Before the roadworks were undertaken around the Panorama Drive intersection, delays for cars going into the city of a morning and returning from the city of an afternoon were enormously long.

I believe that the work proposed for Windemere Road to Vienna Road is on track to be commenced, but the next section of Redland Bay Road—from Vienna Road to the intersection with Taylor Road at Thornlands—also needs to be made dual lane. That work would fill in the gaps between existing sections of dual lanes, providing dual lanes from the southern part of the shire, where all the development and population increase is occurring, right through to Capalaba.

Moreton Bay Road provides a good route around the shopping area of Capalaba on to Old Cleveland Road and on to the city. That leads me to the issue of the bus lane speculated for Old Cleveland Road. We have heard nothing about that in recent times. That was proposed to be run on a similar basis as the South East Transit Project, which is currently under construction. A bus lane on Old Cleveland Road would alleviate traffic problems and encourage more people into vehicular public transport as opposed to just the Cleveland rail network.

I also wish to raise the matter of the number of properties acquired under the ill-fated Eastern Tollway project and which are still held by the Department of Main Roads. Members will remember that the Eastern Tollway project was the proposal of the Goss Labor Government to solve the traffic problem between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The figure for that project was never really finally determined. When we take into account the nominal $600m that the project was going to cost—I think that included the koala tunnel of around $130m, which was probably going to cost more like $150m or $200m when it was all engineered and costed properly—it would have been a fairly costly project which would not provide the vehicular capacity of the upgraded Pacific Motorway.

The concern of some of the residents in the western part of my electorate is that not all of the properties acquired have been disposed of. Not all of the properties on the proposed route were acquired in the first place. About 50 properties were acquired for millions of dollars in areas such as Eight Mile Plains, Rochedale, Burbank, Priestdale, Cornubia and Carbrook, on the northern part of the Logan River. To my knowledge, only one or two of those properties have been sold. That has caused an enormous glut on the market. People whose properties were not acquired under the proposed acquisition cannot sell their properties because the market is flooded. At the same time, I realise that the Government cannot put all of the properties on the market and have a fire sale, because obviously that is not going to help real estate prices either.

The point is that, because the Government is retaining those properties, there is speculation that the eastern tollway is still on the agenda. Maybe it is not on the Minister's mind at present—I know that he was not the Minister at the time; the former Treasurer was Minister when all of this was happening—but there is a perception. Those people do not trust Labor Governments when they have retained these properties. It is about four years since the previous Goss Government declared that the tollway was null and void, that it was off the agenda and that the Government would come up with some other alternative. The Goss Government never announced that alternative because it lost office shortly thereafter.

I ask the Minister to make some comment in his speech in reply to the second-reading debate about just what he proposes to do to accelerate the movement of those properties. One property adjacent to the golf course in the Carbrook area was offered for sale by tender. I believe that the Logan City Council has expressed some interest in that property. If these properties cannot be sold on the market, I encourage the Minister to look at some interdepartmental or intergovernmental arrangement—with the local authority in this particular instance—to see if some public use can be made of those properties. I realise that that cannot happen with all of the properties.

Some of the properties have some fairly nice homes on them. Some of them were acquired at a cost of up to $2m. They have a certain value which naturally the Government wants to recoup. But the slowness of any sort of disposal is becoming alarming. I think the Minister now has a responsibility to make some statement as to what the progress has been to date and what he proposes to do in the future to finalise dealings in relation to those properties.

I will leave the other matters for another time because I realise that time is moving on, but I ask the Minister in his reply to the second-reading debate to address the issues that I raised.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (5.49 p.m.): There are a few issues that I

would like to raise in particular. Firstly, I wish to support some remarks that were made by my colleagues who represent Toowoomba or parts of it, particularly in relation to the Toowoomba range crossing. I know that the Minister has some concerns—as we do—about getting more funding from the Federal Government. We had a deputation with the Federal Leader of the National Party, Mr Anderson, at the recent Rockhampton—

Mr Bredhauer: He is Deputy Prime Minister now. You might like to catch up.

Mr ELLIOTT: Yes, I got that. We had a meeting with him at the Rockhampton conference, that is, the members who represent Toowoomba and parts of it. He indicated clearly to us that funding is now coming through for property acquisitions and so on, but that if things were left the way they are at the moment it would be a fairly long time before we received other funding. We indicated that that really was not acceptable because of the problems and the number of crashes that are occurring on the Toowoomba range.

More and more trucks are using the range crossing every day of the week. This is an ongoing problem. It is not going to get any better, and it can only get worse, especially if we experience wetter seasons, which is on the cards. Over the past 10 or 15 years, we have had a series of abnormally dry seasons on the Darling Downs. But if we start experiencing very wet seasons with storms and constant misty rain on the range, which is normal, more and more accidents will occur on that road. It is as simple as that. I do not know how many people have to die or how many disastrous accidents have to occur on that road before something is done about it.

Not long ago, I had personal experience of the problems on the Toowoomba range road when I had to pick up my kids who were coming up from Brisbane on buses. There was an accident on the range, which closed the road totally. Traffic was diverted along Murphys Creek Road, but then there was an accident on that road and it was also closed. Traffic was then re-routed around Cunningham's Gap. Kids who have been sitting on a bus for five or six hours are not terribly amused by things like that—not to mention the costs to commerce and industry.

Our main concern is the danger of loss of life of the people who are driving trucks over that range or people who are involved in accidents through no fault of their own. The state of that road is not acceptable at the moment. Something must be done to bring forward the upgrade of that range crossing. I urge the Minister to do everything that he possibly can, and to get together with the Deputy Prime Minister, to ensure that that whole upgrade program is brought forward within a realistic time frame. I do not believe that the projected time frame is good enough when one considers the problems that are already being experienced on the Toowoomba range crossing.

I have another issue of concern, and I would appreciate an answer from the Minister about this in his reply. And if he is unable to provide that answer, then perhaps his advisers might be able to provide me with the information that I require. I have received a number of requests in my electorate office about the proposed changes to the towing regulations as they affect private vehicles, utes and light trucks that are towing big trailers that are fitted with override brakes and electric braking systems. This affects large, heavy private vehicles, utes, heavy four-wheel drives and so on. This issue has been a major bone of contention for many people in my electorate. Whereas they have been able to do certain things under the regulations in Queensland, when they have gone into New South Wales the RTA people have told them, "You can't do that, because what you are towing is heavier than the towing vehicle." If we take that to its logical conclusion, we would have to say that no prime mover in Australia is able to tow anything heavier than about eight or nine tonnes—which we all know is just ridiculous. We have to maintain a balance.

The manufacturers' specifications are effectively recommendations in respect of what vehicles are capable of towing. I thought that uniform towing regulations were being introduced with this change; that all States would have the same regulations as those applicable in Queensland; and that vehicles could tow whatever the manufacturer's specifications stated. Therefore, there would be some uniformity in the towing regulations, so that people could tow something from Queensland into New South Wales or Victoria without facing problems. I would appreciate the Minister's officers being able to advise me on that issue.

I turn now to wide loads—whether it be agricultural equipment or indivisible loads—being moved on highways and on arterial roads, particularly on the Darling Downs, the western downs, the southern downs and down to the border around Goondiwindi and so on. Wide loads create a large number of problems. There is a tremendous amount of anger amongst

members of those communities about this because, every time they turn around, someone changes the rules.

For years, wide loads were preceded by vehicles carrying signs reading "Danger Wide Load Following" or Danger Wide Load". But then some clever character came along and said, "That is no good. You can be taken to court because you have admitted that there is danger in it." Then signs of a particular colour were introduced to warn of oversized loads. In Western Australia, the signs say "Over Width". We really need some uniformity in this, and I understand that we are moving towards that now. We definitely need to consider the practicalities of all these problems in an endeavour to create a situation in which people who run agricultural properties in particular are able to comply with these regulations.

Nobody has a problem with flashing lights on vehicles. Everyone understands that flashing lights are necessary to warn people of possibly dangerous situations, and they can be seen from a long distance away. Anyone with any brains who sees a flashing light would realise that that is a warning sign of a potential hazard. It could be the police, the ambulance or the fire brigade—depending on what colour it is—or it could be the local authority working on the road, or it could be an approaching oversized load. That is the first tenet.

The second tenet is the use of two-way radios. People with two-way radios are able to warn traffic approaching narrow bridges—particularly heavy vehicles, because light vehicles should be able to pull up in time. When entering some states of America, there are big signs stating, "You are now entering an agricultural area. Beware of agricultural equipment. It has right of way." There is a similar sign near Gatton that says in part, "Beware of Aerial Spraying" or something like that. People in America have to give right of way to agricultural equipment and wide machinery on roads other than freeways and main highways, which would be the equivalent of our arterial roads in Queensland.

In the Goondiwindi area, two or three properties share the same plant, which has to be transported by road. Although that wide gear folds up, it still takes up the whole width of the road in many areas. So they have to find places where they can get that equipment off the road so that people can pass them. Quite frankly, it is a lot easier to get a car, a ute or a normal passenger vehicle off the road and into a little pocket beside a tree and out of the way than it is to get these wide pieces of equipment off the road.

I believe that we are going about this issue back to front. We need to understand the problems that are involved in shifting this type of equipment and the dangers that are faced by the people who are operating it and trying to move it. It is great to see the work that has been done on the road between Millmerran and Goondiwindi. In the old days, it was the greatest disaster when wide gear was being shifted along that road. There were great drop-offs on the edge of the road, it was not very wide, and if someone coming in the opposite direction did not show courtesy and give way to that equipment, it was forced over the edge.

Debate, on motion of Mr Elliott, adjourned.

SES POSITIONS, MERIT SELECTION

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (6 p.m.): I move—

> "That this House expresses grave concern at the Beattie Labor Government's approach to public administration and calls on the Government to:
>
> (a) ensure that all future vacancies in chief executive positions are publicly advertised, the candidates evaluated by an independent selection panel and appointments made on merit and equity;
>
> (b) ensure that all SES positions are filled on merit and equity; and
>
> (c) stop filling important public sector entities with its mates."

Over the past couple of months, it has given the Opposition no pleasure whatsoever to raise concerns relating to cronyism as practised by the Beattie Labor Government. One of the most astounding responses that a Government can come up with is the indignation that has been expressed by the Beattie Labor Government when the coalition has raised these issues of blatant, rampant cronyism. I suggest to honourable members opposite that it is a hypocritical and absolutely amazing attitude to adopt, particularly when we consider that it is absolutely undeniable that cronyism within the State of Queensland has reached epidemic proportions under the Beattie Labor Government, and particularly when we consider the attitude of members of the Beattie Labor Government when they were in Opposition a year or so ago.

All we have to do is briefly—not comprehensively—go to the Hansard record of what people such as Mr Beattie had to say. On 30 April 1996, Mr Beattie said—

> "They looked after their mates; that is what it is all about; snouts in the trough and looking after their mates...They are prepared to look after their mates financially in more ways than one, yet they cry poor."

On 12 September 1996, the Deputy Premier said—

> "The Labor Party learnt some painful lessons during the last State election, and we learnt them well. This Government has learnt nothing from six years in Opposition. It is still the same. It has not changed. It is still up to its old tricks, still up to the same old cronyism, still up to the same old contempt for ordinary Queenslanders."

What I would like to respectfully suggest to honourable members, and, in particular, to the Premier and the Deputy Premier who made those utterances in this place, is that they have learnt nothing at all from their almost three years in Opposition or from their performance during six years of Goss Labor Government when the practice of cronyism was refined to a point that brought shame on this Parliament, on the state of public administration in Queensland and on the State as a whole. All I can say is that the Beattie Labor Government has learnt nothing from the experiences of the Goss Labor Government.

When those opposite were in Government they precipitated scurrilous, defamatory, and unjustified statements on perfectly innocent and meritorious coalition Government appointments. When someone who was perhaps connected with the Liberal Party won a contract, or won a position based on merit, or won a tender as a result of fair and open tendering processes, they were criticised. We now have honourable members opposite making appointments which can only be described as blatant cronyism. They expect the coalition to sit silent and to witness, without any comment whatsoever, the litany of appointments of cronies and the corruption of the appointment processes to the Public Service and to public sector positions. I have news for members opposite, and that is that we will not be silenced.

Yesterday, I tabled a list of appointments by the Beattie Labor Government with Labor, union and other Labor partisan connections. It contained the details of almost 60 people with Labor, union or Labor partisan connections to various Government entities. This was an authoritative, lengthy and very damning list of cronies containing all sorts of Labor-connected people on it, including—and honourable members should listen to these descriptions of cronies—former ALP presidents, union presidents, union vice-presidents, other assorted union officials, Labor Party Treasurers, Labor Party MLAs, ALP candidates, ALP former candidates, ALP city councillors, ALP mayors, Labor lawyers, former Federal Labor Ministers, Labor Party campaign directors, and wives and husbands of all of the above, and the list can go on and on and on, and undoubtedly during the life of this Government the list will go on and on and on. We will continue to table those lists for the information and gratification of members opposite. What a list! What a rogues gallery of ALP hacks, hangers-on and cronies!

Obviously, the Government has sprung to its own defence and the defences have taken on several forms. Those opposite say that Labor has appointed former coalition politicians. They further say that the coalition Government did the same. They also say that some ALP appointees have severed their ties to the Labor Party and the union movement prior to or after their appointments. Let us have a look at each of these defences as proffered by the Labor Party members opposite.

First of all, let us have a look at the allegation that Labor has appointed former coalition politicians. I challenge speakers opposite to produce a list of those people. Who are they? How many of them are there? I challenge them to produce the list, and to produce it today. They will not come up with a list that is as extensive as the one that I tabled in the Parliament yesterday, and they will not come up with lists in the future that will rival the lists that I will continue to table in this place week after week and month after month.

When the Premier—whom I see has joined the debate—says, "We have appointed your people", I challenge him to produce a list and make it as extensive as the one that I tabled yesterday.

Those opposite also say that the coalition, when in Government, did the same. Let us talk about the previous coalition Government—the Borbidge/Sheldon Government—not the Bjelke-Petersen Government or any other Government. It is the last Government that we are comparing. Let us not go into ancient history, as those opposite undoubtedly will do. Do those coalition appointments contain party presidents, Premiers, Treasurers, Deputy

Premiers, union presidents and all the other litany of Labor Party and union hacks that I mentioned before? The answer is "No", because I can tell members opposite what the standards were in the previous Cabinet. Ministers were barred from appointing party officials—particularly office bearers. It was a rule of Cabinet. It was a direct order from the Premier and the then Deputy Premier. So we did not have Labor Party Treasurers and former Premiers and former Deputy Premiers appointed to positions. I say to those opposite that they will not be able to produce anything that resembles the rampant cronyism which we have documented and tabled in this place.

This morning, we had the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations springing to the defence of an appointment to the Industrial Relations Commission. He said, "Oh, she has not been a union official for 12 years." The fact is that she was a member of the Clerks Union. She was a vice-president of the Clerks Union. Those opposite cannot deny that. They cannot deny their history. They cannot deny their birth. They cannot deny their union connections. With that appointment, the Minister upset the balance of the Industrial Relations Commission in favour of union interests against the interests of employers. We will say a lot more about that in the future if we have to.

The other travesty of public administration in terms of cronyism is the method of appointment. The Beattie Labor Government massively increased the salaries of its directors-general—many of whom are Labor mates. They might talk about Dad's Army—distinguished, experienced, good directors-general employed by the coalition. Labor brought their own directors-general back and gave them pay rises of up to $50,000. In many instances, Labor did away with selection panels for chief executive vacancies.

I have mentioned some of the examples, but it is worth mentioning them again because those opposite are obviously listening very carefully to what I am saying. Those opposite are becoming terribly excited. Examples include Public Service Commissioner Brian Head, who gazetted a notice exempting his own position from merit selection. What absolutely disgraceful, unethical behaviour! The Director-General of the Department of Equity and Fair Trading, Marg O'Donnell, also exempted herself from merit and equity selection. I should also mention the Director-General of the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Bob Marshman, who was repaid for services rendered while we were in Government.

When the Beattie Labor Government talks about jobs, jobs, jobs and constantly mouths that mantra, we can agree that they are presiding over jobs, jobs, jobs, not in industry, but in the cronyism sector of this State. Government members stand condemned as hypocrites because the statements that they made in Opposition they are now not practising in Government. Cronyism is rampant in this State. This will be an ongoing saga that will embarrass and come to haunt the Government time after time in the future.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.10 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the honourable member for Clayfield. It is a pity that we have to move this motion, but we have to do it because this Government has completely and absolutely lost respect for the institutions of proper transparency and selection on merit. Unfortunately, Labor was elected on that platform. It trumpeted it throughout the State. It conned the people of Queensland into believing that it was able to deliver on that platform.

As the member for Clayfield pointed out quite properly in his contribution, when the coalition was in Government it was quite clear that we were very reluctant to appoint anybody who was associated with the National Party or the Liberal Party, and particularly any person who held positions within either of those political parties. In that regard, I know the view of the former Premier, Rob Borbidge.

What happened when Labor came to power in Queensland? It threw that out the window. It started appointing people on the basis of their political affiliations and on the basis of their political affiliations alone. In most cases, there was absolutely no consideration given to selection on merit and transparency. A moment ago, the member for Clayfield referred to people who were appointed to very senior positions by this Government who exempted themselves from the need to have their positions advertised. Can members believe anything more wrong or more corrupt than exempting oneself from the selection process? That is absolutely unbelievable! In this State, the only people who are appointed to such positions are people who are associated with the Labor Party. We have jobs for mates and jobs for the Labor Party's boys.

I refer to the great headline for Queensland in the Sydney Morning Herald of Saturday, 7 August, "Jobs for the boys.com". We know what that is associated with. I table that.

Mr Beattie: No.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The Premier knows what the headline was associated with—"Jobs for the boys.com". I have a range of interesting news clippings. One such clipping, headed "Premier gambles all on coming clean" states—

> "Whenever he has had the chance in the past 14 months, Peter Beattie has shouted his political mantra: 'Jobs, jobs, jobs.'
>
> But public suspicion is growing that Mr Beattie may have been referring to jobs for his Labor mates, as the Government is accused of gross cronyism in its first scandal."

Who can forget headlines such as, "Electricity boards reshuffled"? That has been great! Right throughout Queensland, a grab bag of Labor Party hacks and failed Labor Party candidates have been appointed to the new electricity councils. I have never, ever held the view that a person should not be appointed principally because that person is affiliated with a particular political party. Such a person can be appointed, but the Government has to have a process of merit selection, which is of absolutely paramount importance.

I refer to appointees to the South-west Queensland Electricity Council. I think that a couple of the members here who have Labor Party affiliations would probably have the capabilities to be appointed to that council. However, people have been appointed to it simply because they have ALP affiliations. I refer to Phil Doyle in Warwick, who I know quite well. He will probably do an okay job, but he was appointed because he is an ALP member. Another appointee is Maurice Passmore, who comes from Stanthorpe. He is a nice bloke. He stood against me in 1989. He was appointed to that particular position only because he is a member of the Labor Party. Other appointees include Garry Ryan, who is close to the ALP and the south-west district secretary of the AWU; Robyn Fuhrmeister, who actually stuck her hand up for ALP candidacy in the Federal seat of Maranoa; Frances Harding, who is a Labor Party member and the wife of a former ALP candidate; and August Johanson, who has acknowledged links with the Labor Party and who was the ALP candidate in Roma in 1986.

We can see that, under this Government, the only criteria for the appointment to anything in the State of Queensland is membership of or affiliation with the Labor Party. Merit selection does not matter. Transparency principles do not matter. The Premier is called "Grinner" and his mate is called "Skinner". With these sorts of things going on, I would call the Premier "Spinner". The only way a person can get a job in Queensland is if that person is a Labor Party member of Parliament or is a Labor Party mate. One only has to look at all of these news cuttings to see that. I have outlined only some. There are hundreds.

Time expired.

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

> "Delete all words after 'That this House' and insert—
>
> 'congratulates the Beattie Labor Government for returning the Queensland Public Service to the fine traditions of the Westminster system of responsible and accountable government and confirms its support for the principles of merit and equity in the public service.'."

It is very obvious that the member for Clayfield has learned nothing since he circulated his last grubby hit list in 1991. He has failed to understand that the ALP and people associated with the ALP or the trade union movement can, indeed, make an honest, decent and worthwhile contribution to public life in this State. He seems to have a pathological hatred of anybody associated with the Labor Party or the trade union movement. With this list of people that the member circulated yesterday, he has attacked some of the finest people in this State. I will refer to two people—one whom the member attacked in his speech yesterday and one whom the member has attacked previously. Ian Brusasco, who we appointed as chair of the WorkCover board, is on the member's grubby hit list. Ian Brusasco is a proud member of the ALP. He is also one of the greatest people in this State. He is highly regarded as a business leader who has made an enormous contribution to the business community, to public life and to the sporting life of this State. Yet he is on the member's list.

Today and again tonight, as the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, he has disgracefully attacked Dianne Linnane, the Vice-president of the Queensland Industrial Court.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr BRADDY: Now in his mealy-mouthed way, the member is trying to say that he has not attacked her. In a speech in which he says—

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr BRADDY: I listened to the member in silence. I would appreciate the same courtesy. In his mealy-mouthed way, the member has come into this place and put her name on the list. He has attacked her by saying that—

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr BRADDY: I listened to the member in silence. I expect the same courtesy.

Dianne Linnane is the holder of a quasi-judicial office, yet the shadow Minister has effectively attacked her and damned her, implying that she attained this important position only because at one stage she was a trade union official—some 11 years ago. Since then, never having been a member of the ALP, she has practised law and received many briefs from the business community—the employer's side! If a person had a proper attitude to this issue, he or she would think very carefully before they attacked the holder of such an office.

This member for Clayfield has no respect for anybody. He is the same person—the first person to do so in recent history—who removed a member of the Industrial Relations Commission. He is also the same person who made sure that no member of the Labor Party or anyone associated with the trade union movement was appointed to the WorkCover board—a board which was set up primarily to look after workers' interests.

I ask members to compare his behaviour with my behaviour. Who is the deputy chair of the WorkCover board? Who did I leave as deputy chair? Terry White, the former parliamentary Leader of the Liberal Party—a man who I regard as having ability. I will not remove him because he happens to be a Liberal Party member. I would not remove him. The same member opposite calls on us to circulate hit lists. We will not circulate such lists. Terry White is a decent human being, as is Ian Brusasco. One is a member of the Labor Party; one is a member of the Liberal Party. One is chair of the WorkCover board; one is deputy chair of the board. Clive Bubb, the man I have left as chair of the Workplace Health and Safety Board, is a former Liberal Party member in Victoria—a close associate of the Liberal Party. I have left him as chair of the Workplace Health and Safety Board.

The contrast between my behaviour and the member's behaviour is extraordinary. For this member to attack people merely because they are members of the Labor Party shows his pathological nature. He should go out and have a good look at himself and understand that there are some people in this community, whether they are in the Labor Party, the National Party or the Liberal Party, who are able to provide public service.

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (6.20 p.m.): I am happy to second the amendment moved by the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Opposition members have learnt nothing. Once again they are drawing up secret hit lists. They are trying to put fear into the Public Service. They are back to the blood-letting days of the past. That is what this is all about.

Let us talk about some of the things that we did when we came to office. Did we sack Meredith Jackson, the wife of Frank Jackson who works for the Leader of the Opposition? The answer is: no. Why? Because I think she makes a valuable contribution and I personally have some respect for her. Recently she left the Public Service of her own accord to work for the University of Queensland, but she had been retained under my Government. Did we sack Wendy Armstrong? The answer is: no. Does Wendy Armstrong still work in the Queensland Public Service? The answer is: yes.

Let us talk about Liberal leaders. We have either appointed or retained three Liberal leaders in key positions in this State. Not only have we retained Terry White and reappointed him as deputy chair of WorkCover, as the Minister just indicated, but we have also retained Angus Innes on QPAC and Sir Llew Edwards in a number of roles. What other political party is able to say that three leaders from opposing political parties have been either appointed or retained?

Mr Sullivan: There is a fourth. Mr Ahern is chairing the Prince Charles Hospital and has been retained because of the excellent job he is doing.

Mr BEATTIE: I was about to come to that. Of course there is Mike Ahern, the former National Party Premier, and Mrs Rhonda White, the wife of Terry White, has just been appointed, on ability, to an Ergon electricity board. Can the Opposition say that three former Labor leaders were ever appointed anywhere? They cannot.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: They come in here and attack the electricity councils. Those electricity councils, which are key advisory bodies, are paid $140 a meeting three or four times a year. One could retire on that. What a joke!

Opposition members are trying to terrorise the Public Service. They are here to upset people.

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Let us look at the record. I remember the member for Clayfield, who is so rudely interjecting—

Mr Santoro interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member has no respect for Parliament. He is rudely interjecting, as he tried to do during the contribution of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. Let the record show that the member is trying to disrupt my contribution in this debate.

Do honourable members remember when the coalition had a hit list that they got wrong? On 17 April 1991, the member for Merthyr, now the member for Clayfield, tabled a list of names of people who allegedly were Labor Party cronies. Do honourable members remember that?

Government members: Yes.

Mr BEATTIE: A few weeks later he had to apologise because he had it wrong. Let us look at the headline, which stated, "Santoro admits mistakes over 'cronyism' list". There it is. Why did the member have to admit that mistake? Because he got it wrong! The story told how the member said that a list of about 40 political appointees that he had tabled in State Parliament had contained incorrect information. He had to admit that.

Mr Santoro: No mistakes in this one.

Mr BEATTIE: "I got it wrong last time, but I have got to right this time." Who does he think he is kidding? He has no credibility.

I have said clearly on the record through a detailed—if I recall correctly—ministerial statement that we have appointed people on merit. Our transition to Government was the smoothest transition in the history of this State. There was no vindictiveness and no attempt to purge people. We had a smooth transition because we appointed people on merit and we retained people in their positions. When people's contracts expired, and some did on the turn of Government, we exercised our right to appoint new people. There was no blood bath under my Government. It was the smoothest transition to Government in the history of this State. We are not about vindictiveness, but the Opposition is. The hit list that was placed before the Parliament yesterday and the debate that is taking place tonight are about trying to terrify decent public servants.

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): The power industry has been at the forefront of the Government's chronic cronyism campaign. At the top of the heap is the appointment of the former member for Cairns and the Goss Government's Treasurer, Keith De Lacy, as head of Ergon Energy. I am sure that he will now use all of his Labor friendly creative accounting skills to try to cover the impact of the massive raid that has been made on the profits of the former distribution authorities that Ergon replaces. The budget that Ergon is going to have to maintain the entire distribution system outside the south-east corner has been positively gutted by this Labor Government. The letters in protest testify to that. The capital works budget has also been drained by the Government's insistence on the 95% after tax dividend for 1997-98.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr ROWELL: And we remember the Minister's little contribution. He cannot even add up. He needs to go back to school again.

There is no doubt that one of the faithful has been put in charge because the Government needed somebody who could be relied on not to spill the beans but who would let the transmission systems decay in silence. It is interesting to note that the former member for Cairns joins the former member for Logan, the former member for Redlands, the former member for Wynnum and the former member for Springwood in the group of people who have been looked after by this Government.

Cronyism is the power industry's biggest problem at this time. The blatancy in the clear bias towards people with Labor Party affiliations is unbelievable in the appointments to some of regional councils that now have a mere advisory role in place of real authority. Obviously, the real authority was getting too politically dangerous.

On the far-north Queensland electricity council, no fewer than five of the seven members have clear Labor Party affiliations. Despite his affiliation, nobody would argue with the appointment of the chair, Tom Pyne, because of his long service in the north. However, alongside him are a former Labor candidate in the Federal seat of Leichhardt, a former Cairns Labor branch president, the Cooktown Labor Party branch president and a former president of the Labor Party's Leichhardt division. That is not just a representative group and there is no doubt that they have been appointed for the same reason that Keith De Lacy has been appointed: that in the far north the

Government needs a committee that will not make waves about what the Government is doing.

There is plenty to hide in relation to the old FNQEB area as the documents we recently obtained under FOI show, because Tom Pyne privately resisted Keith De Lacy's successor to the hilt in trying to hold off the demands for the 95% dividend. That is to his great credit. I acknowledge what Tom did.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr ROWELL: It is all the Labor Party hacks who surround Tom who are the problem. Tom told the now stood aside Treasurer that the FNQEB had already seen its credit rating downgraded, and that a 95% dividend would impact on maintenance and capital works, and was quite unsustainable. He effectively forced the then Treasurer and the Mines and Energy Minister to resort to a gazetted direction before he would part with the money. That is how strongly he felt about the issue. That is a fact.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr ROWELL: That is a fact. The Minister has read the documentation and he was involved in it.

The pressure on the maintenance program and the capital works program in the far north is obviously going to be intense for the Ergon Energy Group, which has inherited Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard. The Government needed people, particularly in the far north, who know how to keep their mouths shut.

A similar situation applies in the old South West Power area, where again there were particular problems. The former South West Power board was one of those that went along pretty quietly with the demands for the big dividend, but as my colleagues the member for Warrego and the member for Gregory know well, there is a massive maintenance problem developing across the region. That problem is developing for the same reasons that it has developed in the south-east and everywhere else in the State.

Time expired.

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): Members opposite are keen to speak about mates and cronies. The record shows quite clearly that, when it comes to cronies, it is one of the few areas where they know what they are talking about. The members opposite are showing that, more than anything else, they are really good haters.

When they came into office in 1996 we had one of the greatest blood-lettings that had ever taken place in the Queensland Public Service. Almost every public servant who had served the people of Queensland when we had a democratically elected Labor Government in office was deemed to have been some sort of crony. Members opposite then put out a comprehensive list that caught every one of them. It makes good reading now. After I looked at the new contribution from the member for Clayfield, I went back and had a look at his old list. Amongst the Labor mates, cronies and buddies listed at the time was Gerard Bradley, who was described as having "close ALP links—not regarded as competent". That was enough for the incoming Treasurer, Joan Sheldon, to warrant tossing him out. Where did he go? He went to South Australia, which took a really radical view. It viewed him as a competent, professional public servant and gave him a job as Under Secretary to the Treasurer.

Mr Braddy: A Liberal Government.

Mr ELDER: It was a Liberal Government. I take my hat off to John Olsen and give him top marks for that. When we came back into office, we realised that Mr Bradley was completely apolitical and competent and that we needed someone like him as Under Treasurer in Queensland, and we brought him back. Then my director-general, Ross Rolfe—

Mr Sullivan: Who did they pick?

Mr ELDER: They picked a mate and a crony.

There was a filthy smear about Ross Rolfe, the director-general of my department. One point that I mused over for a long time was that he was noted as going to school with Kevin Rudd. We can see it now: some 30 years ago in the Year 11 history and science lessons at the Nambour State High School the conspiracy started that would culminate in setting public administration in Brisbane and keeping the Nationals out of office. It would have been impossible to make that charge in the context of someone who went to school with someone in the National Party! At least our bureaucrats went to school. And honourable members opposite talk about propriety. Let us look at what the list had to say about Royce Miller, QC. This is where it becomes nasty, as it did today. What did it say about Royce Miller, QC, the Director of Public Prosecutions? It stated—

> "If he cannot be removed then he should be sidelined by employing an additional DPP."

That is what they knew about the separation of powers. We should ask the member for Crows Nest, because he would be full bottle on the separation of powers. It appears that members opposite do not learn the lessons of history, and they are doomed to repeat their mistakes. And repeat them they do. That is quite evident from the contribution of the member for Clayfield.

In that first hit list the things said about people were highly questionable. About one officer it was stated: "Conducting a physical relationship with his secretary." Another officer was labled a "Nazi feminist" and another was described as a "protected species". They even went as far as sacking Graham Tucker, the chair of Suncorp. Why? Because he had the temerity to accept an appointment from the Goss Government, they said, "If he did that, he has to be a crony and a mate. Out he goes."

The fact of the matter is that, if it looks like a hit list, walks like a hit list and quacks like a hit list, it is a hit list. The member for Clayfield is obsessed with hit lists, and he is compiling them again. He likes the idea of naming enemies. He likes to list them. One of the job requirements of coalition staffers in the Opposition office would have to read: "Must be good at making lists." They have a problem; it will be a long list. If this is the starting point, the list will be an extra long one by the time we have finished in Government. Anyone who serves, accepts an appointment or even works with us will end up on one of the hit lists of the member for Clayfield. They will not have any friends. There will be so many people on the list, people will ask, "Why don't you have any friends?" They will all be on the list. The people of Queensland will know that they do not have any friends, because they will all be on the list. The fact of the matter is that they have not learnt and they are back in the business of compiling lists, naming people—

A Government member: With the support of Richard Nixon over there.

Mr ELDER: Again, that will be with the support of "Tricky Dickie"—Richard Nixon. They are up to their old tricks again. They will pay the penalty when the time comes again. They always do.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Clayfield. The plain fact is that this Government is rewriting the book on cronyism. It is no surprise that it is they alone who cannot see this. I will come to specific instances of Labor mates being given special favours—and plum local positions—in my own area, the Burnett, a little later. First, I wish to remind the House, and through it anyone in the Government who is actually bothering to listen, that it was the combination of mates' deals—"cronyism" in the vernacular—and bungled process that killed the Goss Government. The Beattie Government is going the same way.

There may well be a lot of people who are pleased about the fact that the Beattie Government seems determined to exit by the same route but sooner. There is never anything particularly edifying about a Government that is so focused on its own assumptions of excellence that it cannot conceive of any possible demerit—and even less about a leader who is so publicity hungry and so much the media junkie that he will go to the opening of an envelope, or even, it is alleged, the reopening of one, if it means a photo opportunity.

However, there is a difference between being a publicity hound and being someone who fixes things for party mates. A publicity hound is merely tiresome. A fixer is a public nuisance at the least and, if unchecked, a public danger. That is why, as honourable members will need no reminding, I have been pursuing the Deputy Premier over his mates' rates trip to South Africa. We do not know the detailed context of that trip. The member for Capalaba has been strangely reluctant to venture beyond the smokescreen of rhetoric on this subject beyond saying, like the neighbourhood larrikin, that he would do it all again if he fancied it. But we do know that he was doing favours. That is why others on this side of the House have been pursuing other members opposite who have begun the foolish trip down memory lane when it comes to looking after mates and doing special favours for people.

Mr Elder: I tabled my report.

Mr SLACK: It was a very skimpy report, was it not? What did it say? Did the Deputy Premier go to a football match? Was his mate Wayne Goss over there? Why did he not say anything about that? The Deputy Premier went to one meeting on the first day. Who went with him? He should tell us the full story. There is not much at all in his report. Did he do all of those things?

Our warning to the Government is that Governments cannot do special favours for a chosen few. Sooner or later the people will wake up—and they bite. They will wake up about the little trip of the Deputy Premier's. In reality, it was a trip for Deloittes for the benefit of Deloittes and the Deputy Premier's mate

Wayne Goss. This morning he said that he did not care; that he would do the same thing again. What is he going to do for the big end of town? Is he going to put out a message to the big five and exclude all of the little fellows—the small businesses that his Government is supposed to represent—

Mr Borbidge: He started "Rent a Deputy Premier".

Mr SLACK: Exactly; hire a gun. The invitation is out: "Come to me. I'll take you over there. I'll give you access to business." That is what it is about.

In my own local area, the Burnett, it is regrettably also the case that the follies of favouritism have attracted the local Labor Party and its stalwart, the member for Bundaberg. In the 14 short months that Labor has been in power in Queensland, the Government-appointed boards and committees in the Bundaberg region have become quite a familiar stamping ground for Labor mates. In particular, faces exceedingly friendly to the politics of the member for Bundaberg have appeared on boards, such as the Bundaberg Health Services Foundation and the Wide Bay/Burnett Electricity Board. Notably, two staunch supporters of the member for Bundaberg while she was on the city council, Councillor John Faircloth and Councillor Mike Edgar, make no bones about their Labor connections. Both stood for preselection in previous years as State and Federal candidates. I have nothing against them personally at all. They are quite good people. However, what is their expertise other than the fact that they are Labor mates—members of the Labor Party? What is their expertise for that position?

I am also advised that Pat Faircloth, the wife of John Faircloth, has been appointed to Keith De Lacy's Ergon board. For all I know, Pat Faircloth is a nice person. However, the question remains: what expertise does she have, apart from being a member of the Labor Party and the wife of John Faircloth the councillor, to be on the Ergon board? The most blatant politically motivated action—and this is the one that I really complain about—was the sacking of the Burnett Shire Council Mayor, Bill Neubecker, halfway through his term. What had poor old Bill done to deserve being sacked? I can assure the Government that that has upset a lot of people in the Burnett Shire in the context of their having a representative in their own area. We did not sack Nita Cunningham when she was the Mayor of Bundaberg, because we recognised—

Time expired.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): In his motion before the House this evening, the honourable member for Clayfield fails to recognise the realities of politics. In every walk of life people choose to align themselves with one or other side of the political spectrum. On polling day, people go into the booth and cast a vote and they make a choice about which side they support. However, for the sake of good government and the good decision-making processes of government, it is important that Government appointments have a cross-fertilisation of people from all walks of life, regardless of what side of politics they come from. We have a basic understanding in our society that, regardless of race, colour, creed, religion or politics, a person should not be excluded. However, the honourable member for Clayfield continues along the line that, if someone is aligned to the Labor Party in any way, shape or form, they should be excluded from making any contribution to public life in this State.

Looking at the hit list that has been produced by the honourable member for Clayfield, I think what it does not say is more important than what it does say. We as a Government have ensured that appointments to all Government bodies have a decent balance, that is, that appointments have been made right across the political spectrum of this State. As honourable members in the Chamber this evening would know, that assertion has already been made by previous speakers. I could list a number of honourable people in my own electorate who are members of the other side of politics but who are members of various Government boards.

The member for Clayfield fails to understand the importance of public life. The member for Clayfield has allowed his political bias and his sheer hatred of the Labor Party and the union movement to interfere with his good judgment. We have only to look at his performance when he was a Minister in the former Government to see that.

Speakers in the debate this evening have reminded us of his dealings with Commissioner Dempsey. He broke an 80-year convention in not reappointing Commissioner Dempsey. That was done solely because of the bias against and the hatred that he has for the Labor Party and, indeed, the union movement. He has failed to rise above his political bias. As a former Minister of the Crown, he should indeed be able to rise above that. He should be bigger than that but, unfortunately, he has not been able to do that.

I have heard the honourable member for Clayfield on many occasions in this Chamber say that he wishes to play the issue and not the person, yet we see time and time and time again the honourable member stand up in this Chamber and attack individuals. Everybody on this list that he tabled in the Parliament yesterday has been smeared by his innuendo. Yet these people wish to make a contribution to the betterment of the society in this State. This is the same stunt that the honourable member for Clayfield pulled the last time that he was in Opposition. The appointments that we have made have been on ability—the appointments that we have made right across the spectrum—but this is a biased list, of course. The appointments we have made have been made so that people can make a contribution to the betterment of this State.

By his behaviour the member does his party, the position that he represents, the constituents whom he represents and himself no credit. In making continuous attacks on people, he is ensuring that people who might think about making a contribution to the betterment of public life in this State think twice because they are worried about the smear and innuendo that come from the honourable member for Clayfield. He does nothing for the betterment of the good government of this State. He does nothing for the betterment of the good decision making of this State by the continued attacks that he makes on the citizens of Queensland. What we really need here is for him to understand that and to rise above his political hatred of members of the Labor Party.

Time expired.

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): This debate is supposed to be about principles, but all we have seen from the other side of the House is people trying to justify the appointment of cronies and mates. They have not done a very good job of it because, as far as we are concerned, instead of detailing the so-called talent of some of the people they have appointed, all they have done is make excuses for appointing cronies and mates. What is alarming is the blatant disregard they have had for people's respect. They have just foisted and imposed people upon the taxpayers of this State. I am talking about people who have taken their superannuation and left this place, but they have to come back to put their snout in the trough. I can mention the former Premier, Wayne Goss, and Keith De Lacy—the list goes on and on and on.

I mentioned Wayne Goss, although I would have thought he was better than that. His Government was an absolute failure; it wrecked rural and regional Queensland in six short years, although it paid the price for doing so. At least its members could hold their heads up in many respects, whereas this Beattie Labor Government has sunk to a new low as far as the blatant appointment of so many cronies and mates is concerned. It goes right back through the entire union and political spectrum. It is sickening and needs to be exposed because it is a cancer eating at that side of the House.

When we took over Government in 1996, a couple of my daughters were working for other Ministers. That made the front page of the Courier-Mail. Terrible, isn't it? There are Ministers of this Government who have daughters working in Minister's offices and there has not been one word said about it: one rule for them, one rule for us.

We have heard the Carruthers expenses mentioned today and yesterday. There is no question that those expenses were horrific. We thought that, too. We thought they were a disgrace. Who brought that inquiry on? The people opposite; the Labor Party—Labor cronies working with their CJC cronies! They did it. The cost of the Carruthers inquiry can be laid right at the feet of the Labor Party. That is where it came from. While we are aware that the CJC is trying to re-establish its credibility, in 1996 the cronyism and the political bias were unbelievable.

Mr Borbidge: They had the legal advice locked in the safe.

Mr COOPER: They had the legal advice locked in the safe. The CJC had known for 10 months that there was no case to answer, yet it went ahead because cronies of those opposite were working for the CJC. While it is different today—I know that the CJC is trying to get out from under—what happened then was a disgrace. The fact that the CJC put taxpayers to that expense is an utter disgrace. In private discussions I have had with many members opposite that has been confirmed. They know that it was a political witch-hunt. They know that it was a disgrace, because most of the people—the decent ones—over there have recognised that it was a political witch-hunt.

This is also a venal Government—so greedy that all it does is put its mates first, regardless of the people's wishes. It just forces its mates upon the public sector even though in many cases, as most people know, they do not have the ability to do the job. The power

industry is one example. The Premier gets up and says, "They get only $140 a meeting." It is not a question of money; it is the fact that the Government is putting these boards in place to run the electricity industry around the State but they are packed and stacked with Labor cronies. It is sickening.

More names will be mentioned. If anyone thinks that those people should remain in place when we on this side of the House return to Government, they are wrong. That should not come as any surprise to those opposite. They should let the word go out to their cronies, wherever they are. The Labor Government does not care about anyone else. It will go on appointing cronies until it goes out of office, which is where it belongs. Then it will find that those people will not last.

This is a shameful Government. The Beattie Government is a disgrace even compared to the Goss Labor Government. It is sending politics right back into the past—jackboot thugs and union thugs running the Government. Behind the fancy smiles those opposite wear lurks an evil. An evil lurks behind so many of those opposite. We know that their agenda is to try to load the various boards and institutions of this State. If those opposite think that those people will remain after a change of Government, they are wrong.

Time expired.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (6.50 p.m.): I take pleasure in supporting the amended motion. In an appalling abuse of parliamentary standards and in fine Mafioso tradition, the member for Clayfield only yesterday tabled a hit list of public servants and board appointees made by this Government.

Mr SANTORO: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the comments made by the honourable member for Archerfield very objectionable and I would like her to withdraw them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw.

Ms STRUTHERS: I withdraw. The treatment of the Queensland Public Service by the Beattie Labor Government stands in contrast to this. The previous coalition administration sought to cheaply politicise public servants. When the Borbidge Government came to office in 1996, it sacked the vast majority of chief executives of Government and a number of other senior and middle order public servants. It also sacked whole boards across almost all Ministries and replaced many of them with coalition cronies.

In its ideological zeal, the coalition Government removed anyone who had the remotest connection with the Labor movement. The majority of directors-general were not even given the courtesy of hearing about their dismissals from their Minister or the courtesy of a telephone call to advise them of their fate. Even Max Moore-Wilton, the infamous "Max the Axe", when sacking Paul Barratt, the former Secretary of the Department of Defence in Canberra, recently, had the decency to inform him of his fate by telephone. Of course, the courts have subsequently ruled that Moore-Wilton had not gone far enough and given the reasons for that dismissal. In contrast, the Beattie Government did not renew certain chief executives' contracts—not because of a coalition-style purge but because the contracts had expired. But any chief executive with a current contract remained in office.

This is a Government that is both responsible and accountable to the people of Queensland. Appointments to the Public Service have been and will continue to be made on the basis of merit and equity. They will be made through open and accountable processes. Appointments to boards and committees have reflected and will continue to reflect a broad range of experience suitable to the portfolio area.

Let us not forget: it was the Beattie Labor Government that acted quickly to restore the fine traditions of the Westminster system in Queensland. It was not this Government that sent senior public servants and board members packing. It was not this Government that sought to politicise the Public Service through its cynical amendments to Public Service legislation to enable the appointment of chief executive officers for the term of particular Governments.

The hypocrisy of the coalition Government speaks for itself. The hypocrisy of the member for Clayfield is illustrated through his overt political attacks upon public servants, upon members of the business community and upon ordinary hardworking Queenslanders.

The member for Clayfield would have us believe that any appointment made by this Government has been made on the basis of political affiliation. His fleeting acquaintance with the facts conveniently allows him to ignore the fact that it was not the Beattie Government but his own that sacked boards and public servants and appointed Liberal lackeys to

positions they would not gain on merit, giving us the nineties version of Dad's Army.

It was the previous coalition Government that polarised the Public Service. Under its Government, numerous public servants were afraid to brief senior officers in departments, let alone Ministers. It not only polarised the service; it neutered and politicised it.

It is this Government that moved swiftly to return the principles of the Westminster system. It is this system of responsible Government that has traditionally ensured a level of accountability between the Public Service, the Cabinet, the Parliament and the people. This approach is of course despised by the Leader of the Opposition, who, in a media report of July 1998, was quoted as saying—

> "Chief executive officers in today's public service are political appointees."

He said it. He admitted it. He did not focus on merit. Perhaps Mr Borbidge should have checked with Mr Santoro before moving this motion, which exposes the hypocrisy of his own coalition parties. The member for Clayfield's cowardly and deceitful attacks on hardworking, decent Queenslanders—servants of the public who cannot defend themselves in this House—are an absolute disgrace. I now know why people take an instant dislike to Mr Santoro: it saves time.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 40—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! For all future divisions, the bells will be rung for two minutes.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, J. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

NOES, 40—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, E. Cunningham, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Sitting suspended from 7.04 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

SCHOOL UNIFORM BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 August (see p. 3269).

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (8.30 p.m.): I wish to comment on this proposed private member's Bill, the School Uniform Bill 1999, introduced by the shadow Minister for Education on 4 March this year. I refer to the proposed amendments in relation to schools in the electorate of Mount Ommaney.

A few weeks ago, I visited the Monday morning parade of the Centenary State High School. The principal, Mick Mickelburgh, praised students for their immaculate dress that morning. Schools have a reputation to uphold, and if the public perceives that, generally, students are sloppily dressed, they will either alert the school principal or make a mental note that the standards of that school are quite poor and then spread the bad news. I think the issue is not whether a student wears a uniform but how well they wear it.

In the Mount Ommaney electorate, the school principals to whom I have spoken about this issue have not had a problem with students refusing to wear a uniform. Schools ensure that no matter what their socioeconomic circumstances, students are provided with assistance to acquire a uniform. Behavioural problems exist in all schools, and how a student wears a uniform is also a behavioural problem, a bad habit or simply bad dress sense.

Mr BAUMANN: I rise to a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mrs ATTWOOD: The standards required by principals varies across the school

spectrum. Some believe that academic performance is more important than how students are dressed and do not place great emphasis on dress standards, as long as they are neat and presentable.

It is not possible to set standards across all schools for the wearing of uniforms, because each school is different. A lot depends upon the perceptions of the local school community and the expectations of the surrounding community near the school. Students must feel comfortable in their school, because this definitely affects their performance. If a student is made to feel uncomfortable or restricted or regimented, their performance will decline.

What is an acceptable dress standard to one person may not be acceptable to another. It is difficult to be objective about this matter. That is why it is not wise to legislate on this matter. What about individualism? We are trying to promote a sense of responsibility to students in our schools. Students, particularly at high school age, must be given the opportunity to exercise this responsibility. Parents know what is best for their children. This includes knowing under what conditions they perform the best, what are their likes and dislikes and how they respond to various situations. That is why it is vital that parents and their school communities are the best judges when determining dress standards for their children. Students or young people have a tendency to rebel and react negatively when legal enforcement occurs, particularly in an area where they see no obvious benefit or reason to do so.

The Minister for Education, Dean Wells, has given schools the means to overcome the problem of students not abiding by uniform standards. The school communities and principals to whom I have spoken about this are more than happy with this outcome. The Opposition is still fumbling with a tortuous regulatory process which would tie schools in knots. I congratulate the Minister for Education, who identified a simple strategy by using the current Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, which gives a power to school communities, through their P & C associations, to decide whether their schools should have a dress code and what the dress code should be. When a dress code is written into their school behaviour management plan under section 27 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989, the capacity to sanction non-compliance is activated. This is a much better way to deal with the concerns identified by the Ombudsman, who found that schools had no teeth to deal with students not wearing uniforms.

The legislation proposed by the shadow Minister would prove burdensome on our schools by imposing a blunt, heavy instrument of further legislation accompanied by the inevitable delays in implementation. I am sure that principals have more important objectives for their students than to be overcome by a cumbersome administrative burden which will distract them rather than assist them.

Let us get back to what is important in our schools. Each school student's priority is to maximise their educational potential so that they can move on to their chosen career. It is a minuscule percentage of students who want to stir the pot by not conforming with school uniform standards. Those who do not wish to conform can be dealt with appropriately under the current Act, within the objectives of the school's behaviour management plan.

The more we use legislation to regulate every detail of people's lives, the more we erode the capacity of people to invest in social capital in their community. This is not the best solution to the school uniform problem or the most beneficial to the schools. I condemn the shadow Minister's proposed Bill.

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (8.37 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak on this Bill because it is a topic that has been debated for years. I believe there would not be a family dinner table that has not heard a discussion at least once as to whether or not school uniforms should be compulsory.

There are many issues which add to this debate. Some are serious, some are a little lighter, but all are important, and all need to be aired, discussed and debated. This is a question that I have polled extensively in my electorate. During the polling of the question as to whether or not school uniforms should be compulsory, I found that there was an overwhelming desire in the community for it to be so. The first consideration for many was perhaps a selfish reason put forward for pure convenience. It is so easy to be able to not have to choose what has to be worn every day. The children also know what they have to wear. The second consideration was perhaps the most important, that is, that with the wearing of a uniform all children feel equal, no child feels disadvantaged and no child is singled out because they look different. When starting school or transferring to another school, if a child is in the same uniform as the other kids, they feel like they belong, and most children find it much easier to blend in and not look like the new kid. Looking like the new kid

was often a terrifying prospect for many children. I know that from experience, as I attended many schools over the years.

Having travelled overseas and having friends there who have children attending school, I have often asked what their views are in regard to the wearing of school uniforms. Most have stated that they thought it was a good idea; but not having experienced the situation, they felt that they could talk more on the fact of not having a compulsory uniform.

A Government member interjected.

Mrs PRATT: I wrote this speech myself, and any person who does not believe that can go jump.

Most parents mentioned times when their children were subjected to offensive taunting and teasing from classmates who ridiculed the child's clothing—not because it was poor quality, not because it was over the top, but because those doing the taunting just did not like what was being worn.

The child was made to feel alienated because of his or her taste in clothing. As everyone knows, we do not have the same tastes in clothing. To be ridiculed at the tenderest of ages when we are at our most vulnerable is not something to which we would have our own children subjected. I would hope we would not allow future children to be subjected to such ridicule.

Having mentioned the taste of a child in relation to clothing, I remind honourable members that we all know how difficult it is to get children to wear something reasonably sensible and reasonably protective. I refer particularly to the wearing of hats. Let us look at the difficulty in clothing a child.

One of the arguments against uniforms is the cost. One thing upon which we can all agree is that some school uniforms are very expensive. Some uniforms are fashionable and we know that young people prefer to be fashionable. When we say "young", we are referring to children as young as five years of age because they, too, have their own views on clothes and they can be quite demanding when it comes to wearing something that they do not wish to wear.

Young people like to belong; they like to dress like their mates and they like to be one of a gang. This was a major problem that was brought home to me by parents I spoke to when I was overseas. In schools where there is no uniform, children quickly gravitate to their like. This was recognised by the style or quality of clothing. A class distinction was made about an individual at first sight. Children were judged not for their ability, not for their personality and not for themselves; they were judged on appearance alone. This can often be devastating to children who are at the lower socioeconomic level.

The apparel a child wears attracts the attention of certain other children—as the saying goes, like attracts like. So schools with no uniforms found that gangs were forming. There were wealthy gangs, poor gangs, the nerds, the bullies, the gothics, the bovver boys and the in-crowd. Children wanted to fit in and wanted to be part of the in-group. They wanted it so badly that they would steal to achieve the look of the gang into which they wanted to be welcomed. First they would steal from the mother's purse; later on they would steal an article from a shop that stocked the particular article.

Children are so easily moulded and so easily persuaded to be something other than themselves that many start on petty crime. No, they do not all go that way, but if one child feels that it has to go that way, that is one child too many. It is ridiculous to say that this sort of thing does not happen in our schools today, because it does, but it is not so obvious and the children feel compelled to behave in a manner befitting their gang. They will breach the boundaries and judge people more for who they are instead of what they look like or dress like.

Each and every one of us knows that children can be the cruellest of individuals. With a gang behind them, they will be coerced into doing things that they would not normally do. School uniforms are usually modest, protective and serviceable. In this country we are continually promoting protection from the hot sun to preserve us from suffering with skin cancers. I cannot imagine too many young people really taking that into consideration in the fashion stakes of what to wear to attract a member of the opposite sex.

Let us talk about attracting the opposite sex. As we are all well aware, attracting the opposite sex is, perhaps, on the minds of the vast majority of teenagers in schools. With hormones running rampant during adolescence, it is not necessarily the most prudent thing to have young girls parading around the school grounds in revealing outfits.

A major consideration for parents is the safety of their children for it is difficult to spot a child who is playing truant. It is equally difficult to pick up the presence of a person who should not be on the school grounds, including drug pushers. All these things are possibilities if uniforms are not compulsory. These things

are possible right now. I have often noted the number of children who do not wear uniforms to school at the present time. If one child is permitted not to wear a uniform, why should the rest wear a uniform?

How long would it be before action was taken by a student because that student felt he or she was being discriminated against in being forced to wear a uniform? It is difficult enough for headmasters and teachers to encourage discipline and self-worth in children today. How much more difficult would it be as more and more children learn that they can defy the school directive to wear uniforms because it cannot be enforced under present law?

Children are free to wear or not wear a uniform, as the case may be, and it would not be long before the scenario mentioned earlier would be played out all over the country. Who is to be the judge of what is acceptable and what is not? Yes, the parents and the parents and citizens associations should be heard. They also want to know that the wearing of uniforms in schools is enforceable. I have seen that indicated very strongly in the polling I have conducted in my electorate.

As the Premier and his Government have been made fully aware, the unemployment figures in Barambah are abysmal, and the level of poverty associated with that unemployment makes very few other electorates as qualified to speak for poorer students who may not have the resources to comply with the dress codes. I feel that there is enough humanity within all persons to address these situations. Most schools have a pool where children can obtain uniforms.

As I said, there is overwhelming support in the Barambah electorate for this Bill. Therefore I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (8.46 p.m.): I have great pleasure in rising to oppose the School Uniform Bill. People want to know to what use these private members' Bills are being put. People wonder just what purpose they serve. After hearing private members' Bills debated for some weeks, I have reached the conclusion that they do provide a very important community service for the State of Queensland because frequently—

Mr Hamill: It keeps them off the street at night.

Mr FENLON: Apart from keeping them off the streets at night, we continue to get these harebrained schemes coming from different groups at different times. We hear these crazy schemes and we wonder what is the best way to refute them. What is the best way to politely explain to someone that this is a harebrained scheme and it has to be disposed of? I find the best way to do it is to say, "Look, this has been dealt with." I give these good citizens a copy of the debate. They take it away and they read it and they can very clearly see that it is a harebrained scheme and that the House has defeated it after sound debate and that it is not worth considering any further.

Mrs Lavarch: And then they wonder why we waste so much time.

Mr FENLON: I take the interjection. It is a complete waste of time for this House because it is a harebrained scheme. It is a stunt. What we are debating here tonight is not whether there should be compulsory uniforms. We should take this matter back to the real debate. What we must debate is the best way to deal with the problem within schools, at a school level, of getting kids to wear school uniforms.

That is the principal issue in this debate. I hope all members agree with that first point. We support the importance of wearing uniforms because that is what the community wants. That is what the mums and dads generally want. School uniforms fulfil a very important social function. They provide a degree of social neutrality for the kids and families in our community.

I went through poor Catholic schools in Rockhampton with kids who came from some of the poorest families in the town and kids who came from some of the richest families. When they sat behind the desks they all looked the same. They were all treated the same and they all looked the same. That is a good reason for having uniforms. We did not need a law to make the wearing of uniforms compulsory.

I ask members opposite to wake up to themselves. We have not had a law of compulsion because for decades this has been effectively done by the community. The irony is that, suddenly, those opposite are saying that we must have a law. This has occurred because we have had some narrow, legalistic interpretation provided by the Ombudsman. It is not technically incorrect for the Ombudsman to provide that interpretation, but it is something similar to talking about the emperor's clothes.

Suddenly, it is revealed that we do not have a law which would make the process work. We are told, "Yes, we have to work this through the community. How do we do it?" We are told that we need a law to do it. That is just not on.

I commend the Minister for proceeding in the way he has proceeded in terms of providing a legal framework which will ensure that this system works—as it has worked for decades—by communities working it out. When I was at school these matters were always worked out in the community. There was social pressure. There was consensus within a school that, if a student went to the school, that student wore a school uniform. Everyone knew that. The families knew it. I was conscious of it, even when I was at school. Even when I was a little kid at school, I was conscious of the reason why I wore a uniform. It was explained to us that it was one of the great social levellers.

Mr Lucas: The great irony is that those who don't want to wear uniforms often wear a uniform in that they'll often wear the same sorts of track tops or Nikes.

Mr FENLON: That is right. That is the sad alternative. We are left with a variety of uniforms but they are uniforms that reflect the social strata.

Mr Lucas: Of non-conformity or wealth.

Mr FENLON: Of non-conformity or wealth or, for that matter, lack of wealth and homelessness. One of the things that we need to get through to those opposite is that they should go back to school and see the sorts of kids who are at schools today. We have kids lining up at our schools who do not have the traditional mum and dad at home. When I was at school, the non-nuclear family—those without mum and dad at home, not sending the kid off each morning with a packed lunch—was a great rarity. During my whole schooling, I can remember only one kid who did not come from a non-nuclear family. Now, over 50% of the population of schools and high schools come from non-nuclear families, the non-traditional mum-and-dad-at-home nuclear families.

As a society, we have made great changes. We have to have a system in place that will ensure that the communities within schools, the mums and dads within schools, get a chance to actually say what they want to put in place. They are working that out very nicely thank you very much. The reception that I have had in my schools is overwhelmingly positive. They have mechanisms in place to make it work now. They have such things as a uniform room. If in the morning a kid turns up without a uniform, that kid goes and gets sorted out with a uniform for the day. The schools work it out. They do not need a law for that.

Finally, this proposal gives no recognition to the social diversity of this State in terms of trying to deal with a policy that reflects schools from Holland Park to Aurukun, nor does it recognise the fact that social values change. They have changed completely from my generation to this generation. I commend the Minister's position and I urge members to firmly reject this harebrained scheme of those opposite.

Mr FELDMAN Caboolture—ONP) (8.52 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to join this debate. However, before I do I want to comment on something that occurred earlier in the 6 o'clock debate. It is something that I thought that I would never hear in this Parliament. We are used to the constant name calling, but to actually hear a racist slur from the bastions of multiculturalism really, really surprised me. To hear the member for Archerfield call the member for Clayfield a Mafioso was quite surprising indeed.

I also recall the words of the Minister for Education back on 21 July this year as he sought to debate a point with the member for Caloundra. I also find myself feeling very, very sad about the fact that, out of that little tirade, the Minister who represents the educational standards of this State made fun of the illiterate by making a joke about illiteracy in this State. No wonder those who cannot read or write the English language are too frightened to speak up, to put up their hands or to go forward and be recognised as someone devoid of this ability. After seeing the Minister for Education in action—treating this handicap as a bit of a joke and seeking to ridicule the very people he should be reaching out to help—it is no wonder that illiteracy is such a problem in this State. I feel that that is somewhat of a disgrace. With such a shoddy disregard for illiteracy from the Education portfolio, where will education go in this State?

That was not the first time such an offence was committed by the Minister for Education. I recall the very same comments—sad comments—about join-the-dot books, colouring-in books, papers and pens as he sought to ridicule the members of One Nation when we first entered this Chamber. The Minister must have felt that the handicapped people of this State, some of whom I remind him live and work within his own electorate, are worth only a passing joke. I hope that the percentage of people who are handicapped by illiteracy is a sufficient percentage to have him no longer representing his electorate. I remind him that, by making such a nasty, pointed joke, he has alienated the 23% or more of his electorate who voted for One Nation. I am also

at the point of putting out a press release to advise that the Minister for Education calls 23% of Queenslanders illiterate. If the Minister retains the audacity to insinuate that the member for Caloundra is illiterate, then I, too, would be proud to stand by the member for Caloundra in the same denigrated state.

In common with other speakers in this debate, I, too, must reiterate what the Ombudsman had to say in his most recent annual report, which was—

> "If schools are imposing sanctions on students not in uniform, then they are doing so with no legal basis."

Unfortunately, we live in litigious times. I feel sure that, with no legal basis upon which to fall back on, it will not be long before some parent brings a teacher or a school principal to task in the legal arena over poor little Johnny who has suffered some deep psychological trauma through somehow being sanctioned for non-compliance with a school uniform policy. With no legal basis upon which to fall back, this is a very distinct possibility.

Our school system deserves better protection from litigation when the school seeks only to protect and educate the major proportion of our students. The Ombudsman went on to state—

> "The position, therefore, is that putting inappropriate dress codes aside, a student who is reasonably dressed cannot be punished or treated differently in any way for not wearing the official school uniform. I know that this view is unpopular with some principals and P. and C. associations but the position can only be changed by legislation, not by administrative stealth or low level coercion."

I agree with the Ombudsman's opinion. After all, he has been challenged by complaint after complaint for at least the past two successive years. He has called for legislative intervention, because he has also stated publicly that there is no legal basis for the mandatory wearing of school uniforms.

We cannot box people into the two categories that this debate has raised. The general school population cannot be categorised so simply into either liberal freethinkers or strict disciplinarians. We all know these categories exist, but the majority of people fall between the two extremes. The vast majority of the school population, including those in those two categories, desire the uniform code for a whole range of very positive reasons other than to punish or discipline students.

Today, we are more conscious of our image, and so are schools. Even in my own community of Caboolture, parents school shop. They search for an appropriate school, especially in the area of higher education, in particular between Years 8 to 12. The high schools that present themselves well, that is, have pride in themselves and reward their achievers—both students and teachers—come across in the community as schools that are worthy of travelling those few extra miles to attend. I am saying that these types of schools actually attract parents and students. A uniform code goes a long way in the presentation of this corporate image of neatness, pride and success.

In my own electorate, for example—this is a subjective issue—I know of parents who transport students from Mount Mee and Woodford to the Tullawong State High School. I also know of parents who transport their children from Kilcoy to the Bribie Island State High School. Each school comes with its own levels of acceptance and credentials, most passed on by word of mouth through association and appearance. Recently, I responded to an invitation to the Tullawong State School to speak to the Year 7 students about the Westminster system prior to their visit in Parliament House. We had the opportunity to engage in a debate about school uniforms.

Mr Hamill: Hope you learned something.

Mr FELDMAN: This debate was to give some insight into the presentation of views on the floor of Parliament. I must admit that there were no rude interruptions in the school situation, unlike what we see here from both sides of the House. The incredible part of that short debate was that we could not find any student in the four Year 7 classes involved who wanted to present a case against the wearing of school uniforms. However, we had a whole room of takers who wanted to speak for the benefits of a school uniform policy. In the end, I had to develop some arguments against the wearing of school uniforms to enable the debate to continue.

I digress for a moment to speak of schools and their needs. Never being a shrinking violet, I take this opportunity to remind the Minister of the needs of several of the schools in my electorate.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! That is not relevant to the debate tonight. We are discussing a Bill about school uniforms.

Mr FELDMAN: Neatness and school uniforms are very important, and that is what I want to highlight to the Minister.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will beware, because I will listen carefully to the member's comments and then make a decision.

Mr FELDMAN: For over six years the junior section of the Caboolture State School has been crying out for a new toilet block. The Minister is well aware of my consistent lobbying for a new facility, due to the extreme health risks that the old facility now poses. I look forward to seeing that facility as part of the 1999-2000 capital works program for Education. There is no point in having a tidy school and neat uniforms if the students have to wait to attend to their duties—if I can put it that way—until they get home.

At the Elimbah State School there is an urgent need for an additional classroom—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We are not debating capital works. This legislation relates to uniforms. If the member has anything more to say on that topic, he will proceed. Otherwise, he will resume his seat.

Mr Wells: I did take the names.

Mr FELDMAN: I thank the Minister. I realise that he has been looking into those matters and I appreciate that. I was also going to highlight the fact that the Elimbah State School needs an extra classroom for the preschool.

Mr Wells: I got your point about the Caboolture State School.

Mr FELDMAN: I thank the Minister. I was going to ask the Minister about the Caboolture State High School's need for a major covered area, which has been on the list since 1996.

I thank the Minister for the funding that he has granted to the Wamuran State School. That school is looking for a little bit of extra help in providing an entrance to the school that will prevent children from being injured when walking to or from the school, where they will be wearing their school uniforms with pride and humble dignity. The school needs a little help in the provision of an entrance to the school off Spillane Street at the back of the school, rather than having an entrance off the D'Aguilar Highway.

Mr Wells: We're working on that.

Mr FELDMAN: Again I thank the Minister. As I said, the $2.5m grant was greatly appreciated by that community and it will be utilised extremely well.

One Nation supports the concept of State schools being able to develop and apply mandatory dress codes for their students. Considering the conflicting advice of the Minister for Education and the Ombudsman's report with regard to the authority of principals to apply dress codes within their schools, I agree that the legislation is necessary to ensure that schools have a formal right to adopt and to enforce school uniform policies.

The majority of students, parents and teachers favour school uniforms because they promote unity within the schools and give schools an identity. Most students take pride in the wearing of their school uniforms, because it encourages discipline in their personal grooming while providing uniformity amongst their peers. Students today are constantly under peer pressure to fit in and be accepted. Cigarettes, alcohol and drugs are probably the main issues that face our youth every day. The last thing that they need to cope with is the added pressure of having to decide what to wear. Some may not think this would be an issue, but when one takes into consideration the fact that most children aspire to wearing expensive brand-name clothes and shoes, those who cannot afford such items are often looked down upon by their peers. Of course, it is upsetting that something so trivial can impact so greatly on a child's self-esteem, just because they are deemed to be not a part of the in-crowd. We are all sycophants, but sometimes we just do not make the grade. For example, members of the Labor Party are wannabes—they want to be members of One Nation—but they just cannot make the grade. School uniforms would eliminate the desire to be part of a trend setting in-crowd because all children would be seen as equals. I consider this to be a major advantage to our youth, especially in today's society.

Another advantage of having school uniforms is the safety aspect. Schoolchildren participate in school excursions outside the school, quite often into heavily populated city centres. This is done very frequently. Even here in Parliament House we frequently have visits from schoolchildren. They visit places such as the museums, South Bank and the art galleries. I can imagine the nightmare that teachers would face if students were not wearing uniforms, because they would not be very easily identifiable in crowds. A student could wander off without the teacher noticing and then there would be a frantic teacher with one less child in their care. Can members imagine the chaos if several schools without uniform codes attended the same venue at the same time? It is easy to see that it would be very difficult for teachers to keep track of their students, which would definitely compromise the safety of those students.

Some may argue that implementing a mandatory school uniform policy would cause families considerable expense, and we have heard that from members opposite. However, I take the view that if parents can afford to buy Adidas sportswear, surf clothing such as Billabong or Quicksilver, or Nike shoes, it would be safe to assume that they can afford a uniform as an alternative, especially considering that these days uniforms are ultimately cheaper than expensive brand-name clothing.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr FELDMAN: When the rude people have finished interjecting, I will continue.

Families that face difficulties in purchasing uniforms need not be forced into financial hardship. I am aware of several schools that have separate funds allocated to help families in genuine financial need. Those funds may cover the purchase of uniforms or school books. As the member for Merrimac advised the House in his second-reading speech, schools that choose not to have a uniform still need to set a minimum dress standard for student safety and personal modesty.

A school in my electorate has set aside washing facilities within the school and has uniforms on tap so that all students can go into the community displaying a corporate identity. As a result, the students look as though they belong together.

With the passing of this Bill, Queensland schools will have the legal authority to make their own decisions about a dress code for their school, with the school community being a major contributor to the setting of that standard. Most importantly, principals will have the power to enforce that code on the students on behalf of their parents and the school community. Members seem to be missing the point that the P & Cs and the school communities as a whole actually want the children to wear uniforms. The code needs to have some teeth so that the Government can protect teachers and principals in our very litigious society. People have a natural tendency to turn on others and that is something that we need to prevent. We need to protect our principals and teachers.

Ms Nelson-Carr: What do you do with kids who don't wear a uniform?

Mr FELDMAN: As I said, some schools are going out of their way, with the support of and funds raised by the P & Cs, to provide such children with uniforms so that they can be like all the other students when attending functions that are held outside the school. Principals need the power to enforce that code on students on behalf of the parents and school community that wants that uniform code in place. One Nation supports school uniforms, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (9.10 p.m.): In October last year I called on the Government to examine the possibility of providing legislative support to schools that chose the compulsory school uniform option. I am pleased to say that that is exactly what the Minister has done. However, he has done so within the existing legislation without the requirement for passing new legislation. The Minister has provided a practical, straightforward way to deal with the confusion created by the Ombudsman's report last year. That is in stark contrast to the cumbersome, complex and confusing solution proposed in the coalition's Bill.

The interesting thing about this issue is that we are all talking about achieving similar outcomes. The difference is in the means of achieving that outcome. The Minister's approach is simple: firstly, he makes a declaration under section 84(1)(g) of the Education (General Provisions) Act; and, secondly, all that the P & C is required to do then is to pass a resolution at one of its monthly meetings adopting a school dress code. The uniform policy is then able to be enforced under the school's behaviour management policy. What could be simpler than that?

I support the right of schools to decide on the compulsory school uniform option for a number of reasons, most of which have been outlined in other speeches tonight and at other times. Firstly, uniforms are a great leveller. They remove the sometimes emotionally damaging contrasts that occur between kids whose parents can afford expensive clothing and those who cannot. They promote pride and self-esteem. They assist in maintaining standards of behaviour and discipline and assist in enhancing security in school grounds by allowing easy identification of students and visitors. Safety in school grounds is now a significant issue and the beneficial aspects of school uniforms cannot be underestimated.

The effectiveness of the Minister's approach can be assessed only by experience. My local high school has a uniform policy and that policy has been accepted by the students and enforced with the approval of the P & C. I am advised that this acceptance is particularly strong among the Year 11 and Year 12 students, who I am sure would have

challenged the policy quite regularly if there were any doubt about its validity. But that is clearly not happening. Accordingly, it appears that the scaremongering of the Opposition is ill founded.

I am also not aware of any significant problems regarding the implementation of a school uniform policy in other neighbouring schools. And that was the case both before and after the much-publicised Ombudsman's report. The Opposition's opportunistic political ploy has been a fizzer. Its Bill would cause confusion and unnecessary bureaucracy within school communities and the Education Department. It would turn a simple decision of a P & C into a bureaucratic trail of regulations that would almost have no end—regulation to Cabinet and the Governor in Council, regulatory impact statements and possible disallowance motions in this Parliament. All that for a decision which rightfully should be left to a local P & C association. If this Bill were enacted we could see this Parliament debating such significant matters as the size of a stud that a student might wear in their ear.

The Minister's response in this case is sensible and is obviously working without any significant problems—much to the disappointment of the Opposition. Not many members of Parliament have constituents kicking down their doors demanding that legislation be passed to allow schools to adopt a uniform policy. They can already do it. The sensible approach would be to allow the Minister's solution to work and evaluate it through experience in our schools. If it was such an issue that it needed a legislative response, why did the member for Merrimac not do something about it when he was the Minister? This issue is a beat-up. It is a pitiful attempt by the Opposition to create a storm in a teacup. It failed dismally on this one and, accordingly, I will be opposing the Bill.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (9.14 p.m.): Tonight I am pleased to support the School Uniform Bill, because it is a sensible and fairly simple Bill that will give some legislative support to an area where there is some conjecture and doubt at the moment, particularly since the Ombudsman's report was released. In contrast to the experience of the previous speaker, school P & Cs have come to me and said specifically that they would like the support and strength of a legislative base to enable them to provide a uniform code within their school and which would give them some certainty and security within their school community.

The other interesting aspect about tonight's debate is that there seems to be a general feeling of support in the House for school uniforms. However, on the other side of the Chamber that support tends to get a bit weak around the edges and a bit wobbly. We all agree that school uniforms help develop within a school a sense of pride and belonging and a sense of family and community. That helps a little with the development of discipline and self-discipline. It helps build teamwork and teaches students that, even though they might prefer to do what they want to do at times, they all have to accept some direction and a degree of conformity. Also, school uniforms are very often designed by the school community, and their level of interest in their uniform is a reflection of their school pride.

Although I am perhaps digressing a little, I point out that, when the Leading Schools program was brought in under the previous Government, in respect of the high schools in my electorate I noticed that people in the community took advantage of that tremendous opportunity and joined forces with their school to develop it to mirror what the parents and the school community felt about it. I am extremely proud of the two State high schools in my electorate. We have about 14 secondary schools in the immediate area of Toowoomba. Within my electorate there are quite a number—some seven or eight. The two State high schools—the Centenary Heights State High School and the Harristown State High School—are outstanding.

Interestingly, at the moment in Toowoomba the three high schools are undertaking a major marketing program through such mediums as television advertisements. There is an aggressive education market in the city. Non-Government schools may be seeking additional numbers because of their ethos, mission statement and their desire and need to provide a certain type of education. They also need to have a certain number of students so that the school can operate efficiently. However, the people from the high schools might take the view that the more students they get the more it will cost. To them it is a matter of pride. They are concerned about the level of education they are providing and the standard of their cultural, sporting, library and computer resources and their industrial and academic training. I admire the way in which the three high schools have developed so much pride in their school communities. In particular, I salute the Harristown State High School and the Centenary Heights State High School for what they have done in that regard.

This Bill will provide some certainty. It is a simple, minimalist Bill that will allow school communities to feel confident that this option is available, now that the Ombudsman has taken this view in his report, which he is likely to reinforce in his next annual report. It provides principals with protection against any form of action that people may want to take against them. Honourable members opposite may have felt certain about the issue before the Ombudsman made his comments. Our shadow Minister, who was the previous Education Minister, noted in his speech that, had he been aware of what was likely to be in the Ombudsman's report, he would have paid more attention to legislating for some soundness and strength in relation to the school uniform issue.

What we are really getting from the Minister and the other members on the Government side is a degree of uncertainty and reliance upon a section of the Act. The Ombudsman has said that it simply does not stack up. Therefore, I think we in this House have a responsibility to stand by school communities that are crying out for leadership, strength and guidelines. That is why parents are making the decisions that they make about where their children go to school.

I have mentioned the high schools in my electorate. I have mentioned Harristown State High School. Its numbers are escalating year after year as people see the strength of that school, the pride that that school has developed. When they are looking for a school, people are looking for things such as school uniforms, strength of leadership and school management, and a welfare plan, such as they have at Centenary Heights State High School.

A lot is said about why parents are considering non-Government schools. The non-Government primary schools in Toowoomba are having to cap their numbers because they are going through the roof, and the same is starting to happen with the high schools as well. It is about letting the community be involved, as I said before in relation to Leading Schools. Honourable members would be surprised and amazed at what comes out of a community when it is allowed to be a partner and allowed to really get involved with a school. People do believe in their suburb, they believe in their town and they believe in their school. That is probably the greatest source of strength and enthusiasm and support for any school, be it a Government or a non-Government school.

I commend this Bill to the House. The comments that I have heard from the previous few speakers about this being a stunt belittles this House. We see plenty of Bills introduced by members on the other side of the House that we could equally say are a stunt or are just straight out wrong, immoral or incorrect. That is the nature of this place. There are divergent opinions.

Here we have a Bill that has been brought into this House by a shadow Minister who was noted as a very able administrator and Minister. He is also noted as being a person who plays a straight bat and as being a person of sincerity. This is a straightforward Bill which addresses an anomaly that was not there before and provides security for school communities, P & Cs, the school management team and the staff. It provides that legislative security that they need to deal with an issue. Whilst 99% of us support the wearing of school uniforms, there are often all sorts of fringe issues that have to be dealt with, for example, the amount of coverage needed to prevent sun cancer, the latest fashion fads, the modesty, colour and style of uniforms, and so forth. This Bill provides a degree of security.

I think that this Bill is a good, sensible Bill. It is no stunt. It is about supporting communities. I cannot believe that members on the other side of the House have not had people from school communities come to them and say that they want this, because we certainly have. I know that the shadow Minister has consulted widely with all the major non-Government and Government organisations, unions and associations and has unanimous support. This Bill should be passed. I think it would really show a degree of maturity in this House if honourable members opposite supported it, instead of digging their toes in and not wanting anything to do with it simply because it has come from this side of the House. I certainly support this Bill, and I commend it to the House.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (9.23 p.m.): The member for Merrimac stated in his second-reading speech that the purpose of this Bill is to give legislative backing to State school communities developing and applying their own individual dress codes with an agreed framework whether or not that involves a student uniform. In fact, the Bill actually gives the decision in relation to dress codes or whether or not there is a school uniform to the principal and the Government, but I will come back to that point a little later.

When one reads the second-reading speech of the member for Merrimac, the

implication is that this is an aspirational objective and, as such, it can be reached without legislative backing; it is an objective that does not even need bureaucratic administration; it is one that can and should be achieved at a school community level, that is, by school P & Cs. The simple point is that the aspirations in relation to school uniforms do not need legislative reinforcement.

Until I heard the member for Caboolture tonight, I thought that everyone in this debate was on the same wavelength. Before the member for Caboolture spoke, I had not heard any disagreement from anyone in this House about the wearing of school uniforms. That has changed a little.

I still do not believe that any member of this Assembly is really arguing about what is to be achieved. The arguments of the Opposition are only about how it is to be achieved. For us there is no argument because the Minister has already demonstrated that his administrative approach is working, and working well. In fact, it has been achieved; it is fixed. As pointed out by the Minister in speaking to this Bill on 21 July, the problem that the Ombudsman observed was able to be solved by the simple device of a determination being made under section 84 of the Education Act. Tonight's debate is redundant. If the member for Merrimac really wanted to make a constructive contribution to education in this State, he would withdraw the Bill.

The legislation will not advance the position of school dress codes one iota, and the member for Merrimac admitted as much in his response to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Alert Digest report on the Bill. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, in Alert Digest No. 2 of 1999, reported on this Bill and, whilst reaching a view that a requirement to wear a school uniform does not unreasonably intrude upon the rights and liberties of students or their parents, the committee did express concern that the term "dress code" in proposed new section 26A is not defined. The committee was of the view that if it is the Bill's proposal to have dress codes made by regulation, then that would be an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

The committee also expressed concern about the provision that the sanctions that may be applied for contravening a dress code would be prescribed by regulation. The committee's recommendations were that the Bill be amended to incorporate a definition of the term "dress" or "dress code" and, further, that the Bill be amended to list the possible sanctions for contravention of the dress code rather than leave these to regulations.

In response to those concerns, the member for Merrimac reiterated his public statements on the matter that the coalition's School Uniform Bill was never intended to address every last issue involving school uniforms. Perhaps he could tell that to some of the other members on his side of the House. He goes on to state that he always favoured the minimalist approach. He says that, in common with the Minister, he does not believe that we should legislate for the colour of socks, expressing the view that the Bill is not meant to extend existing practice; it is there simply to legitimise the status quo. The member for Merrimac welcomed the committee's acceptance that dress codes should be instituted by administrative action rather than be incorporated into regulation.

In response to the committee's recommendations that the Bill be amended to define "dress code", the member for Merrimac stated that it would be totally inconsistent with the fundamental commitment to a minimalist approach in drafting this Bill to comprehensively define "dress code". In response to the concerns that the sanctions would be made by regulations and that these sanctions could include exclusion or suspension from school, the member for Merrimac was adamant that it is not the Bill's intention to apply such severe sanctions to a contravention of the dress code. However, I am not so confident that this would be the case.

Even if the regulations made under the proposed new clause do not specifically provide for suspension or exclusion, such sanctions could be applied as a disciplinary action under Part 4 of the Education (General Provisions) Act. That is, if one looks at section 28 of the Education Act, it could be said that consistent failure to wear the correct jumper or the right coloured socks or not wear three earings in your ear or have your nose pierced is disobedience, and disobedience under section 28 can be dealt with by suspension.

Mr Quinn interjected.

Mrs LAVARCH: No, it is not our problem. This Bill makes the situation much worse.

The Opposition is clearly advocating an aspirational, minimalist measure in relation to dress codes with the first port of call being the schools making the determination on what the dress code is—not the P & C, but the principal. The Bill then requires the Director-General of the Department of Education to approve that dress code and, as was rightly pointed out by the member for Gladstone, that is in contravention of the member for Merrimac's

own beliefs. When he was the Minister for Education, his beliefs were that it was to be school-based management.

I concur 100% with the Minister, the Honourable Dean Wells, when he says that principals should not be making decisions about what children wear. Members of Parliament should not be making decisions about what children wear. Administrators should not be making decisions about what children wear. Mums and dads should be making decisions about what children wear. That is why the decision should be in the hands of the P & Cs.

What the Opposition seeks to achieve and what the Bill will require if it becomes an Act are two very different things. I think the Opposition should be very conscious of this, because if the law does not reflect the policy, then this State has a very bad law.

In conclusion, I draw to the attention of the House what the Smith Family had to say about the Opposition's proposal to legislate for school uniforms. It says that its client surveys show that uniforms are considered a costly but acceptable expense within reason. It states that the concerns of parents have been over rigid compliance with school uniforms. Stories of children being sent home because their jumper was not the right shade of maroon, even though they had nothing else, or because they wore incorrect socks and so on, although relatively isolated instances, were prevalent and the major factors affecting these students. The possible enforcement through regulation opens the door for even greater pressure to be applied to those in our schools who are already marginalised.

The enforcement through regulation often limits the options available, and the pressures applied for financial gain or the need to simplify standards can be justified and act as a vehicle to exclude. A sensible, understanding approach needs to be taken with school uniform policy through a mix of community resolve and collaboration with agencies that represent the interests of children. The Smith Family says that we need to be cautious. I concur with it, and that is why I will be opposing the Bill.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (9.32 p.m.): Like most members of this House, I support the wearing of school uniforms—there are many good reasons for wearing school uniforms—but that is not what this Bill is about. I concur with members of the Government when they say that this Bill is about building up legislation to do all sorts of wonderful things. I simply cannot agree with it.

It has been nine long, long years since I left high school. I went to a school that did not have a school uniform policy for a certain period and I did not see kids going around dressed in Levis or whatever. When I was at school, maybe it was interesting for the first couple of days to not wear a uniform, but by the end of the first couple of weeks we just went about our business. Nobody really cared what anybody else wore. I just cannot grasp the whole concept of people having to wear a uniform to make them somebody.

Mr Lucas: You did join the Army.

Mr NELSON: One of the greatest armies ever to march on the face of this planet was the Confederate Army of northern Virginia. The Confederate Army of northern Virginia—

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr NELSON: Members opposite should let me give them a bit of a history lesson. Soldiers of the Confederate Army of northern Virginia tried to wear grey when they could, but most of the soldiers who went in to fight at places such as Bull Run and Gettysburg did not have shoes, had different coloured pants and had all sorts of different types of hats. The simple fact is that—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I am finding it very difficult to hear the member speak.

Mr NELSON: Bloody rude!

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

Mr NELSON: The simple fact remains that these troops were the best fighting force in the world. They did not need a uniform. They beat troops who wore a uniform that had a wonderful pattern on it and so on.

As the honourable member for Lytton said, I did join the Army. The Australian Army is renowned worldwide for not having a strict uniform policy, so to speak. I actually got into trouble three or four times for the state of my hat and so on. My skills as a soldier were not in question; the uniform was in question, but being in an army that had a pretty lax attitude towards uniforms at the best of times, that did not really matter.

Points made by speakers from the Opposition side of the House about this wonderful world in which kids will be much better off and will learn better if they wear uniforms are simply not true. I think those arguments are a fallacy, to say the least.

I firmly believe—I have always believed and I will always believe—that these sorts of decisions are best made by the people who

are affected by them. This decision should be left to the P & Cs. The P & Cs should have the ultimate say and—

Mr Dalgleish interjected.

Mr NELSON: I will get to the point.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr NELSON: I find it incredibly hard to support the Labor Party at the best of times. I think I should be given a little bit of leeway.

Mr Turner: It's out of the goodness of your heart.

Mr NELSON: Trust me: I will have a Dettol shower later on.

Members of parents and citizens associations have to deal with the issue of clothing their kids—getting the uniforms and paying for them—so I think the decision is best left to them. After all, who would know the socioeconomic standing of a school better than the parents and citizens associated with it?

In relation to the point of having protection through legislation, I really think the way to beat the trend of people suing each other and trying to get back at each other is to make sure we do not encourage it. Let us look at this realistically. If a kid does not want to wear a uniform and the principal says, "You have to wear a uniform," and the student says, "I'm going to sue you," what is the student going to sue the principal for? I am not a solicitor—maybe some of the Labor lawyers can help me—but what sort of case does the student have? How could he possibly sue? How much money could he really get? I know that the Ombudsman may have a few concerns about the whole issue, but legislation to deal with it is totally unnecessary. It perpetuates the trend of going to court.

Yes, there are many good reasons for having a school uniform but, conversely, I think there are many more good reasons for that decision to ultimately be left with the people it affects the most. I do not think we should be passing these sorts of laws in this House. I do not think we should be forcing anybody into a decision of this magnitude and then putting laws on top of it. In saying that, I must say that every school in my electorate does have a school uniform. I stand to be corrected if someone knows better. Most of the kids wear that uniform on most occasions. Those uniform policies are set up in the first place by the P & Cs and they are followed through by the P & Cs.

I state again that I am the youngest member in this House. I am not the youngest member to ever be here. I went to a school that did not have a uniform policy. There was no anarchy. There were no gangs of coolly dressed kids. I do not believe that kids have changed all that much in the nine long, long years since I left high school, but I honestly do not believe that we should be putting that huge onus on young people and saying, "If you are not uniformed, you are going to go nuts." It simply does not happen. I went to one of the worst schools in Queensland at the time, which was the Kingston State High School. We had a terrible record for all sorts of wonderful things, but the kids there—

Mr Schwarten: Was Kev Lingard the principal?

Mr NELSON: No. I got the cane from a guy whose name I cannot even remember now.

The point is that there was no mad slide into anarchy because we did not have uniforms. As best I can remember, our teachers were comfortable with it and the P & C was comfortable with it because, let us face it, in that area there was not much money to go around. There was a colour system we could adhere to, but it did not make much difference. It grieves me not to be able to support this Bill, but I honestly believe that this decision is best left to the P & Cs.

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (9.40 p.m.): I am delighted to make a contribution tonight to this debate on school uniforms and the Opposition's proposed legislation, which purports to legislate for the wearing of school uniforms.

One thing that just about everybody in this House agrees on is the fact that the wearing of school uniforms is a good idea and a positive idea. Where we part company, however, is that members on this side of the House and, I understand, a number of members opposite, agree strongly that the issue of school uniforms is totally inappropriate to be decided by legislation. So, basically, just about all of us agree that students should be wearing school uniforms; it is the manner in which that is to be achieved on which we disagree.

It should be noted that for many, many years in Queensland we have got by with the existing legislation. Unfortunately, only recently, due to a decision of the Ombudsman, some doubt has arisen about the ability of schools to enforce a uniform code. That means, therefore, that we need to address this issue in the most appropriate

manner and in the manner that provides the most appropriate flexibility.

Queensland is a very diverse and decentralised State—from the tropical heat of the Torres Strait and far-north Queensland to the coolness of Stanthorpe. It has a very broad diversity of requirements, needs and situations, just as it has a very broad socioeconomic diversity. That is why the proposal by the Minister for Education is the best and most appropriate proposal for the needs of our State—not the one-size-fits-all, sledgehammer to crack a walnut proposal suggested by the Liberal/National coalition, but a policy that is designed to achieve the desired outcome. And that outcome is to maximise the wearing of school uniforms and to give parents—who should have the ultimate say—the final say in relation to the wearing of school uniforms by their children.

I believe that it is important to discuss in some detail why I believe that the wearing of school uniforms is important. Throughout my travels within my electorate, people are saying to me loudly and clearly that they believe that State school parents believe that it is appropriate for students at their schools to be wearing school uniforms. They are concerned about the trend in society for people to say that State schools do not have enough discipline. I totally reject that argument. But they say that they believe that if it is appropriate that school uniforms be worn in our society, then that is the appropriate policy, regardless of whether one is enrolled at a private school, a State school or, indeed, any school. They do not want this to be an issue of distinction between students who attend Government and non-Government schools. They are saying to me loudly and clearly that they believe that the wearing of school uniforms is appropriate.

Some of the arguments put forward in favour of the wearing of school uniforms are very, very compelling. For example, some tragic incidents have occurred in our State and, indeed, in other parts of Australia whereby trespassers have gone onto school grounds and committed criminal acts, sometimes—unfortunately—with great injury to school students. The wearing of school uniforms is one of the most important ways in which we can identify who is a legitimate person to attend a school and who is not. Indeed, most teachers in schools these days actually wear identification tags to make sure that they are delineated.

When I went to school, I was taught by the Augustinian Fathers. They wore a uniform, too, which was a brown habit—not that those are common in society any more. The fact is that school uniforms are a very, very important way of ensuring that the young people on the campus of a school are the ones who have appropriate business to be there. That is in the interests of their safety as well as any other interests.

Another aspect of school uniforms is that they introduce egalitarianism. The member for Greenslopes, in his excellent contribution to this debate, made the point clearly that, when a student wears a uniform, it is the same uniform for everyone in the school regardless of what their mother or father does and whether they are from the wealthiest family in the school or the poorest. In these days when clothing is everything to young children, when someone can afford the best Nike runners or the latest and flashest tracksuit top or something like that, and they are in a situation where they can turn up at school and differentiate themselves from the other students, that is what leads to problems with self-esteem. At least when all students wear a uniform, all are equal before the education system and the system that provides them with their nourishment and their intellectual nurture. That is a very important reason why the wearing of school uniforms is appropriate.

I warmly congratulate the Minister on the way in which he has made it crystal clear that part of the Government's policy in relation to school uniforms is the fact that it will be fundamental that no school that adopts a school uniform policy—and I imagine that would be the vast majority—will be able to do that without ensuring that an adequate supply of uniforms is available for those families who, due to whatever financial reasons might confront them, are unable to supply uniforms for their students. That is another very important reason to ensure that no-one is discriminated against because they cannot afford a school uniform. Often, we might have a situation in which families move around the State for various reasons, and they may not be able to afford a uniform.

Mr Schwarten: That is the commonsense approach that you allow principals to make that decision and local communities to do that. That is what Leading Schools was supposed to be about.

Mr LUCAS: The Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing makes an excellent suggestion. He is 100% correct. It is a commonsense approach that takes into account the needs of people. If a family does not have the resources to be able to afford a

uniform, and if the school is able to supply them with a uniform, their children are treated equally to other children. That is very important.

Another thing that a school uniform does is to instil corporate pride in one's school. I sponsor a trophy between the Wynnum North State High School and the Wynnum State High School. Last week, I was delightful to be at Memorial Park at Wynnum with the two Year 8s of both schools who were cheering on their schoolmates in their distinctive school uniforms and colours. I have to say that, these days, school uniforms are a lot more comfortable than the ones I used to wear when I was at school. It was great to see those students taking pride in their schools, showing school spirit, competing in solidarity with their school friends, but at the same time respecting each others' individual schools. That was very important.

Discipline is an important part of one's character formation when one is young.

Mr Mickel: Like values.

Mr LUCAS: Like values, as the member for Logan accurately points out. When children are developing in society, they need to learn that society imposes rules. They may not particularly agree with some of those rules, and they may not know the reasons for them, but it is essential that they understand that those rules are to be obeyed. We might not always like the rules that society sets, but it is important to understand that we must respect them. If a child sees its parents slanging off at the police or behaving in an inappropriate manner towards the police or teachers, that can affect a child's attitude. That is why school uniforms are also important.

The Minister's policy is the accurate one. I give full credit to the Minister. He has said, "What's the problem? Let's address it, and let's address it sensibly"—not like the Opposition: whack a Bill into Parliament and try to run a press release to grandstand on it.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr LUCAS: No. They were in Government for 32 years, and it did not seem to be an issue on which they had to legislate then. This Minister has given this issue priority. I warmly congratulate him on that, and I look forward to his and this Government's encouragement of students to take pride in their communities and to wear school uniforms.

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (9.49 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill, which will empower school communities to adopt a school uniform policy, if desired. This is a necessary requirement to protect school principals, who are responsible for the implementation of that policy. From listening to members opposite who have made contributions in this debate so far, I would be surprised if they can, with conscience, vote against this Bill. In the main, they have supported the principle of school uniforms being worn in State schools throughout this State.

The point is that the Ombudsman has identified a legislative requirement to enable school principals to adopt a school uniform policy and enforce the policy if that is the desire of the community. As a result, it is now necessary for us to enact legislation to give principals security.

Government members interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: I am amazed that members opposite are not supporting the schools in their own communities. I am sure other honourable members are in the same position as I am. The majority of schools in my electorate have adopted a school uniform policy. Very few parents in my electorate have come to me and dissented from the enforcement of a school uniform policy which has been supported by the P & C and the principal.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member for Redlands will continue.

Mr HEGARTY: Are you going to protect me, Mr Deputy Speaker? I am not taking interjections.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That was not a reflection on the Chair, was it?

Mr HEGARTY: You are hearing the interjections. You are not responding to the interjections. I am not taking the interjections.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Redlands will continue, but he will be very careful about reflecting upon the Chair.

Mr HEGARTY: I also ask for your support.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HEGARTY: A lot of stress has been laid upon concentrating on the enforcement of the wearing of uniforms at the expense of the educational needs of children in Queensland schools. Principals of schools in my electorate which do have school uniform policies—and the majority do—do not concentrate on forcing the few recalcitrants to wear uniforms. These are children who, supported by their parents, do not abide by the school's decision. The majority of school communities are happy to support the policy of school uniforms.

What we are really arguing about tonight is nothing. Those opposite say that the wearing of school uniforms should not be forced upon students. This issue is not being forced upon them. We cannot force a child to wear a uniform if the parents do not support the policy.

The benefits flowing to the vast majority of students who do wear uniforms are as follows: firstly, they are easily recognised. That point has been mentioned tonight by speakers on both sides of the Chamber. Those of us who have attended regional or zonal sports days have been able to identify the schools—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing should assume that the member is not taking any interjections. I remind the member that pointing appears to be a reflection on the Chair.

Mr HEGARTY: Mr Deputy Speaker, this is outrageous. I am making a contribution to the debate. You keep on making accusations that I am reflecting on the Chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the member for Redlands continues his speech.

Mr HEGARTY: As I was saying, members of the teaching staff are better able to recognise students who are wearing school uniforms. This has also been acknowledged by members on both sides of the House. We have heard about visitors coming to school premises. We have heard that teachers and ancillary staff wear appropriate name tags. This allows for easy identification of predators. Those people can then be removed from the school grounds and no harm comes to the children who are in the care of the Department of Education. That is a positive aspect. I do not believe that anyone on either side of the House would argue against that premise. To my mind, that is the most beneficial aspect of the wearing of uniforms in Queensland schools.

The high schools in my electorate have set very high standards, which should be commended and encouraged. The majority of those schools have adopted a school uniform policy for the very reason that they are competing against the move towards private schools and private education in this State. How can we retain students in State high schools in this State if we are not prepared to support the principals of those schools in their adoption of a school uniform policy? I do not find that a problem.

Students in the schools in my electorate speak to me and I have never had a student say to me, "Isn't it terrible that we have to wear school uniforms?" They all seem very happy with the situation. I have a sense of pride in the schools when I see the students in their uniforms rather than seeing them dressed in rag-tag attire which brings discredit to the students.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments made with reference to children who do not go to schools that prescribe a school uniform as being somewhat substandard to other children who do wear school uniforms totally offensive to myself—

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

Mr SCHWARTEN:—as my child goes to one of those schools.

Mr HEGARTY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am pleased that you have seen fit not to take that point of order.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr HEGARTY: Obviously the Honourable the Minister must have had a different upbringing from the rest of us. I will pass on from that.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I find that—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The first point is that the member for Redlands continues to reflect on the Chair. That is his last warning. Now, I will take the point of order.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I find that comment offensive and unnecessary and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr HEGARTY: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! You have been asked to withdraw.

Mr HEGARTY: I withdraw anything that he found offensive. I am not sure what he found offensive. There was nothing directed particularly to the Minister.

I think we have pretty well summed up in a few words what this Bill is about. This Bill empowers school communities to have a say in how they run their schools. It is about giving school communities a choice of whether they want to have a school uniform or not.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing! The member is obviously not taking interjections, so would you please allow him to get on with his speech?

Mr HEGARTY: The Honourable the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing is obviously having about the same impact on this debate as Marcel Marceau had on his radio program. All I want to point out is that the vast majority of the school communities in Queensland—

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing will refrain from commenting during the member's speech.

Mr HEGARTY: The point of this legislation is to empower Queensland school communities to have a school uniform policy if they wish. It is also about legislating to make sure that there are no legal repercussions against school principals who enforce the wishes of their school communities. It is not a question of whether a school should have a school uniform. We have been through that debate. We know that the vast majority of schools wish to have uniforms. When we look around the 1,300 or 1,400 primary and secondary schools in Queensland we see that the vast majority of them have adopted a school uniform policy. It is backed by the QCPCA and all the other major stakeholders. So it cannot be at odds with the wishes of those representative bodies.

I will conclude by saying that I support the schools in my electorate that have adopted a school uniform policy. When I visit those schools or when I see them at regional and zone sporting days, I feel very proud to see how they stand out. I also note the pride that they have in their schools. If it were not for those school communities adopting individual school uniforms I do not think that they would have that esprit de corps and competitive spirit, which is a very healthy thing to have when the students of those schools finish their schooling and eventually move into the competitive world.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their participation in the debate. As is usual in relation to debates about education, whether the contributions are made from this side or the other side of Parliament, they are always wide ranging and very interesting. Members bring different perceptions to the debate. At the end of the day, the consensus formed within the House is that we are trying to do the best thing for kids in schools. The debates themselves never degenerate, as do some debates in this House, to mudslinging exercises. There is always a willingness from both sides to consider each other's opinions and respect the differences where they may lie.

As usual, in this sort of debate there is a difference in opinion. On this occasion, the difference lies not in the objects of the legislation but in how to achieve those objects. The Opposition is in favour of a purpose-built piece of legislation that will address the problems that the Ombudsman has outlined in his report and, I think, would outline in his next report.

The Government has said that it is going to cobble together existing provisions in the legislation and come up with a solution. However, the nonsense that some people put about that there is no need for a legislative base and that it can be achieved administratively is wrong. The Government's side relies upon cobbling together existing provisions to try to come up with a legislative basis to support principals' actions.

I mention the fact that this legislation is needed because the Ombudsman has found that principals do not have any legislative authority to enforce school uniform policies. That is made quite plain in the Ombudsman's report. I will not read the report in detail, but in it he has outlined a number of provisions or arguments that could have been used to support principals and then found that, at the end of the day, those provisions could not be used. I take the point that the Minister made that the Ombudsman is not a source of legal advice that the Government has to take. Everyone knows that. However, I believe that, from my perspective, the Ombudsman has highlighted a hole in the legislation that needs to be plugged.

On this occasion, I agree with the Ombudsman because the Minister's solution is actually one of those issues that is discussed in the Ombudsman's report. In other words, making a determination that school P & Cs can say that they would like to have a school uniform policy and then inserting it in the behaviour management plan of the school is specifically discussed in the Ombudsman's report. In his report, he states that he has found that there is no legislative basis upon which that can occur. Whilst there is that debate in that the Ombudsman says that it cannot be done that way and the Minister says that it can be done that way, parents will continue to go to the Ombudsman seeking relief from school principals wishing to enforce school uniform policies until, because of frustration, some poor principals will find themselves defending their action in a

courtroom based on some legal advice that the Minister has, which he has shown no-one. From the parents' perspective, they will be riding on the Ombudsman's report. Whilst that shadow of doubt exists, I think that it is far better to put in place a piece of legislation that will not allow it to get to the stage at which we find a principal in court defending his or her actions based on the existing legislation. Once one walks into a court of law, one just does not know what might happen. Anything can happen.

From my perspective and the coalition's perspective, it is far better to put in place specific legislation that addresses the concerns and takes away the shadow that hangs over the current legislation.

I turn now to some of the other issues that were put forward. First of all, I refer to the idea that the Minister has put around, and included in his contribution, that there are a number of problems with the legislation that the coalition has put forward. He said, for instance, that every school uniform policy would be required to be signed off by the director-general. He said that the regulations were onerous and that we would be putting in them the colour and size of socks and those sorts of things. Quite simply, any reading of the legislation, when placed with the principal Act, shows that the Minister either does not know what he is talking about or, in making those sorts of comments, is grossly misleading people.

I refer firstly to the idea that every school uniform policy would have to be signed by the Director-General of Education. The Act makes it quite plain that the director-general has the power to give approval for the school uniform policy. The principal Act contains a number of delegations. I tried to explain this to the Minister, yet he kept persisting. The Act itself gives certain powers to the Minister and certain powers to the Director-General of Education. Within the Act, there are sections relating to delegation. For instance, the Minister is authorised to produce and sell educational materials, sell services, enter into agreements to provide services and so on. That does not mean that every time something is produced or sold the Minister himself or herself has to do it. That does not mean that every time an agreement has to be signed the Minister himself or herself has to do it. The Act states that the Minister from time to time may delegate to an appropriately qualified person any of the Minister's powers under this Act. There is a broad delegation of powers there for the Minister. Similarly, for the Director-General of Education, the chief executive may delegate the chief executive's powers under this Act, other than in Part 4, to an appropriately qualified person in the department.

So the nonsense that the director-general would be signing every school uniform policy is absolute rubbish. I would have thought that the Minister for Education would know what is in his Act that he is charged to administer. Apparently he does not. The same applies to a range of other responsibilities that schools have or that other officers in the department have. The powers are delegated. It may be that the principal's supervisor, the district director or someone of that nature can sight the school uniform policy and sign off on it. The relevant provision is inserted in the Act to guarantee that no school principal oversteps the mark and puts in something that is illegal or contrary to the legislation. That is why that provision is in the legislation. It is meant as a fail-safe provision for the principals. It does not mean that 1,300 school uniform policies will be signed off by the Director-General of Education. That is just a nonsense. The Minister's reading of the Act shows simply that he either does not know what is in the Act or it is a deliberate attempt to mislead people and to run a scare campaign.

The next issue related to regulations covering the size of shoes, the colours of dresses, the colours of socks and so on. Again, that is an absolute furphy. The regulations are about prescribing a process that the school communities go through in order to arrive at a consensus about school uniforms. It prescribes a consultation process, it prescribes things that have to be considered in the dress code, for instance, what articles would be in the dress code—shirts, socks, shoes. Nothing is mentioned about their size and nothing is mentioned about their colours. We are not interested in a fashion parade, as the Minister seems to be; this is all about trying to provide sensible guidelines for schools so that they can formulate a school uniform policy.

An interesting point to note is that when we spoke to all the key stakeholder groups—the Principals Association, both primary and secondary, the parent groups and so on—none of them had any problems with any part of this Bill. Not one stakeholder raised a significant issue about the final draft of this Bill. They are completely comfortable with what is in this legislation. They know how it works, they know its intention, and they are comfortable with it. The only person who can find monumental errors or faults with the legislation is the Minister, because either he

has not read it or he is waging a deliberate scare campaign.

From the coalition's perspective, there is nothing in this legislation that is draconian, that requires an enormous amount of work or that is in any way designed not to work. We have tried to be as broad as possible in order to give Education Queensland the flexibility to implement the legislation should it pass the House. We have not been as prescriptive as people have said. The legislation allows school communities to design their own school uniform policies or dress codes and enables them to be sensibly implemented within the school communities.

People have commented on the fact that school principals will be making the policies. That power is attributed to the school principal because under the Act—as the Minister does not know—only school principals have the authority to enforce a policy decision. Even if P & Cs make the policies, under the Act they have no power to enforce them. Only school principals can have that authority. Therefore, rather than being in contravention of the Act, the Bill gives the power to the principal but ensures that a consultation process takes place.

The Minister's approach has been made public. He has written to all the schools and, at the same time, he has relayed that advice to the Ombudsman. I communicated with the Ombudsman and asked him whether or not he thought the Minister's approach would solve the problem. In a letter dated 6 July, the Ombudsman stated—

> "In relation to your question concerning whether the position can only be remedied by legislation, my view remains unchanged at this time."

Therefore, the Ombudsman's view about the Minister's remedy has not changed.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I remind members that they must interject from their correct seats. The member for Merrimac is obviously not taking interjections, so it would be helpful if members let him continue with his speech.

Mr QUINN: Because the Ombudsman has made his view quite plain, there is every possibility that the next Ombudsman's report will also say that the school principals have no legislative backing to enforce school uniform policy. Coincidentally, that is supported by a document of the Department of Education that the Minister released in answer to a question on notice. I will go through that document and read the pertinent sections of it.

One section discusses the school behaviour management plan and the ability to insert a school uniform policy within the code. The department states—

> "It would be difficult to argue that a school uniform policy fits easily within a behaviour management plan for a State school."

That is the same view as that of the Ombudsman. This is the advice of the Minister's own department and it is supported by some legal opinion that is quite rightly blacked out of the document for FOI purposes.

Another section discusses an act of disobedience in refusing to wear a school uniform. It states—

> "Thus, at present there is no legislative basis for the imposition of a penalty on a student for failing to wear a school uniform."

Again, that backs up what the Ombudsman has said. There is a clear view within the department that the Ombudsman is right on the matters upon which he has reported.

More importantly, at the bottom of the Education Queensland document is a telling comment, which states—

> "To date, the department's central office is aware of two instances of requests for statements of reasons under the Judicial Review Act 1991, which is a precursor to formal judicial review application to the Supreme Court, and, in the event, did not process for a statutory order of review. It is only a matter of time before a formal judicial review on uniforms progresses to a stage that will embarrass the department."

There is a clear recognition within the department that the current provisions in the Act do not cover what principals are doing. The department is telling the Minister that it is only a matter of time before a matter goes to court and the department will be embarrassed.

As a result of that, the Minister has taken some further legal advice and has cobbled together his response. However, the coalition will take the advice of the department and the Ombudsman. If there is a shadow of doubt, this House needs to pass legislation to wipe that shadow out, otherwise a principal will be taken off to court on a legislative basis that only the Minister knows. I would have thought that if the Minister has ironclad legal advice that says he is right, he would have at least

showed it to the Ombudsman or authorised his department to do so.

Mr Wells: I sent it to every P & C in the State.

Mr QUINN: That was not legal advice; that was the Minister's opinion. The Minister should take his official legal advice to the Ombudsman and show it to him. The Minister should convince the Ombudsman that he is wrong, otherwise we will get the same result the next time that the Ombudsman publishes a report. It is made quite plain in the Education Queensland document that eventually a principal will be taken to court.

From the coalition's perspective, we have covered the major issues in the debate. We are quite certain that the Bill is a reasonable response to the problems that were highlighted by the Ombudsman and the department. We are not convinced that the Minister's response will solve those problems, and that is why this Bill is before the House at the present time.

I thank all honourable members for their support of the legislation. Those who vote against the Bill are acting on a piece of advice that they have not seen and that the Minister refuses to show to anyone. In the long run, they will find that the Ombudsman will again hand down a report that will see us back in this House trying to remedy the situation through legislation. It is far better to fix the problems now than to wait until some poor principal finds himself or herself in court.

I am under no illusions that the Government will support the Bill, although not because it is not good legislation; it is good legislation. It will not support the Bill because of politics. It is a sad and sorry day when one starts playing those sorts of games with issues that concern schools. It is a sad and sorry day when a Minister plays politics with an issue that affects so many schools, students, teachers and principals.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 38—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Horan, Johnson, Kingston, Knuth, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Paff, Pratt, Prenzler, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Veivers, Wellington. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

NOES, 44—Attwood, Barton, Beattie, Bligh, Boyle, Braddy, Bredhauer, Briskey, Clark, E. Cunningham, J. Cunningham, D'Arcy, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Turner, Welford, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Sullivan, Purcell

Resolved in the **negative**.

COMMUNITY-BASED REFERENDUM BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 9 March (see p. 310).

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (10.25 p.m.): The Government opposes the Community-Based Referendum Bill, as it would tend to erode parliamentary democracy. The law-making function of this Parliament is central to the democratic process, which relies upon majority rule and minority rights. The Bill currently before the House is similar in a number of respects to an earlier Bill introduced by the member for Nicklin, but differs in certain respects. The current Bill is longer and contains substantially more detail than the earlier Bill. However, it does share a number of characteristics. It establishes a law-making process which is additional to and separate from the traditional parliamentary process. This process commences with the registration of a legislative proposal sponsored by members of the community. A stipulated level of community support, evidenced by the signatures of a prescribed percentage of the Queensland voting population, must then be obtained within a 12-month period, failing which the proposal lapses. If the prescribed level of community support is obtained, the legislative proposal, drafted in the form of a Bill, must then be submitted to a referendum of Queensland voters. If passed by a majority of voters in a majority of electorates, the proposed law must be presented to the Governor for assent.

The Constitution Act 1867 is to be amended to stipulate the new process as one of the means by which legislation may be made in Queensland. The Constitution Act 1867 is to be further amended so as to entrench the new process; in other words, to require that any later parliamentary legislation to amend or terminate this process be first endorsed as a referendum.

The differences of substance between the current Bill and the earlier Bill are: the current Bill does not attempt to restrict Parliament's power to amend a citizens initiated referendum—or CIR—law, whereas the previous Bill, which I will refer to as the CIR Bill, purported to preclude amendments to CIR

laws for 12 months after their enactment. The current Bill requires that the Premier advise the Governor to assent to a CIR proposed law, whereas the CIR Bill provided that the Governor was not bound to consider the advice of his or her Ministers and should instead consider the will of the electors as expressed at the preceding referendum about the proposed law.

This question goes to the whole issue of the role of Parliament in a democratic Westminster system. On the one hand, the argument is advanced by the member for Caboolture that direct voter participation in the law-making process would tend to enhance democracy. However, the genius of the Westminster system is its capacity to accommodate different interest groups while respecting at the end of the day the will of the majority. There is a real danger with legislation of this sort allowing for citizens initiated referendums, or in this case community-based referendums, that such legislation would lead to social divisiveness and the tyranny of the majority. This is a particular concern in a State such as Queensland, where the majority of people live in the south-east corner and where a majority thus formed may have substantially different interests from those of the minority in the remaining parts of the State. There is also a real concern that the oversimplification of complicated policy problems may lead to unintended consequences. There would be a tendency for so-called popular measures to be well supported, for example, reductions in taxes and charges, with a concomitant reluctance to adopt necessary harsher measures, thereby leading to financial irresponsibility and a lowering of community support for disadvantaged sectors. There is moreover a danger that well-funded lobby groups would be able to use the CIR process to further their own agendas.

Let us examine a couple of aspects of this Bill in detail, because there is a major divergence between the Bill on the one hand and the Explanatory Notes and introductory speech on the other hand. The member for Caboolture seems to state that the Governor's assent depends on the advice of the Premier and that a referendum vote "is not formally binding on the Premier to advise assent". His words in full on this point are as follows—

> "Proposed legislation can become law only with the assent of the Governor, which presently depends on the advice of the Premier to assent to any Bill, and the passage of this Bill would not change that situation. If, however, the electors approved at referendum an amendment to the Constitution to require the Premier to recommend the giving of assent, that would be a different matter.
>
> The Bill will enable the community to address matters it considers important. Notwithstanding that the clear vote of the community is not formally binding on the Premier to advise assent, It would be a brave Government indeed to ignore a successful referendum."

Similarly, when the explanatory memorandum construes clause 32 of the Bill it explicitly states that a "proposed law approved by the electors may be submitted by the Premier to the Governor for assent, but there is no requirement for the Premier to do so under this Bill." Both the introductory speech and the explanatory memorandum appear to specifically contemplate that it will require a future referendum amending the State Constitution to oblige the Premier to follow a positive referendum result when advising the Governor before the Premier is under any such legal obligation. However, the Bill does not reflect this. Rather, it appears to specifically provide for the exact opposite. The Bill states in clause 32(9) the following—

> "If the electoral commissioner presents an approved proposed law for assent, the Premier must, within 14 days after the presentation, advise the Governor to assent to the law."

This language appears to indicate that the Premier has no discretion in the matter but is bound by a positive referendum result to advise the Governor to assent to an approved proposed law. The member for Caboolture may care to explain to the Chamber whether we should rely upon the words of the Bill itself or upon what he says in his second-reading speech and in the explanatory memorandum—what he intended—because the two are, frankly, in conflict.

There is another anomaly in the Bill in that, in common with the CIR Bill, the present Bill seeks to amend doubly entrenched provisions in the Constitution Act of 1867, namely, sections 2, 2A and 53.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the honourable member. A referendum is required by section 53 of the Constitution Act 1867 before such a Bill can be presented for assent, and the present proposal does not address this requirement. So there is a constitutional problem with the Bill.

There is a problem of conflict between the express words of the Bill and the words of the

honourable member in his second-reading speech and in the explanatory memorandum. That may simply be as a result of confusion on the part of the honourable member but, in any event, the Parliament is left with a frank conflict between the two which would result in the clear words of the Bill prevailing to the effect that the Premier must, within 14 days after the presentation, advise the Governor to assent to the law notwithstanding what the honourable member said.

This Bill, in common with the CIR regime it promotes, is fundamentally flawed and would not work for the benefit of the community. The system of representative and responsible Government has served our State well since 1859 and has helped to ensure a stable and productive society in Queensland. There is, of course, no room for complacency in the area of parliamentary democracy. It is important that Parliament should reach out, for example, through the parliamentary committee system. It is important that the institutions of Government should reach out, as is being done, for example, through the Community Cabinet process engaged in by the current Government. That is important because it is all too clear that many people feel alienated and estranged from the institutions of the democracy. However, we do not solve that problem by creating further problems.

Our system of Government puts in place checks and balances to prevent the agenda being hijacked by organised sectional interests who have no concern for the welfare of all sectors of our community. Like it or not, when one enters into the arena of parliamentary politics, one has to take on board the interests, the ideas, the aspirations of different people and try to ensure an outcome which is just for all. That is the genius of the Westminster parliamentary system. It is the basis of our democracy. It is for that reason that the Government will oppose this Bill.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.36 p.m.): I say at the outset that the Opposition will also be opposing the legislation before the Parliament. I would like to make a few general comments in regard to the legislation. As the Attorney-General indicated in his contribution a moment ago, the Parliament debated legislation to try to bring in some form of participatory democracy or citizens' initiated referendum in this term, and that legislation was defeated by this Parliament. I think it is fair to say that this legislation is probably a refinement and attempts to deal with this matter, considering a number of the problems which have been brought forward or are often considered when we deal with the notion of citizens' initiated referendum.

It is also fair to say that there are many and varied models of citizens' initiated referendum around the world and there are many and varied models which are discussed with, I think, all members of this Parliament when they speak with their constituents. We hear people talk about the right of a simple veto, that is, the right of the people to be able to veto laws that have been passed by the Parliament or are going to be considered by the Parliament. This is an approach which seeks to allow the people to have a direct role in being able to initiate legislation and laws in this Parliament.

In my involvement in the National Party over a good 14 years now, I have come across a lot of people in that organisation who have advocated this particular viewpoint and many people in our party who advocate the contrary viewpoint. I am one who has had some sympathy with the notion of citizens' initiated referendum, or voters' veto, in the past, but I must admit that I still remain to be convinced that it is all rosy. I believe that there are certainly some problems with it which would be difficult to overcome. As I indicated, there has been some interesting debate on the issue, and it is something that continues to come up at meetings of our organisation from time to time and no doubt will continue to come up in the future.

The ultimate participation is the right to determine policy. In the case of the National Party and the coalition, it is quite clear that our branch membership does not support the proposal of citizens' initiated referendum in such numbers as to bring about a majority that would allow us to support the legislation before the Parliament. Having said that, I think it is fair to say that we need to address some of the issues which have been raised by the honourable member for Caboolture in this Bill before the Parliament.

Quite simply, there is little doubt that people in the community, those we represent, believe that members of Parliament do not necessarily represent all of their views. In many cases they believe that members of Parliament do not represent any of their views. I think that is why people have attempted to express themselves in many and varied ways over the last decade or so.

It is also fair to say that a lot of the problems that people are concerned about are not easily addressed in a modern democracy when we consider the many and varied

problems that Governments and politicians have to deal with from day to day. While the concept of community-based referendums, citizens' initiated referendums, voter recall or voter veto is something that will continue to have a degree of community support in varying levels depending on where we go around Queensland, it is something that we are not able to support here tonight.

Over the last few years I have had the opportunity to read a bit about citizens' initiated referendums. Also, a couple of years ago on a trip to America I had an opportunity to ask some questions, in California in particular, about how citizens' initiated referendums functioned in that jurisdiction. I am sure that the Attorney-General would be aware of the various models around the world.

One thing that did concern me—the Attorney-General did mention this in his contribution—was the ability of certain well-heeled groups which would naturally have a degree of community support to hijack the agenda, in some cases in a sinister way or in a way which was otherwise against the views of the majority of people in the community. I do not think it is easy or proper for us to dismiss the decentralised and diverse nature of Queensland when we consider some of the controversial issues that come before us. The majority might hold a view that is not necessarily right and might subjugate other people on a regional basis without necessarily understanding the true nature of the problems in other areas.

One interesting issue related to me in California involved the ethics industry, which is a growing industry around the world. A lot of people are popping up at ethics conferences. There are a lot of calls in this State, nation and right around the world for more ethical politicians. I do not know how that can be achieved when, I believe, the great majority of politicians are people who have high ethical standards. Some people are not ethical and will not be ethical regardless of what we decide to do to ensure ethical behaviour.

One anecdote I was told related to a proposition put before the people of California to try to wind back the amount that could be publicly donated to political parties or members of State Congress. A lot of funny groups, like "Pensioners for Ethical Politicians", started popping up and advocating these sorts of propositions. A whole industry grew out of ethics, which was raised on a cynical basis. There were groups that believed in what was being proposed, but they were actually used to put forward a question that would provide an opportunity for a certain section of the community—the ethics lawyers and the like—that stood to gain. That is the sort of problem we can have. I concede that the system in California is probably more developed than what is proposed here, but I have set out the sorts of problems I foresee.

The issue of participatory democracy is mentioned. That term means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. I believe that the honourable member for Caboolture genuinely thinks that it is where the people have the opportunity to continue to instigate proposals which may be taken before the Parliament for consideration, to be made into laws for the Governor to assent to. My idea of participatory democracy is a little different. I think the very fact that we are here tonight debating this legislation, which is obviously something the honourable member feels very strongly about, is the greatest example of participatory democracy.

Our political system has been a two or three-party system. It is now a four-party system and there are also a number of Independents in this Parliament. People are choosing to send a whole range of representatives to this Parliament to express the majority of their views. It is fair to say that not every member in this Parliament represents every view of every constituent, but we are elected based on the majority view in a particular electorate. If we are unable to reflect and express the views of those who elect us, then we do not deserve to be in this place. That is an argument that has been put up in the National and Liberal Parties over a considerable period of time. Whilst there are many people who might sympathise with the fundamentals of what is being proposed, there are certain issues that lead us, and certainly the majority in the National and Liberal Parties, to not be able to support the legislation in its entirety.

The National and Liberal Parties have a democratic process. No doubt it is the same in the Labor Party. Our 50,000 or 60,000 members are able to put forward their particular viewpoints at a branch level, to chase it through to a division or electorate level and then a State conference level. Then, if they are successful, it is made into party policy. If the people of Queensland are satisfied that the policies we have will be for the ultimate betterment of the State, then we will be elected to Government. If we do not implement those policies and if in the time we are in Government we are not flexible enough to see the community concern which is being expressed, then we do not deserve the

majority support of the people in our electorates and we do not deserve the majority support of the people of the State. That is why Governments come and go.

In some cases when we debate citizens' initiated referendums we are probably giving an impression that we can deliver something which we might not be able to. The process of representative democracy is a difficult one. We can see the changes that are happening in our own State, in our own nation and worldwide and we see some of the difficulties that Governments face. I think things will become a lot more unstable before they balance out. I think we have to concede that. I do not believe that community-based referendum will assist us in overcoming that particular problem.

I think the honourable member for Caboolture has tried to address some of the concerns which are commonly expressed when people talk about citizens' initiated referendums. People are concerned about confining a Government when it comes to the issue of Supply. The honourable member indicated in his second-reading speech that the Bill does not seek to do that. I know that the issue of Supply continues to be a concern.

The member for Caboolture has tried to address the concern that members of the community have about referendums that might not necessarily be in line with proper processes such as the rule of law, the rule of natural justice and so on. The honourable member has realised that those issues are of concern when we debate the proposal for community-based referendum. Even so, there are ongoing problems which the Parliament must recognise.

Once again, I wish to indicate that the best way for people to be involved in a participatory democracy is not through citizen-initiated referendums but through taking the time to be involved in a political party or to stand as an Independent, to be elected to this Parliament and to advocate for and represent those people who elect them to this place. That is the only real way to have participatory democracy, good policy and good government. And if their constituents do not like them, they have the opportunity to get rid of them in three years' time, or sooner if the election occurs before the due date.

While I understand the sentiments and concerns that the honourable member has expressed in introducing this Bill to the Parliament, the Opposition continues to have concerns about the Community-Based Referendum Bill because of the way the proposal has been put forward, and the concept itself. Therefore, we are unable to support this Bill.

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (10.50 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of this Bill introduced by the member for Caboolture, the Leader of the One Nation Party in the Parliament. However, at the outset I wish to say that it is a shame that the result of the vote on this legislation has been pre-empted.

Community-based referendums is an issue that is dear to the hearts of many Queenslanders. As the member for Caboolture stated in his second-reading speech—

> "People take the long-term view of what is in the best interests of the State as a whole. They are not vying for the perks of office, and they are not trying to get into power. In a real democracy they do not have to."

Truer words could not be spoken. How many times have we heard the complaint from community groups, organisations and the public in general that the problem with the political system is that Governments are short-term initiators because they do not think beyond the next election? Many, many times I have seen organisations that are seeking to make changes shake their heads in frustration because they know that, when they lobby the Government, they must do so with the timing of the next election in mind. Community-based referendums will overcome this difficulty. The people are not interested in promoting themselves for re-election; they are only interested in making positive change for the benefit of all Queenslanders. They are not bound by election hopes to thinking short term.

I am sure that there is not a member in this House tonight who would not agree that many of the more serious problems with which we are faced are problems that require long-term solutions—solutions which will need to extend beyond changes of Government and beyond elections. Community-based referendums are the only vehicle by which these solutions can be facilitated.

Although the issues I will be speaking on tonight were outlined in the member for Caboolture's response to the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's report, I feel it important to go over the differences between our Community-Based Referendum Bill and the member for Nicklin's Citizens' Initiated Referendum (Constitution Amendment) Bill. I will do this by contrasting our Bill against the citizen-initiated referendum Bill, which was defeated in this House last year.

I believe our Bill to be a far better and more comprehensive piece of legislation, although the aims of both Bills are very similar. I do not think it is possible to make direct comparisons between the Bills, as they are vastly different in ethos, principles and procedures. The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee listed the similarities in Alert Digest No. 3 of 1999, and a quick glance at that list will show that the similarities do not extend far beyond the establishment of direct democracy. Any superficial similarities between the two fundamentally different processes disappear at registration, if not before. From registration onwards, the proposals are entirely different and irreconcilable.

The Community-Based Referendum Bill is an Australian model based on the ACT's Community Referendum Bill and the T. J. Ryan Popular Initiative and Referendum Bill proposed by Labor in 1917—a Bill passed in both the Queensland Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council in 1917 to 1919.

The citizen-initiated referendum Bill was based upon the Californian model of direct democracy and is a model that was rejected in this House by members of the T. J. Ryan administration, because they saw that it would not be good enough to ensure that good legislation was introduced. The Community-Based Referendum Bill, on the other hand, empowers the community, expresses democracy and welcomes community input and consultation whilst ensuring strict compliance with fundamental legislative principles. The Community-Based Referendum Bill seeks integration with existing processes that are considered necessary and normal for the preparation and examination of proposed legislation. The citizen-initiated referendum model rejected these most necessary checks and balances and the great benefits they brought to ensure the best possible legislation.

The Community-Based Referendum Bill, on the other hand, seeks to be an adjunct to existing legislative processes and an integrational approach, while the citizen-initiated referendum Bill sought to be entirely separate from existing legislative processes and was open to a confrontational approach. The community-based referendum ensures that the drafting of a Bill will not occur until a legislative proposal has qualified and that drafting is of the highest standard, with a drafting person supplied by the Parliamentary Counsel. In contrast, the rejected citizen-initiated referendum model would have produced Bills incapable of amendment, and could have produced substandard legislation as a result of being drafted by a backyard amateur.

Whilst the Community-Based Referendum Bill is tabled in the Legislature, the citizen-initiated referendum Bill sought to bypass tabling in this House and sought to bypass scrutiny. As such, it sought to bypass a most important institution of our parliamentary system. The community-based referendum model will ensure that all Bills will be scrutinised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and any other parliamentary committee that may be relevant. The citizen-initiated referendum Bill did not allow for this at all and would have ensured that Bills did not receive any scrutiny by these committees. On the other hand, the Community-Based Referendum Bill can be amended, having regard to matters raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and others. Bills introduced due to citizen-initiated referendums could not have been amended even if they contained glaring errors or would have produced unconscionable injustices, denial of natural justice, etc.

The community-based referendum provisions ensure compliance with fundamental legislative principles, the rule of law and the rules of natural justice. Every Bill under the community-based referendum process will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly, they will be open for amendment and submission to the electors, and they may be enacted by the Parliament. Our provisions provide for the preparation of proposed legislation of the same quality as the Parliament currently sees. If Parliament enacts the legislation, no referendum will be necessary.

The citizen-initiated referendum model rejected any possible amendment of what could be a vision championed by one strong-willed individual. It rejected community input, rejected presentation to, or tabling in, the Legislative Assembly, rejected submissions to scrutiny, rejected examination, and rejected any constructive criticism or reports of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee. It rejected even any second thoughts of the proponent and rejected any amendment, even where the Bill might have been found to contravene fundamental legislative standards or rule of law or rules of natural justice.

Debate, on motion of Dr Prenzler, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (11 p.m.): I move—

"That the House do now adjourn."

Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11 p.m.): Tonight I want to tell the Parliament about one of the greatest festivals in Australia—the longest continuously running festival, namely, Toowoomba's Carnival of Flowers, which will be held for the 50th time in September this year. It is a marvellous, homegrown event, which commenced in Toowoomba in October 1950. The carnival has run continuously since that time with the assistance of volunteers.

It is great to think that one of Queensland's cities can run such an event for a period of 50 years. The carnival developed out of the Australia Day festival which used to be held at the beginning of the year in Toowoomba. In 1949, a number of meetings were held under the auspices of the chamber of commerce. A subsequent public meeting led to the election of a committee which was led by Alderman Ted Gold. That committee staged the first carnival in October 1950.

Mr Ken Brown, who was involved in the Australia Day event and the Carnival of Flowers that year, was one of the driving forces behind the festival. I remember Ken for his involvement in the floral section of the Toowoomba Show when I used to run the Toowoomba Showgrounds.

The Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers is a very special event. The highlight of the festival is the carnival parade on the Saturday which attracts something of the order of up to 100,000 people. People come to the carnival in buses from all over Queensland. It is a very traditional event. Many people take part in the parade via the floats and bands. The theme of the parade is the beautiful flowers in Toowoomba—our garden city.

The carnival queen quest is one of the strongest features of the festival. The quest raises a considerable amount of funding each year. Last year the entrants raised just over $30,000. The quest consists of seven sections. Apart from the carnival queen quest, we have sections for younger people and more mature age people. The quest brings together a lot of families. We are all in awe of the way families support the carnival year after year. Companies and businesses in Toowoomba are involved in fundraising and support the girls in the quest. The crowning of the carnival queen will take place on 10 September at a gala ball.

The highlight of the carnival, of course, is the gardens themselves. There are some 26 sections of the garden competition. Throughout the weeks surrounding the carnival we see literally hundreds of busloads of people coming to the city to look at the beauty of the gardens. People notice the way that the gardens blend in with the city.

Throughout the week we have various floral shows in the halls and churches of the city. We have carnivals and sideshows. Shop windows are decorated. We have a number of other cultural events, including fashion parades, sporting events and a speedway. These things make the carnival just that much more special.

This event is run with local help, local sponsorship and local honorary assistance. If ever an event merited financial support from the Government, it is the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers, because it has a track record. It has been running for 50 years and it is successful, it is happy, it is enjoyable, and it is based upon the natural ingredients of Toowoomba and the people of Toowoomba. It has proved to be a wonderful tourist attraction. It is an event in which people can take part.

Being the 50th year of the carnival, this year's festival will have some special events. There will be a special display of memorabilia. There will be the Ergon International Flower Show. Some 200 volunteers will assist in running the flower show. No doubt we will also see one of the best parades ever.

I would like to congratulate the president, Neale Stewart, the vice-president, Robert Campbell, and the carnival board. I particularly congratulate Joan Falvey, who has been helping for many years, and Graham Rayner, who has been the chief parade marshall for many years. I make special mention of Bob Carroll, the chief executive officer, and the carnival's office staff. I also wish to mention the carnival's sponsors, namely, the Heritage Building Society, which is the main sponsor, Big Fresh, Ergon Energy, Grand Central and the Toowoomba Chronicle. We must not forget the small sponsors and the individuals who put their hands in their pockets and make the carnival such a success.

Throughout the 50 years the home garden contest has been sponsored by the Toowoomba Chronicle. I have no doubt that the 50th carnival will be the biggest and best ever. I invite all members of this House and everyone in the south-east corner of

Queensland to come to Toowoomba and attend the greatest Carnival of Flowers ever. It is Australia's most successful and longest running carnival.

Time expired.

Noise Pollution, Mount Ommaney Electorate

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.05 p.m): Some of the most common complaints I receive every day in my electorate of Mount Ommaney are about noise and nuisance problems. Noise is a "stressor" and there are many causes of this stress.

The most prolonged issue of industrial noise in Corinda is from Simsmetal at Rocklea. Residents in Rinora, Neata and Penaton Streets state that this company starts crushing cars early in the morning and continues until late afternoon, and sometimes right through the night. There is no break for residents from this constant, aggravating noise even on weekends. What is heavy industry doing so close to a residential area?

Not only are people in Oxley and Corinda plagued by this seemingly incessant noise, but they are also affected by another environmental hazard—dust. Dust from this industry settles on the clothes on the line, in the house and on the lungs. People are so angry that they are demanding that the industry close. The local authorities have been unsuccessful in their attempts to clamp down on this company to make it conform to environmental requirements. I have referred the matter to the Minister for Environment to take the appropriate action under the State's environmental protection laws.

There is also the issue of traffic noise. The wooden noise barriers along the Centenary Highway are almost complete. Some will remember my concern about the quality of these noise barriers. Despite the barriers, noise seems to remain a problem to some residents in Sinnamon Park. The Main Roads Department was made aware of these concerns and has set up a trial near the Sumners Road end of the highway to test the effect of speed on noise. The speed limit has been reduced to 90 km/h. The department continues to take measurements in affected areas. Some residents have already advised me that it has provided some relief from the problem.

What about shop noise? There has been substantial development and renewal of the Looranah Shopping Centre over the past 12 months. This centre is proving very popular as a meeting and dining place with a number of restaurants and small businesses taking up leases. However, some residents living close by are being driven mad by the continuous noise of air-conditioning compressors operating day and night. One local resident has been pursuing the issue for the past eight months but has been unable to gain a solution. Why cannot the centre owners take local needs into consideration? Local residents are asking for a cover to be put over the compressors to stifle noise and to change the times when trucks unload to a reasonable hour. I have also taken this issue up with the Minister for Environment who is liaising with the Brisbane City Council in relation to appropriate action being taken.

Noisy swimming pool filters can also be a source of stress for people. Residents go home at night to get some rest, relax and be comfortable. They may, perhaps, wish to work in the garden on the weekend or to have a quiet, comfortable place in which to catch up on some work or to enjoy their family. Poorly sound-proofed pool filters intrude upon residents' enjoyment of their own homes and gardens. Simple sound-proof covers solve these problems at little expense to the owner, while providing great relief for the neighbourhood. The Brisbane City Council has taken action in regard to the individual concerns I have put to it where it has found a genuine problem to exist.

People in the Seventeen Mile Rocks area were becoming physically ill because of a leak in the sewer system. Several public meetings were held to discuss this issue and, following my representations to the Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley, he visited the area to personally inspect the problem. It was not an easy problem to fix. The Lord Mayor, however, and the council sought solutions every day until the problem was rectified. The Lord Mayor has since allocated funding in this year's budget to fix the problem completely and permanently.

Sometimes it does not take much to be kind to our neighbours. We are all entitled to a fairly peaceful existence, away from stress, if we choose. With very little effort and some cooperation between residents these issues would not be issues. The alternative is to enforce laws and make them tougher so that people are forced to comply. Why not just get on?

Naturelink Gold Coast Cableway

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (11.09 p.m.): Recently, the Cairns Skyrail was rightly judged the State's best tourist attraction. That title has been won quite regularly by Gold

Coast attractions, as no doubt it will again. Tonight, I would like to congratulate Cairns on its success on this occasion. Skyrail has proved a major addition to the attractiveness of Cairns as a tourist destination. It has given many people who would never otherwise get the chance the opportunity to see the natural wonders of our great northern rainforests. It provides that opportunity in an environmentally friendly way with virtually nil disruption to the forest floor or the forest canopy, allowing flora and fauna to remain undisturbed.

We now have the opportunity to replicate that great success story on the Gold Coast, and I certainly hope that we seize that opportunity. I hope that the Gold Coast's equivalent of Skyrail will, in a couple of years, be in a position to be judged the State's best tourist attraction. The proposed naturelink Gold Coast cableway would traverse the forest canopy between the Gold Coast hinterland townships of Mudgeeraba and Springbrook. Therefore, it would serve the invaluable purpose of spreading the benefits of the Gold Coast tourist attractions to the people of the hinterland in the same environmentally friendly way as Skyrail, giving considerable substance to the "green behind the gold" promotional slogan that has been used to great effect on many occasions by the south-east corner of Queensland to promote its marvellous hinterland and golden beaches.

It would mean, as it has with Skyrail, that youngsters, the elderly, the disabled and those with simply not very much time on their hands would have the opportunity to experience the wonders of traversing the high canopy of native forests without disrupting the environment. Added to that attraction, of course, is the opportunity for people to walk through the rainforest canopy via the stations installed at the various pylons along the cableway.

Like the Skyrail, marketing research suggests that naturelink would be a tremendous hit. Having had many years' experience dealing with the inbound and local tourist market on the Gold Coast, I have no doubt that that would be the exact truth. Research has shown that it is anticipated that visitor numbers to the area will be up to 500,000 annually, taking advantage of that new development. That level of support would have major spin-off benefits for many small businesses on the Gold Coast. The flow-on effect will equate to many millions of dollars injected into the local economy.

Naturelink will add to the web of attractions in the region and help maintain the Gold Coast as Australia's premier tourist destination. It will help keep people in the region for longer. Of course, in relation to inbound tourists, that is one very effective way of extracting more export dollars that we can retain in this country. It will promote more visits to the region by the people of Brisbane and from much further afield. It would be a tourist attraction that would be effective, in a local sense, for people who live within a 300-kilometre radius of the Gold Coast. It would be a very significant addition to our tourism infrastructure and a magnificent attraction of which all Queenslanders could indeed feel proud.

However, as always, there are knockers. They are the same type of people as those who oppose Skyrail in Cairns, the Hinchinbrook development, Sanctuary Cove and anything else that brings employment and prosperity. They will no doubt do their best to stop this project, and that must not be allowed to happen. There are 500 construction jobs in this project and there are almost 700 permanent jobs, and they are desperately needed jobs. I join with the Premier—and applaud the Premier—in his focus on jobs, jobs, jobs. We have to create the opportunities for our young people. This will be one project that will most certainly promote those opportunities. I personally wish the project well and offer this encouragement to its proponents: the great majority of the people on the Gold Coast support this project. The knockers are definitely in the minority. The proponents of this project will get community support, and I look forward to riding on naturelink.

School Performances, Mansfield Electorate

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (11.14 p.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the highly professional performances that I have attended in the past month at three schools within my electorate. It is a pleasing to see that the Minister for The Arts is present in the Chamber to hear my speech.

I had much pleasure in attending the Mansfield State High School and the Rochedale State High School musicals and the Wishart State School concert. I am sure that all members who have attended similar performances in their respective electorates are, like me, in awe of the quality performances and the enthusiasm of the students involved. I would like to pay tribute not only to the students involved but also to the many teachers who plan, implement and

direct these events. Words cannot describe the admiration that I have for their skill and efforts. The amount of time that they put into these performances is certainly above the call of duty. To be able to turn so many novices into professional performers virtually overnight—mind you, they probably wish that it was just overnight—is a remarkable feat.

The Mansfield State High School musical, Jungle Fantasy, was directed by Ms May, the deputy principal of the school. The musical director was the principal himself, Mr Murray Kay. It was truly a professional performance from the sets, to the backstage crew and to the actors, who were first class. I must make special mention of the actors: Stuart Layt, who played Tarzan; Jacquie Sewell, who played the Jungle Queen; and Katie Williams, who played Jane.

The Rochedale State High School performance, Time Warp, was entertainment at its best. I must say that some of the events that we as members attend can be a real chore. However, I would be willing to attend events like this performance time and time again. Last Saturday night's entertainment was one of the most enjoyable Saturday night's entertainment that I have had for a long time. What stood out more than anything was the enthusiasm that all the students displayed. Not only were they displaying their obvious skills and talents but also they were definitely enjoying what they were doing.

The musical was directed magnificently by the stage and performance managers. The stars of the night were the whole crew, but a few stood out, including the voice of Tanya Marriott, who I understand is only 14 years of age. To hear her sing the theme song from Fame was really something. One of the leading actors, Robbie Mason, who played a variety of roles from Sonny in Grease, to Pepe in West Side Story, to Romeo in Romeo and Juliet, was simply outstanding. However, I must say that all of those involved in the musical were sensational.

The other event that I attended on the Tuesday of Exhibition week at the Chandler Theatre was the Wishart State School annual concert. To witness performances by all the students from Year 1 to Year 7 was breathtaking. The music was put together by Wendy Toussis, Jill Barratt and David Fittell, and the stage managers were Gael Witt and Kathy Winert, who I believe deserve a badge of honour for being able to bring together a high-quality production involving five year olds to 13 year olds. The stand-out performance was a dance routine by Rebecca West, which would have put Michael Jackson to shame. The Year 3s were simply delightful, with their TV medley from the Flintstones to a range of songs from other TV shows. The finale, which involved getting the entire school population on stage or around the stage singing That's Entertainment, was a remarkable feat in itself. It simply was true entertainment.

Once again, I want to pay tribute to the teachers and parents and, in particular, the students who put in hours upon hours to get it right on the night. I looked on with envy, being not what one would call musically talented. However, above all, I thank and praise the schools for putting on those events. To use the words from the finale of the Wishart State School concert, what I experienced at those three events was just that—entertainment—and it was of the highest order.

University of Queensland, Gatton Campus

Dr PRENZLER (Lockyer—ONP) (11.18 p.m.): Once again, I rise to speak about the plight of the University of Queensland's Gatton campus. Indeed, I speak tonight with a renewed optimism that at last something positive is about to take place.

Over the past few months, many speeches have been made and questions have been asked in this House regarding the plight of this campus. The majority of those speeches and questions from both sides of the House have been supportive of the campus and have called on the various agencies involved for a commitment. Unfortunately, a few members decided to politicise the situation and, as I have stated quite publicly, their contributions are not welcome.

As I stated earlier, I now have a renewed optimism for the future of the Gatton campus. Four days after a motion in relation to the Gatton campus—as amended by the Minister for Education, the Honourable Dean Wells—was passed by this House, Professor E. T. Brown, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, released a memo regarding the future of the Gatton campus. The memo was titled "Faculty of Natural Resources, Agricultural and Veterinary Science (NRAVS) and the Gatton College Campus of the University of Queensland."

The purpose of the memo was as follows—

> "Following discussions with the vice-chancellor, I have expressed the purpose of the exercise in the following terms: based on an analysis of previous reports

> and advice and on consultations with stakeholders, my purpose is to provide the vice-chancellor with advice delineating a coherent implementable plan for the future roles and organisational and geographical locations within the university of the rural and natural resource disciplines currently represented in the faculty of natural resources, agriculture and veterinary science. This will necessarily involve consideration of the future roles, development and management of the Gatton college campus."

In his memo, Professor Brown asks for interested stakeholders to make submissions to his committee. The closing date for those submissions was the middle of this month. Professor Brown's timetable asks for the final report to be presented to the vice-chancellor on 1 October and for the vice-chancellor to make his recommendation, based on Professor Brown's report, to the university senate on 14 October. At last, a light has appeared at the end of the tunnel.

My submission to Professor Brown was one of encouragement and support. I outlined my belief that the University of Queensland has been presented with a unique opportunity to establish an agricultural university of world standard at the Gatton campus. I described a visionary university that would be a first for the southern hemisphere. The university would be a complete umbrella encompassing all the agricultural disciplines, including horticulture, broad-acre farming, animal production and the new discipline of biotechnology that is becoming so important in feeding future world populations and, hopefully, help to protect the environment from the hazards of chemical pollutants such as insecticides. This morning the Premier once again mentioned the establishment of biotechnological research and I assure him that the Gatton campus is an ideal position for such research.

Such a university could educate students in all facets of agriculture, from certificate level to graduate and postgraduate levels, attracting students from throughout Australia as well as internationally. The university would attract sponsorship from business and industry, and produce the sort of trained graduates that are necessary today with the emphasis on smart farming rather than traditional family farming.

The site occupied by the Gatton campus is unique. The campus is surrounded by some of the most fertile horticultural lands in Australia. Those farms could become a part of the university and the university could become a part of the farms in its quest for research and development—research such as that proposed by Dr Jeff Tullberg of Gatton campus and Mr Drew Posthuma of Gatton, who advocate the establishment of a national farm mechanisation centre. I proudly table a copy of their proposal for the information of honourable members. That mechanisation centre would not run in opposition to the one already established at Toowoomba, but would complement the research that is already being done there. I wish Professor Brown well in his deliberations and I trust that he will come to the correct decisions for the future of this campus.

Prince Charles Hospital

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (11.23 p.m.): I wish to speak about the Prince Charles Hospital from two perspectives: that of a member of Parliament and as a family member of a patient. On Tuesday 13 July, the official opening of the main acute building of the Prince Charles Hospital was held. Over 400 invited guests attended the official opening, including members of the community and organisations that have played a significant role in the services provided by the Prince Charles Hospital, past and present staff, the redevelopment team including project managers, construction managers, architects and others who contributed to the design and construction of the facility, and Government and industry representatives.

Community members present included people from the Chermside Bowls Club, the Chermside & Districts Historical Society, the Neighbours of Huxtable Park, the Kedron/Wavell RSL, the Kedron Wavell Services Club, Neighbourhood Watch groups, Charlie's Angels, which is the hospital support group, nurses, doctors, domestic and support staff, allied health workers, business people, residents and QAS and QFRA members. It was a great celebration.

Others to attend the opening ceremony included: Dr Helen Carkeek, the Director of the Atkinson Capital Insight Project; Dr Rob Stable, the Director-General of Queensland Health; Ms Cheryl Burns, the Executive Director of Nursing; Dr Jean Collie, the Executive Director of Medical Services; Mr John Wylie, the Director of Corporate Services; Dr Greg Stafford, the Chair of the Medical Staff Association; Mrs Joyce Turner, the Chair of the Combined Staff Association; and Mr Mike Ahern, the former Premier who is Chair of the Prince Charles Hospital Foundation.

The ceremony started with Howie Gardener, a wardsperson, leading us in the national anthem. Phil Sheedy, the District Manager, welcomed everybody and spoke about the hospital and its role in the district. I had a chance to welcome the local residents. Wendy Edmond then invited the Premier to perform the official ceremony. A vote of thanks was given by Joyce Turner and the closing remarks were made by Mr Ted Howard, the Chair of the District Health Council. The blessing of the new hospital was conducted by Father Peter Lockyer, Reverend Bert Johns and Father Terry Madden. The strength of the responses by those present showed how much people were involved in the ceremony. We then all enjoyed a light lunch. The official opening ceremony lasted just 35 minutes. It was an excellent program coordinated by Kim Johnston, the public relations officer, and the staff of the Prince Charles Hospital.

There was also a fantastic response from the local community when, a few days later, the hospital held an open day. It attracted thousands of local residents and was a great time for the hospital.

I also saw the hospital from another perspective because, at the very time of the opening, my mother-in-law was a patient at the hospital. She started off in a ward in the old building and moved to the new building, which she found to have a warm and welcoming atmosphere. She was in hospital for a number of weeks and her condition deteriorated to such a degree that by the last week of July her treatment moved from that of coronary care to palliative care.

Kath Bartlett died peacefully in her sleep just before sunrise on the morning of Saturday, 31 July. Her family are very appreciative of the excellent care provided by the nursing, medical and support staff at the Prince Charles Hospital. Her children Brendan, Trish, Anthony and Cathy, and their spouses Irene, myself, Libby and Geoff were included in the discussions with staff and we were kept informed of Kath's progress before her demise.

In Kath's last days, staff assisted our family, including Kath's grandchildren, my own children, in saying farewell to a lady whom we loved deeply. Staff were sensitive to Kath's needs and the needs of the family. I saw nurses who were leaving work for a couple of days of well-deserved rest saying goodbye to Kath. As they left the ward, the tears that flowed from their eyes showed how much they cared for their patient. This attention was not an isolated experience; they showed it to many of their patients.

The Prince Charles Hospital is a world-class facility. It is part of the local community. It has a devoted, professional and caring staff. We can all be proud of the Prince Charles Hospital.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.27 p.m.