

THURSDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 1999

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

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Ruled Out of Order

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of honourable members to the Standing and Sessional Orders relating to questions. Questions shall be brief, relate to one issue and shall not be unduly lengthy. Therefore, I have ruled out of order three questions asked yesterday by Mr Rowell, Dr Watson and Mr Quinn, which are unduly lengthy and do not comply with rule 68(g).

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Drug Addiction

From **Mr Cooper** (10 petitioners) requesting the House to introduce true drug reform through (a) coercive residential rehabilitation drug centres for all heroin-dependent addicts in cooperation with our courts, police department and churches, etc., (b) free Naltrexone treatment for all heroin addicts in residential rehabilitation drug centres for the rapid detoxification of their heroin addiction, (c) establishment of a medical panel to assess each heroin addict and recommend the addict's treatment and length of time in a residential centre, follow-up treatment, supervision and counselling, (d) cooperation between law enforcement officials and parents of addicts who report their sons or daughters for treatment in residential centres and (e) legal power to conduct random drug tests on suspected drug addicts by Health Department medical officers and selected trained police officers.

Triunia Robusta

From **Mr Davidson** (519 petitioners) requesting the House to amend the situation whereby the Triunia Robusta, Spice or Honeysuckle Bush, despite being classified as endangered under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992, remains unprotected by providing immediate protection to the national parks estate of Tewantin and Ringtail State Forests, both entirely located within the

Shire of Noosa and that this take place without undue delay or permit granted to any works which may prove deleterious to either Triunia Robusta or its natural vegetative community.

Shorncliffe Rail Link; Houghton Highway

From **Mr Hollis** (4,587 petitioners) requesting the House to construct a modern rail link to Shorncliffe or surrounding suburbs and upgrade the Houghton Highway to include a rail corridor and two lanes and emergency stopping land in either direction for vehicular traffic, as a matter of extreme priority.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

The following papers were tabled—

- (a) Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing (Mr Gibbs)—

Report on ministerial visit to China and Japan from 27 July to 8 August 1999

- (b) Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading (Ms Spence)—

Office of Film and Literature Classification—

Schedule 1—Printed Matter Classification Guidelines (Amendment No. 1)

Schedule 2—Guidelines for the Classification of films and Video Tapes (Amendment No. 2)

Schedule 3—Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games (Amendment No. 1)

Schedule 4—Guidelines for the Classification of Publications—1999.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Member for Ipswich West

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.35 a.m.): I give notice that tomorrow I shall move—

"That this House notes Report No. 35 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and resolves—

- (a) that the Member for Ipswich West, Mr Jack Paff, MLA, committed a contempt of this House by making a deliberately misleading statement in a document tabled by the Member

on 11 March 1999 during a personal explanation;

- (b) that Mr Paff be admonished for his conduct and that the Speaker, on behalf of the House, forthwith deliver the admonishment to the Member standing in his place; and
- (c) that following Mr Speaker's admonishment, Mr Paff be suspended from the services and precincts of the House for 21 days.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

SES Positions, Merit Selection

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.35 a.m.), by leave: On 24 August the member for Clayfield rose in this House and defamed a number of the State's decent, hardworking public servants.

Mr Foley: It was absolutely shameful.

Mr BEATTIE: He has done that on a number of occasions.

It was a disgraceful and totally unwarranted attack on the reputations of senior public servants dedicated to serving the public interests of this State. Using this House to defame individuals who cannot defend themselves and deliberately seeking to damage the careers of senior and very capable people is absolutely disgraceful. It is degrading not only to the member but also to this Parliament.

The member chose to highlight the issue of merit. I have clearly explained to this House many times my Government's commitment to merit. The process for direct appointment of several CEOs last year specifically upheld merit. Let me repeat what I said at the time: I am prepared to appoint highly meritorious people directly to a CEO position, if they meet the test of established merit, that is, they have been previously appointed to a CEO-level position through a nationally advertised merit recruitment process. This is a tougher test than the appointment process used in recent years by the Prime Minister and the Premier of Victoria. Let me repeat myself: I have every confidence in the quality and merit of the senior public servants the Opposition has seen fit to besmirch in this House under privilege.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: They are continuing that behaviour today. They have no respect for decent public servants.

Let there be no doubt about it, the qualifications and experience of the current

CEOs in Queensland is world class. The member for Clayfield continues to play the person. He deliberately refuses to understand the principles at stake. He has claimed that a new directive changed the rules on 23 April 1999 so that all SES positions are now exempt from being advertised. Nothing could be further from the truth. That directive actually imposed a new and tighter requirement that SES positions normally be advertised in the national press as well as the Government Gazette and the local press. The change was to ensure that this Government's advertising was far more thorough than that required by the previous coalition Government, in which the member for Clayfield was a Minister.

If the Opposition wants to undermine public sector professionalism and probity, it is going down the right path by indulging in this sleazy and degrading personal campaign. I want every public servant in Queensland and every Queenslanders to understand that this Government values the dedication, professionalism and experience of its CEOs and the public sector generally. We will stand by the Public Service in this State, because the public sector makes a significant contribution to the quality of life of all Queenslanders by assisting in good government. We will stand by those dedicated people, who serve this community in a professional and dedicated way. My Government will stand behind these dedicated public servants. Let every public servant know that, if the coalition were ever re-elected, it would again be out to have hit lists and destabilise people's positions. If the coalition ever returns to power, no public sector position will be safe.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electricity Generation Projects

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.39 a.m.), by leave: There has been some controversy recently over the amount of money spent in Australia by companies engaged in large projects on behalf of the State Government. My office has sought estimates of spending from Bechtel Australia Pty Ltd, which is involved in the Millmerran power project, the \$1.4 billion project. The project will have a total construction cost of approximately \$890m. Some major power station equipment is not available in Australia and has to be sourced from overseas. About \$250m, or 28% of the total, will have to be committed overseas. A further \$390m, or 44% of the total, of

equipment and material will be put out to tender in Australia and overseas.

This means that Queensland and Australian suppliers will have the opportunity to compete for these contracts. About \$250m, or 28%, will be reserved for Queensland and Australia for materials, equipment, services and labour. So about 72% of the value of the construction of the Millmerran project represents opportunities for Queensland and Australian industry. That is about \$3 out of every \$4. This is in addition to the significant benefits to industry that will occur from opening up the power generation market to competition.

It is also worth noting that Bechtel's headquarters for Australia, New Zealand and PNG is located in Brisbane and that Bechtel has been permanently established in Australia for 40 years. Over the past five years, Bechtel has procured over \$2 billion of equipment and services in Australia, much of it in Queensland. For export around the world, Bechtel has, over the past five years, procured over \$580m of material, equipment and services from Australia. So while Bechtel is obtaining some supplies from overseas, it is seeking to maximise the amount of local content in its investment.

My Government is concerned about this issue. My Government calls on all investors in Queensland to take advantage of the technical skills and capacity of Queensland industry, which is a world leader. We will be seeking to ensure that investors provide every opportunity for Queensland manufacturers and suppliers to compete for these massive contracts. We will be working closely with Queensland industry and unions to ensure that they have the best chance to participate in the economic development of this State.

While we are talking about major projects, I point out that the Leader of the Opposition yesterday stated that my Government had not delivered one new project for Queensland. The Opposition criticisms of my Government are bordering on the comical. It is like Monty Python. Do honourable members remember the Life of Brian and Eric Idle? We have our own Eric Idle over there. Remember he asked that question: what has the Beattie Government ever done for us? What have the Romans ever done for us? What has the Beattie Government ever done for us? Remember Eric Idle? Let us go through it.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right. Yes, all of that. We all remember. We have our own Monty Python here.

Let us go through it. There is the \$1.4 billion coalmine and power station at Millmerran that I mentioned. The Darling Downs—National Party heartland—has been asking for a power station for 30 years. They had to wait for a Labor Government to deliver one. Then there is the 1,300 jobs expansion of the meat industry.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I can hear the Romans bellowing over there. We will send a few lions over shortly.

There is the 1,300 job expansion in the meat processing industry with new investments from AMH at Dinmore, Townsville and Australian Country Choice at Cannon Hill. When the conservative Government betrayed the meat industry, my Government saved it. That is what happened.

The Leader of the Opposition would probably ask: apart from the Millmerran power station and the new meat processing facilities, what has the Beattie Government ever delivered for Queensland? There is the \$800m Marlborough nickel project which should reach financial close by the end of the year. We have created more than 1,000 jobs through call centres for IBM, Stellar and Citibank. We have ensured that the Century Zinc mine started on time. We helped Boeing win a \$1.5 billion defence contract. We have kept the PNG pipeline project on track to the point where preliminary contracts have been signed. Apart from that, I suppose we have to do more. That is what we are doing, Mr Speaker. You ain't seen nothing yet!

Access Economics has reported \$33 billion of investment projects on the books for Queensland, a 25% increase since my Government took office. It is just not credible to say that this Government has not delivered. The Opposition—and I have thought about this—is like the pet shop owner trying to bring a dead parrot back to life. He is sitting there on the perch, but he has not moved for the last 14 months. I am sorry to break this one to you, Mr Speaker, but the parrot is gone. He is deceased. He has had it. He is no more. You can bang him on the table all you like, but he will not move, Mr Speaker. You see, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is the late parrot.

PRIVILEGE

Questions on Notice

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (9.45 a.m.): Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising following

your statement. I refer to the fact that you ruled out of order three questions asked by me, the member for Merrimac and the member for Hinchinbrook. I ask you to reconsider because, for the past 12 or 14 months—since July of last year—we have asked exactly the same questions. The questions require only computer print-outs from the departments. If you would like to reconsider them, we have 14 months of questions in precisely the same format.

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. Since we have been in Government, the Opposition has consistently breached Standing Orders. It has repeatedly breached Standing Orders in questions on notice. Under the ruling of the previous Speaker, Mr Turner, we were not allowed to ask more than one issue in a question on notice.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I wish to listen to the Premier.

Mr BEATTIE: Mr Speaker, the previous Speaker made a ruling in relation to this matter consistent with what you have ruled today. The Opposition, if it wishes, has to pursue these questions on notice in accordance with the Standing Orders and, I submit to you, in exactly the same way that applied when we were in Opposition.

Dr WATSON: Mr Speaker, following the points made by the Premier, I suggest that when you look at the questions there is, in fact, only one issue in any of those questions. They require in the answer multiple tables. They have been answered every month for 14 months. The question you have to ask is: why are they ruled out of order this time? Because you are trying to hide something, because in the Budget papers they did not put the feature numbers—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Moggill! That is a reflection on the Chair that I have not been—

Dr WATSON:—on what the Premier was saying. I have asked you to reconsider it, Mr Speaker.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Crows Nest!

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and untrue. I seek for them to be withdrawn. All I wish to do—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We have somebody on their feet. Order! Resume your seat!

Mr BEATTIE: Do they have any manners at all? I find those remarks offensive and untrue. I am simply seeking to have the Standing Order of this Parliament enforced and not abused in the way they have been. I ask for those comments to be withdrawn.

Dr WATSON: I will withdraw what the Premier finds misleading, or whatever. Mr Speaker, earlier I asked you to reconsider it. I asked you to reconsider it on the basis of the Standing Orders and the way they were interpreted. The fact is that there was only one issue. The fact is that they only require tables being printed out on computer, and these sorts of questions have been asked every month for 14 months. What has changed now?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will consider those matters before tomorrow morning and get back to the honourable member on that.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Businesses

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Government is committed to creating a positive environment for Queensland businesses. In particular, this Government recognises the role of the retail industry as a vital and increasingly important element of the Queensland economy. This is highlighted by its status as the largest employer in Queensland, employing 21% of all private sector employees and 31% of all young employed Queenslanders between the ages of 15 and 24. In addition, the retail industry is the third largest industry in Queensland, with 32,100 retail businesses in 1996-97, representing 18% of all business establishments.

Recently, the Office of Small Business in the Department of State Development has completed the review of the Retail Shop Leases Act. The Act has long served as a method of meaningful assistance to the retail industry since its inception in 1984. It provides minimum standards for leasing and low-cost, speedy dispute resolution services, particularly targeted at providing assistance and protection to smaller retailers in leasing relationships. The Act was the first legislation of its type introduced in Australia, and it is notable that the legislation was recognised as the best

practice retail tenancy legislation nationally by the fair trading inquiry in 1997.

The Beattie Government has recognised through this comprehensive review of the Act that improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislation and reducing both the number of disputes and the length of time required to resolve them improves the overall business environment. The amendments proposed in the policy paper which I now table in the House have been developed in response to the issues raised through extensive consultation with the retail industry and other stakeholders, particularly through comments received on a discussion paper released in November 1998. Over 1,800 copies of the discussion paper and 1,200 summary brochures were distributed.

The Department of State Development also established an industry based working group representing both lessee and lessor interests to facilitate consolidated industry feedback on issues considered during the review. This has significantly enhanced the consultation process. The working group included representatives of the Retailers Association of Queensland, the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, the Property Council of Australia, the Queensland Investment Corporation and two independent representatives. Working group representatives have been able to reach agreement on all of the amendments proposed, which will assist in ensuring that the Act will continue to be relevant and beneficial to the parties to a lease. I congratulate the working group representatives for their professionalism and the spirit with which the entire discussions were entered into within that group.

The tabling of this policy review paper in this House discharges my obligations under section 122 of the legislation. This public release of the policy review paper provides the retail industry and other interested members of the public with a final opportunity to provide comments on the Government's preferred amendments to the Act before they are finalised and introduced into the Parliament. I table the policy review paper on the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 and commend it to the House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Y2K

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local

Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) (9.52 a.m.): The new year is rapidly approaching and around the world the race is on to fight off the threat of the impending—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister did not seek leave.

Mr MACKENROTH: I seek leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

Mr MACKENROTH: I am going to do away with that. It is time for ministerial statements and it does not make sense to actually seek leave. I think I will do away with that.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: No, it will be done.

The new year is rapidly approaching and around the world the race is on to fight off the threat of the impending Y2K or millennium bug. However, there are no quick fix, overnight solutions. That is why our Government has dealt with Y2K as a top priority since we were elected last year. We have deliberately taken a well-structured and precisely planned approach to managing Y2K issues without the need for going into crisis mode. We are also committed to reporting on our progress and today I am happy to release the latest reports, which show the Government's progress as at the end of July. These reports track the progress of Government departments and agencies in Y2K assessment and rectification, as well as contingency planning.

We have devoted a lot of time and resources to assessing and rectifying the Y2K problem with Government departments and agencies, and it is pleasing to note that these latest reports indicate that all the hard work and planning is now paying off. They indicate that all 25 departments and agencies have finished the majority of their work ahead of schedule. In fact, the report shows that at the end of July most departments and agencies had completed a minimum of 90% of their overall assessment and rectification work. Several departments and agencies also indicated that all their assessment and rectification work was now complete.

In addition, the report also indicates progress on contingency planning. While the Government is working to ensure that our own systems are Y2K compliant, it is essential to make these contingency plans because of the interreliance between various computers and systems which are out of our control. Contingency plans describe how organisations intend to respond to events that disrupt normal

operations of a particular piece of equipment, external supplier, IT system or other critical resource. Whilst we hope not to use these plans, the Government is taking every precaution to ensure that we are prepared for any scenario. These latest reports show that most departments and agencies have completed a minimum of 75% of their contingency plans.

The reports tabled today also provide an update on the preparedness of the Queensland electricity supply industry, statutory authorities, port authorities, and water and sewerage infrastructure. The Y2K Program Office in the Department of Communication and Information recently undertook a detailed stocktake of the readiness of these major service providers. The stocktake indicates that all are currently on schedule to complete Y2K projects before the end of the year. In conclusion, let me say that I am pleased with today's results, but there is still work to be done and we will continue to work tirelessly to prepare for 1 January 2000. I table the reports.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drugs in Sport

Hon. R. J. GIBBS (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to announce the State Government's initiatives in addressing the issue of drugs in sport. My department has worked cooperatively with the Australian Sports Drug Agency to establish an education and promotional strategy on anti-doping practices in sport. More recently, this partnership has been developed to complement the national drugs in sport framework and recently amended Commonwealth legislation.

Queensland is recognised by ASDA as being extremely proactive and committed to promoting and encouraging a drug-free sporting environment. The development of a user pays drugs testing program has ensured that Queensland is leading the way in the testing of State level athletes in Australia.

My department, in conjunction with ASDA, has developed a coordinated approach to combat drugs in sport. Under Queensland's new drugs in sport policy, Queensland State sporting organisations and the Queensland Academy of Sport will now have the opportunity to enter into drug testing contracts with ASDA. My department has allocated \$22,200 in project moneys for 1999-2000 to a user pays drug testing program—\$2,200 for

administration costs and \$20,000 for the Government-funded tests. This allocation will fund approximately 22 event tests and 22 out-of-competition tests in the lead-up to the Olympics.

Under the user pays drug testing program, ASDA will independently assess each application from State sporting organisations or the QAS based on criteria developed by ASDA and my department. ASDA will negotiate all contractual agreements with the State bodies. Numbers of drug tests allocated to sports will be based on ASDA's determination of the level of risk of doping that exists in the sport.

My department and ASDA are also working together to establish an education and promotion plan for the program. This will involve publishing a brochure on the rights of State sporting organisations, compiling a drugs in sport reference manual including information on the user pays testing program, and a risk management guide. The first major development of the education and promotion strategy will be the official launch of the drugs in sport policy, risk management guide and user pays drug testing program on 7 October.

The elimination of drugs in sport remains one of the key objectives of this Government. The range of measures that I have outlined today will go a long way towards achieving this objective.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Employee Entitlements

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: The protection of employee entitlements in cases of business insolvency is a priority issue for the Beattie Labor Government. Workers deserve, and indeed should expect, fundamental rights such as a healthy and safe work environment and fair and decent wages and conditions of employment. Workers also deserve to expect that their wages, their accrued annual leave, long service leave, superannuation and other entitlements—hard worked for and accrued earnings and rights—are guaranteed, even when their employer becomes insolvent. Unfortunately, for what appears to be a growing number of workers—evidenced through employer insolvency cases such as the Oakdale mine, the Cobar mine, Grafton abattoir and the Rockhampton St Andrews Private Hospital—this is, sadly, no longer the case.

On coming to office in June 1998, our Government has been seeking to find a national solution to the protection of employee entitlements in cases of employer insolvency. After months of deferring the issue, and only after much publicity, pressure and campaigning, Federal Minister Reith was forced into a backflip by his own Federal Cabinet to allow the Oakdale miners access to funding to pay out their full entitlements through the Coal Industry Long Service Leave Fund. The weight of public opinion again forced Reith to release a discussion paper outlining options to protect entitlements for all employees.

I inform the House today of the Queensland Government's response to this important community issue. Our Government is committed to the prompt implementation of measures to comprehensively address the problem of the loss of employee entitlements in the case of insolvency through guaranteeing employee entitlements and cracking down on deliberate employer avoidance. To this end, the Queensland Labor Government supports five overarching principles to guide the establishment of such a system—

1. It is a fundamental obligation for employers to pay all accrued employee entitlements.
2. There is a need to establish a comprehensive national scheme to protect employee entitlements.
3. The system needs to be fair and equitable for both employers and employees.
4. All employees should be covered by the scheme.
5. The scheme should be easy to access with timely payments to affected employees.

The ultimate objective in addressing this issue must be to seek to reclaim the full extent of employees' earnings and entitlements. Consideration must also be given to the introduction of stronger anti-avoidance measures and to the development and expansion of industry trust funds. It is also clear that this is an issue where business is not only legally but morally obligated to pay all accrued employee entitlements. Accrued employee entitlements should not be something to be viewed by employers as simply a business risk. Employees should expect to be guaranteed payment of their entitlements without them being gambled away or lost through insolvency.

In addition, whether the scheme is funded or established as an insurance or compensation scheme, it also must only be introduced as an adjunct to measures aimed at significantly reducing the extent of entitlements lost. Tough anti-avoidance measures must be introduced to prevent the deliberate manipulation of corporate structures and insolvency to misappropriate employees' earnings, such as occurred in the Patrick case.

State and Federal Attorneys-General have been considering proposals for amendment to the Corporations Law to allow for the prosecution of directors of companies that seek to avoid employee entitlements. My colleague Attorney-General Matt Foley, along with the other Labor Attorneys-General from New South Wales and Tasmania, has been pressing at SCAG meetings for some time for such reforms. However, the Federal Government must commit to other measures to allow for unpaid entitlements to be recovered from related corporate entities and in appropriate circumstances from executive officers.

The Queensland Industrial Relations Act 1999 does provide a model to establish appropriate legislative measures in this area through provision to prosecute for unpaid wages through company directors. It is clear that directors must be called to account for insolvent trading in deliberately contrived circumstances. Mechanisms should also be put in place to actively encourage the establishment of industry trust funds. The trust fund approach involves employers, on an individual or industry-wide basis, holding the accrued entitlements of their employees in trust so that other creditors have no claims against these funds in the event of insolvency. Precedent for this model clearly exists. The resolution of the Oakdale miners is a prime example of the payout of unpaid entitlements from an industry long service leave fund.

The construction industry in Queensland is also a case in point. This industry is relatively well serviced in terms of secured entitlements through a range of statutory and non-statutory funds, such as the Portable Long Service Leave Fund, the Building Employees Redundancy Trust and the Building Union Superannuation Funds. These are examples of industries managing their entitlements responsibly and effectively on an accrual basis. The costs have become negligible to individual employers over a period of time and, in some cases, have become self-funded. This has meant no ongoing costs to business—saving them money, guaranteeing security of entitlements for workers and allowing for the

reinvestment of excess funds back into the industry through initiatives such as the skills development and training programs. It is clear that further examination must be undertaken of these existing schemes to develop proposals for the more widespread establishment of such schemes. This would include, for example, the consideration of contribution mechanisms, such as the existing superannuation schemes, regulatory schemes and methods to encourage a high level of employer participation.

While the Beattie Labor Government has been attempting to have this matter addressed in a comprehensive manner, Reith and his Federal Cabinet colleagues have only recently sought to do something about this issue. The Reith ministerial discussion paper itself has been hastily cobbled together. It is lacking in vital statistical and financial information, and no consultation has been undertaken with the insurance industry, which has expressed great reserve at the feasibility of some of the Reith proposals. The financial backing of the proposed schemes clearly requires further and detailed consideration, given that both options being proposed expect State Governments to contribute 50% of total Government contributions, either for full funding of the scheme or on behalf of small business.

Reith has also arrogantly proposed to link the passage of legislation to protect employee entitlements to his divisive and unfair second-wave workplace relations amendments, which he wants in place by 1 January 2000. Instead, Reith should convene an urgent meeting of all relevant Commonwealth and State Ministers to work through the details of the proposals—something which this Government has sought to do through the meetings of the Attorneys-General and the Workplace Relations Ministerial Council for the past 12 months.

It is only through the cooperation of the States and the Commonwealth that Australian employees and employers will get an acceptable scheme that fairly protects employee entitlements and which is both fair and balanced.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ms J. Macdonnell

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP)
(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: I join with the Premier in condemning the member for Clayfield for his slandering of

directors-general of this Government. On Tuesday, I made a statement in this House to correct scurrilous and baseless allegations about the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which focused on a senior officer employed there by the previous Government. Today I correct even more offensive and baseless allegations, this time by the member for Clayfield, against the director-general of my department. So thick is the hide and the head of the member for Clayfield that he cannot remember the consequences of the last time he wrongly accused Ms Macdonnell of being a Labor crony. Let me remind him.

In 1991, the member for Clayfield alleged that Ms Macdonnell's appointment from a legal firm to the new position of Executive Director of the Office of State Revenue was the appointment of a crony from the Labor Lawyers Association. When both Ms Macdonnell and the Labor Lawyers Association strenuously denied that she had ever been a member of that organisation, and the Courier-Mail was about to report the falsity of his allegation, the member for Clayfield made this statement to the House on 20 August 1991—

"I got three people wrong: Mr Peter Carne, Ms Mary Miller and Ms Jane Macdonnell, who is the Executive Director of the Office of State Revenue."

He went on to say—

"To those three people in respect of whom I genuinely believe I made a mistake, I unreservedly apologise."

He went on to say this—

"I will not use this place as a coward's castle."

How times have changed!

The member for Clayfield has no problem using this place as a coward's castle. To my knowledge, Ms Macdonnell has no association of any kind with the Australian Labor Party. I do not know her politics. I believe that to be irrelevant. That is why I have never sought, as a Minister, to interfere in any way with the advancement of persons whose politics differed from my own.

The facts are that Ms Macdonnell responded to a public advertisement for the vacancy in the Queensland Treasury in late 1990 and was selected by a committee of strangers. Five years later, as a stranger to me and two other committee members, she was the successful applicant for the position of director-general of my department. One of the four selection committee members was the

then president of the Queensland Law Society, Ms Julie-Ann Schafer.

Ms Macdonnell's previous tenure as director-general was short because the previous Government, in which the member for Clayfield was a Minister, did not allow her to serve it. Not one director-general employed by the coalition Government was a woman. Unlike her immediate predecessor, Ms Macdonnell has no party or personal connections with the Attorney-General.

My counterpart in Victoria certainly had no spurious objections to Ms Macdonnell being employed within her portfolio. A Liberal Premier, Jeff Kennett, whose personal approval is required for a public servant to be paid a performance bonus of more than 15% of the maximum 20%, approved for Ms Macdonnell a bonus of 18% for her performance as a general manager at Victoria Legal Aid.

This Government is proud to have Ms Macdonnell's services. We want people like her who are prepared to challenge the way things are done and uphold standards of conduct—people who strive to continuously improve services within available resources.

Ms Macdonnell has established her credentials over almost 25 years of service with Federal Governments of both political persuasions, the private sector and two State Governments of different political persuasions. Her experience encompasses all aspects of corporate services, the delivery of welfare services, involvement in law enforcement, tax administration, private legal practice and legal assistance.

When the member for Clayfield makes such vitriolic attacks on public servants he should be ashamed of himself. I consider it an honour to work with someone of Ms Macdonnell's eminence and I refute utterly the member for Clayfield's vile and cowardly attack upon her reputation. I think Shakespeare must have had the member for Clayfield in mind when he spoke of slander "whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue outvenoms all the worms of Nile". Mr Santoro's serial slandering is an utter disgrace and an abuse of the privileges of this House.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Students; Selection of Subjects

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumbidgee—ALP)
(Minister for Education) (10.13 a.m.), by leave:
It is again that time of year when students in the middle years of schooling, and their parents, are attempting to decide what

subjects to choose for Years 11 and 12. This is a critical decision which will impact on the students for the rest of their lives. Some students are being told to choose subjects that they are good at; others are being told to choose particular subjects because they count more than others and, by choosing them, they will do better. The students who are being told to play to their strengths are being given good advice. Students who are being told that some subjects count more than others are being given advice which is based on misunderstandings of the facts and of how the system works.

I recognise that it looks as if choosing some subjects gives a better chance of a higher result. Students taking some subjects have, on average, better OPs than those in other subjects, but appearances can be misleading. It is true that there are more high achieving students taking some subjects than others, but it is not true that these students are high achievers because they take these subjects.

It is obviously wrong to argue that, because our Olympic team contains good swimmers, one will become a good swimmer just by joining the team. There is a name for that kind of argument: it is called the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy—the "after this, because of this" fallacy.

The best students succeed in many ways. For example, our best mathematics and science students tend to do very well in the writing task component of the Queensland core skills test. Writing task markers do not know which subjects students have studied, so the fact that students taking some subjects tend, on average, to do better in this test than students taking other subjects simply tells us that that is what they have learned and what they can do, rather than it simply being a matter of which subjects they chose.

If one chooses subjects hoping to get an advantage just because of the choice of subjects, one is in for a big disappointment. There is no rule that requires the best students to take particular subjects. There are top students in every subject. Every student should select the subject he is good at and do his best. It is all about learning. The best reply to the question, "How do I get an OP1?" is to say, "In short, to get an OP1, you must be ahead of your competition. If the academic competition at your school is tough, you will need to be only just ahead. If it is not tough, you will need to be a long way ahead."

I urge honourable members to encourage their young constituents to play to their

strengths when they are choosing their subjects. The system is designed so that one can achieve a high OP no matter what one's choice of subjects.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Minister for Emergency Services.

Mrs ROSE: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Mrs SHEDDON: I rise to a point of order. We have now had 45 minutes of ministerial statements this morning. That is really control of the Parliament by the Executive. So much for the House of democracy!

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ambulance Usage

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.16 a.m.), by leave: The Queensland Ambulance Service is not a taxi service. Unfortunately, some people consider ambulances to be nothing more than a free taxi ride. Patient transport officers and ambulance officers relate stories of patients who ask them to stop off at the shopping centre on the way home from a visit to hospital so that they can do their grocery or personal shopping. There have even been instances of family members in their own vehicles following ambulances transporting patients to hospital for routine check-ups and then following them home again. There have been requests for ambulance transport to appointments in the city because able-bodied people refuse to pay parking fees or because they refuse to drive in city traffic. Some have even contacted the ambulance call centre and have been waiting on the kerb, bags packed, when it arrives.

The tasks of ambulance officers include emergency dashes to deliver critically ill or seriously injured patients to hospital after road or workplace accidents, a cardiac arrest, or a sporting injury. It could be non-urgent or routine transport. It could be a matter of taking a frail or disabled patient to or from a hospital appointment or for a medical check-up at their doctor's surgery. It could relate to clinical cases, routine admissions or hospital discharges.

More than two million Queenslanders are either ambulance subscribers, dependants of subscribers or are covered by the free service provided from 1 January this year to up to 850,000 pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants. All are eligible for

emergency and non-urgent or routine transport. It is vitally important that we use our resources wisely.

Misuse of the Ambulance Service could result in valuable resources being tied up when they could be used for the treatment or transport of more needy patients. The QAS patient transport guidelines have been revised, reinforcing the need to use resources wisely. Cases where non-urgent or routine transport may be required include instances in which the patient will be medically unsuitable for public or private transport and will normally require stretcher transport; where the patient will require active management or monitoring in transit; or where it is a patient whose condition would cause them to be either gravely embarrassed or unacceptable to other people in public transport.

Pamphlets detailing patient transport eligibility and providing appropriate service contact details and suggested transport alternatives are being widely distributed in the general community and a guidebook will be circulated to ambulance and major service users. Doctors and other health professionals will receive posters, charts and pamphlets and be briefed on new guidelines from this month onwards.

All requests for routine transports must be authorised by a doctor. All requests for inter-facility transfers or aeromedical transports must be authorised by a doctor. This has always been the case. In order to cater for the legitimate needs of patients, routine or non-urgent transports must be notified at least 24 hours in advance. Some transports can be booked much earlier.

The QAS is merely asking health professionals and people who use ambulance transport to be responsible and use commonsense when they call for transport and to consider whether alternative arrangements, such as family or friends, subsidised taxis, community or volunteer transport groups and public transport, are appropriate. People should not expect an ambulance to turn up for non-genuine, non-urgent transport.

But people can be assured that those who require emergency treatment or transport will continue to be cared for by the QAS and that non-urgent transport will continue for genuine cases. It is important that those not covered by the Government's free ambulance policy subscribe to the QAS. We have the best Ambulance Service in Australia and one of the best in the world. By using the service responsibly, people can help the QAS save lives. By calling only in cases of genuine need,

they can help the QAS ensure that the right ambulance gets to the right patient at the right time.

TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 28, the annual report for 1998-99 of the Travelsafe Committee. On behalf of the committee, I thank the many people who supported our work during the past year and I commend this report to the House.

MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Report

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (10.21 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee report No. 36 titled "Report on procedures for raising and considering matters of privilege or contempt and the definition of contempt", and I move that the report be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Water Resources, Rural Queensland

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.21 a.m.): I give notice that I shall move—

"That this House condemns this can't do Beattie Labor Government for failing to deliver dams, weirs, channels and pipelines for the secure economic development of rural Queensland."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mining Exploration Permits

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.22 a.m.): In August a group of geoscientists sought my help to petition the Beattie Government about mining exploration permits and the new Native Title Act. Some of that petition was tabled on Tuesday in this House. I now table the hundreds of additional signatures from the mining explorers.

The mining industry has been battling low commodity prices since the Asian economic crisis began, and perhaps even beforehand. In fact, for a number of years a fall in real prices has been occurring in the export area. However, section 482(e) of the Native Title (Queensland) State Provisions Amendment

Act has practical implications that will have disastrous consequences for the industry. It requires miners to secure high-impact exploration permits to take their portable equipment onto land under native title claim, because the definition of "low-impact exploration" is not realistic in practice. This is a time—

Mr Elder: How are you going to change it?

Dr WATSON: I heard the Minister say that the other day. I will make a deal with him: if the Minister can get Beazley to get it past the Senate, I will go with him to front John Howard personally in a bipartisan manner to get this section changed, if that is what he wants. I make that offer.

The industry needs a sympathetic hearing, because the laws that are in place are costly both in terms of time and money. Miners are going to have to negotiate access and compensation payments with native title owners before they drill a single hole. This could delay the process by up to nine months and push overheads through the roof without any guarantee of a positive outcome. Miners have to drill about 3,000 holes to find a viable deposit. They need the portable equipment and they need access to land to get that equipment on the land. They cannot use existing roads or tracks to get to isolated sites. We have about 80 highly qualified geoscientists—

Time expired.

Seniors Card

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (10.24 a.m.): I urge this Government to investigate the possibility of seeking corporate sponsorship for our Seniors Card so that we can provide our senior citizens with greater benefits. Recently, I met with senior citizens in Nicklin who told me that they were concerned that the provision and entitlements of a Seniors Card in this State were lagging behind those provided in the rest of Australia.

Consequently, I researched this matter and discovered that their claims were true, and I table that research. For example, to be eligible for a Seniors Card in New South Wales, a person must be aged 60, not work more than 20 hours a week and be a permanent resident of the State. To be eligible for a Seniors Card in South Australia, again, a person must be aged 60, not work more than 20 hours a week and be a permanent resident of Australia.

Those conditions differ greatly from the conditions under which a person becomes eligible for a Seniors Card in this State, where to be eligible for a Seniors Card a person must be a Queensland resident, must have turned 65, must not work more than 35 hours per week, or must be 60 years of age and over and receive a Commonwealth pension or benefit and not work more than 35 hours a week.

One of the ways in which the other State and Territory Governments are able to provide services to a greater number of their senior citizens as Seniors Card recipients is through corporate sponsorship. In fact, GIO is a major sponsor of Seniors Cards in New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

It saddens me that, at this time, during the Year of Older Persons, Queensland's seniors are quite clearly the poor relations to seniors in other parts of Australia. We need to recognise the invaluable contribution that our senior citizens have made to this great State of ours. One way in which we can do this effectively is by bringing our Seniors Card into line with those offered in the rest of Australia.

Consequently, in the near future I will be moving a motion that this House investigates seeking corporate sponsorship for Queensland's Seniors Card to bring it into line with Seniors Cards in the rest of Australia.

Labor Party Cronyism

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (10.26 a.m.): On Tuesday, I made some statements regarding the roting of the Public Service selection processes by the Beattie Labor Government. What I outlined was factually correct and not contradicted by anything said in this place this morning. The people whom I named in this place on Tuesday have been appointed without going through the proper selection process based on merit. Those people did not—I repeat: did not—go through a selection process based on merit and did not have to compete for their jobs after the Government changed in 1998.

It should be noted that in July 1998, after the appointment of the Beattie Labor Government, the Acting Public Service Commissioner, Mr Brian Head, issued two directives exempting his position and that of all other chief executives from being advertised and giving the Premier the power to avoid a selection process. In other words, it gave the Premier of the day the power to appoint whomever he likes without the process or safeguards.

The advice that I have been given is that the following persons were appointed as chief executives without any advertising, without any selection panel and for five-year terms: Glyn Davis, from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Gerard Bradley, from Treasury; Ross Rolfe, from the Department of State Development; Jane Macdonnell, from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General—

Mr FOLEY: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. Ms Macdonnell was selected and appointed on merit and shamelessly sacked by the previous Government without cause and without reason.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr SANTORO: The list goes on: Ken Smith, from the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care; Margaret O'Donnell; and Brian Head.

In some of these cases, the persons appointed without merit had never previously been associated with the department that they now head. That is the point: they have not gone through the merit selection process. The public record—

Mr BEATTIE: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. They did go through the process. I have already explained that to the House.

Mr SANTORO: I note for the record that the Labor Party has been outed in this matter. I thank the Premier and the Attorney-General for raising the issue which, because of East Timor and the Budget, was missed on Tuesday. I stand by everything that I have said and there is more to come.

Time expired.

East Timor

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): In what is left of East Timor people are under siege. With a population of 900,000, East Timor is largely rural and about 47% of children over 10 have never been to school. Today, the situation in East Timor has deteriorated to a catastrophic state since the referendum ballot, at which 78.5% of the East Timorese population voted for independence. The many volunteer workers who have been providing the desperately needed international solidarity and relief assistance during the crisis have been evacuated. Most media have also been evacuated, making it difficult to inform the world of the continued atrocities. As our Federal Government continued to sit back with continued ineffectiveness, the slaughter was

maintained. Catholic priests and nuns were also gunned down.

Although peacekeeping forces have now been organised, it is heartening to know that large numbers of Australian people are being incredibly vocal about this crisis occurring to our near neighbours. Calls from the Queensland Council of Unions for a campaign of peace are to be congratulated. The proposed industrial action against Indonesian interests and consumer boycotts of Indonesian products and services is small indeed when compared to the massive loss of human life. If we link with Amnesty, Community Aid Abroad and other church and activist groups, we are indeed doing something positive to avert the continued crisis.

It was also heartening to see that last week Queensland communities came out strongly in support of a campaign for peace. In Townsville on Friday night, more than 150 people turned out for a candlelight vigil pledging their support. That was organised by the JCU NTU at very short notice that day. It has been a long time indeed since public outrage has been so vocal. In Brisbane, the numbers swelled to the thousands in support of peace for the East Timorese—once again organised at short notice. The organising of demonstrations to inform the community of the East Timorese crisis is the very least that we can do.

In addition, the UN Security Council, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should be pressured to act quickly in bringing international pressure on the Indonesian Government to protect the East Timorese from human rights violations. Our prayers are with the soldiers in the peacekeeping force and their families, as they attempt to bring peace to East Timor where the Indonesian military remain. Our thoughts are with them as they leave this weekend on a dangerous mission.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police Resources

Mr HORAN (10.30 a.m.): I ask the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to explain to the Parliament why he is slashing the Queensland police retread recruitment intake in October from 40 to 20, why he is slashing the new recruit intake in October from 147 to 100, and why he is slashing the January new recruit intake from 147 to 100?

Mr BARTON: I do not know where the member is getting his figures from, but they

appear to be Budget related material. The police numbers that are being put in place are exactly the same numbers that were arrived at under the program that was developed when the coalition was in power. The timing is exactly the same. The difference is that, in part, because we are so far ahead in providing the additional numbers, we have carried through something in the order of 46, and I reported that to the Parliament several weeks ago. At the end of last financial year, we had considerable numbers more than the program needed at that point.

Mr Horan: One hundred and fourteen cut.

Mr BARTON: It was a lot more than 14.

Mr Horan: No, it was 114.

Mr BARTON: It was not 114 down. We have allowed for the fact that because we are already so far in front intakes do not need to be as high as originally planned. The police numbers in this State are the best that they have ever been. The program to put over 2,000 additional police into Queensland is exactly in line with our election commitments. Unlike the coalition, we went to the last election and said that we were not going to get involved in a Dutch auction over police numbers and increase them over and above any particular figure. The fact is that we have delivered over and above what was promised last year, by some 46.

We have put the coalition's program in place. The figure quoted in the Budget of an average of 325 per year will be met. However, we do not keep training at the planned levels when the attrition rate is much lower than it was. If we did that, by the end of this year we would end up with 100 officers more than were planned for, and they would have to be budgeted for and funded.

Every member in this House has seen the figures and talked to the police in their electorates. They know that there have never been more police in their cities, police stations and provincial towns. That is a fact. This is nothing more than another cheap stunt by the shadow Minister. Every time he opens his mouth on a Police or Corrective Services issue—which is very infrequently indeed, because he still thinks he is the shadow Health Minister—he gets it wrong and, again, he has it wrong this time.

Time expired.

East Timor

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Premier to the continuing tragedy of East Timor and, in

particular, the heart-breaking sounds of thousands upon thousands of refugees, and I ask: what role if any can the Queensland Government play in assisting our northern neighbours in their time of need?

Mr BEATTIE: The human tragedy of East Timor is greatly disturbing for all Australians and, clearly, for all Queenslanders. Earlier this week I expressed a wish for a peaceful transition to independence for East Timor. I know that that is a view shared by all members of this House. Since then, the United Nations has given the go-ahead for a peacekeeping task force, including Australian troops, to go to East Timor.

I know I speak for all Queenslanders and all members of this House when I pass on our best wishes to the troops going to East Timor from Queensland bases. We pass on similar best wishes to their families and friends, because it is always a distressing time when someone is going into what, in essence, could be a combat zone. Our thoughts and prayers will be with each and every one of them until all the troops return from East Timor and there has been a transition to democracy.

As our troops take part in restoring peace in East Timor, I am concerned about the safety of the thousands of refugees. Therefore, today I indicate that Queensland is prepared to accept refugees if that is the wish of the Australian Government. We are prepared to work with the Commonwealth in any transitional period if that was requested. Honourable members will recall that my Government recently offered similar assistance to the Kosovo refugees and that that offer was supported by the Opposition. A similar offer is made here. If there is a need for the refugees to stay here until peace is restored in East Timor, we are prepared to play a constructive, positive and humanitarian role. This is the least that we can do.

I believe that all Queenslanders would join me and members of this House in indicating to the refugees that they will have a home here, if that is sought by the Commonwealth, until peace and democracy are installed in East Timor.

Mrs E. Nixon

Mr BORBIDGE: I refer the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources to his decision to evict elderly Cape York pioneer, Eileen Nixon, from her cattle property on the cape and his threats to cheat her of money if she does not go quickly, even after she has offered to

surrender environmentally sensitive areas of her property, and I ask: how many other pioneers of Cape York and other parts of Queensland is the Minister going to do this to and how does he justify his actions in respect of this elderly Cape York pioneer?

Mr WELFORD: It is actual factually incorrect to put, as the honourable member suggests, the proposition that I am evicting anyone from Cape York. Mrs Nixon has had a pastoral lease on Cape York for a number of years. She no longer lives on that lease and the lease expires in the normal course, as do the many hundreds of other pastoral leases throughout Queensland.

I have indicated to Mrs Nixon that as part of the tenure resolution process at Cape York, as was indicated to her a number of years ago, the current lease is unlikely to be renewed in the context of that tenure resolution process. I have also written to her indicating that I and the Government will do everything we possibly can to compensate her for the relinquishment of her lease, notwithstanding the facts that there are only a small number of months to go and that legal advice indicates that the Government has no legal responsibility to compensate an expired lessee for anything other than improvements on the property.

On two occasions now I have written to Mrs Nixon and I have met her on at least one occasion in north Queensland. I have indicated our willingness to do everything that the Government can to assist in her re-establishing at an alternative location. There is no substantial business conducted by her on the lease and, as I already mentioned, as I understand it she lives elsewhere.

Mr L. Robertson

Mr BORBIDGE: I preface a further question to the Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources by saying that she would not agree with that.

I refer the Minister to the boardwalk project undertaken at Middle Rocks on Fraser Island by his department and specifically to his utter failure to guarantee payment to not only the contractor but also the subcontractors concerned. One such subcontractor, Mr Les Robertson, who after completing this project partially severed his left wrist, has experienced such financial hardship due to the department's non-payment that he has had his accounts closed, his truck repossessed, his business virtually closed down, is now behind in his rent and has been served with an

eviction notice. I ask the Minister: given that his Government has finally made the necessary legislative changes for the security of payment for subcontractors, why is he failing to comply with the law, or is it simply the case that he does not care?

Mr WELFORD: The Leader of the Opposition once again quite improperly seeks to inflame a situation. The situation is that there were a number of problems with the contractual arrangements for the construction of the boardwalk on Middle Rocks. I have recently received a faxed letter from Mr Patterson, probably the same letter from which—

Mr Borbidge: Robertson.

Mr WELFORD: Sorry, Mr Robertson. It is probably the same letter from which the Leader of the Opposition quoted. It is true, to my knowledge, that some time after he completed his work on that project, Mr Robertson—

Mr Borbidge: He was a subcontractor.

Mr WELFORD: He was a subcontractor; that is right.

Since completing that work, he has fallen on very difficult times. On the face of his letter, I accept that he has experienced difficulties. The Government is not directly responsible for the payment of subcontractors. It is the responsibility of the head contractor to make those payments. I reassure the Opposition Leader that two days ago I signed authorisation to ensure that, notwithstanding the outstanding disputes in relation to the variations which the head contractor had claimed, the head contractor will be paid in full.

Aquaculture

Mr PITT: I refer the Premier to recent reports that the Federal Government plans to impose new regulations covering aquaculture projects on the Queensland coast, and I ask: was the State Government consulted about those proposed regulations?

Mr BEATTIE: Queensland and the Commonwealth have enjoyed a solid relationship in the management of one of the great wonders of the world, and that is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. We have announced a review of some parts of the relationship, but we are keen to see the strength of that relationship continue. There has always been close consultation until now. On this occasion the Commonwealth is planning to introduce retrospective regulations to protect the Great Barrier Reef. These

regulations would control discharges from existing and new aquaculture projects from Cape York to the southern edge of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and five kilometres inland.

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is an admirable thing to do. I want to make it absolutely clear that it is something to which my Government and the relevant Ministers are committed. These regulations go too far, and this is just the thin end of the wedge. To put it bluntly, I am advised that these regulations could threaten the livelihood of primary producers along the entire Queensland coastline and threaten industries worth \$50m. These ill-conceived regulations, which were cobbled together by Canberra without consulting my Government, have the potential to stop the sugarcane industry in its tracks, not to mention every cattle producer and horticulturalist along the coast. The regulations will virtually create a no-grow zone five kilometres wide along the coast.

I called on the Prime Minister, John Howard, to intervene and scrap the regulations proposed by the Federal Environment Minister and to work with the State to come up with a sensible regulation. Unfortunately, the silence from most of the Federal and State parliamentarians from the National and Liberal Parties on this issue is deafening. I am advised, however, that De-Anne Kelly, the National Party member for the Federal electorate of Dawson, actually called on Senator Hill to introduce these regulations. I call on every sugarcane grower, tomato farmer, tropical fruit grower and grazier to remember De-Anne Kelly's actions and to remember the actions of the National and Liberal Parties. I call on primary producers to lobby Prime Minister Howard on this issue.

I have asked Crown Law for urgent advice on whether these regulations are constitutional. The Queensland Government has not been involved in this process despite the fact that the regulations are to be enforced under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park legislation. That Act gives the State and the Commonwealth joint management of the Great Barrier Reef—joint management, not unilateral management. Rather than taking this sledgehammer approach, the Commonwealth should be working with the State to develop standard scheme provisions or codes under the Integrated Planning Act. This is supported by the Australian Prawn Farmers Association, which agrees that future large-scale aquaculture developments should be subject to public environmental assessments.

School Attendance, Children in State Care

Mr BEANLAND: I ask the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services—

Government members interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: This is the jackpot.

Given that children under 15 years of age are required by law to be at school, I ask: why has the Minister not taken action to ensure that children in the care of the State, for which her department has parental responsibility, are off the streets and at school during school hours? Is this another reason why Premier Peter Beattie lacks confidence in her and her department?

Ms BLIGH: It seems we have the trifecta this morning. I hope that the member for Indooroopilly is not exhausted from the effort.

It is a serious question and it is one to which my department and I have been paying particular attention. It should not come as any surprise to the member for Indooroopilly, or indeed any member of the House, that children who come into the care and protection of my department almost by definition are children who have experienced fairly serious abuse and/or neglect. Therefore, it should come as no further surprise that those very same children, when they reach the often turbulent and difficult years of early adolescence, can often find it difficult to make adjustments in foster care families and mainstream schooling environments. It certainly is the case that a number of those children are unable to sustain the requirements of mainstream school environments and have in many cases been the subject of numerous suspension and, in some cases, expulsion orders.

These are a group of children for whom I believe we have to find special programs that address their special needs. The Minister for Education and I have established a task force at a senior level in both of our departments, which is working on this matter as we speak. We are looking at alternative education programs. There are a couple of very good models at which we are looking, one of which is in the electorate of the member for Yeronga. Tarragindi Lodge is an organisation that provides very intensive schooling services for children in that position. Not surprisingly, many of them are children who are in the care and protection of my department or who have at some stage experienced intervention by or involvement with the department. In my view, it is a fine establishment and provides a good model, and the Minister for Education and I are currently looking at it.

The interest in this area of the member for Indooroopilly is commendable, but I recommend that he look a little more closely at what is a very complex and difficult issue for a group of children who, as I said, almost by definition have been subject to some of the most serious abuse and neglect. Any expectation that we might have that they should also then be able to cope with all of the normal pressures of adolescence as if they were children who had not experienced such things is unreasonable and reflects a lack of understanding and, in my view, a lack of compassion for the difficulties they face in struggling to overcome their past and become worthwhile young adults.

Progress of Major Projects

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I ask the Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade: can he outline the progress of major projects under this Government?

Mr ELDER: I thank the member for the question, a member who does have a strong interest in projects, particularly in her own electorate. I certainly can do that. The member for Surfers Paradise keeps going on about what a big game hunter he was. However, he is bagging these projects for Queensland left, right and centre.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr ELDER: I take the interjection from the Premier.

Mr Gibbs: He got gored by a rhino.

Mr ELDER: He did. As we all know, the major hunter on that side was the member for Noosa and on that occasion he did not bring a rhino back, either.

Let me make it clear: every time I have challenged the acting Leader of the Opposition on his claims about projects, he says, "We brought Boeing." I have to say that we like Boeing as well. In fact, we are doing much, much more with Boeing in terms of enhancing defence industry opportunities in this State. If honourable members compare our list of projects on his criteria, they will see that we have a pretty impressive list of projects. When I look at the trophy cabinet, I can tell honourable members that the Daktari rhino was not there, but we did have Boeing.

Let us go through the companies which we have attracted to this State. Let us go through our record. In information technology and telecommunications, the Beattie Government has succeeded in gaining global computer giant IBM, Indus Industries, Saville

Systems, ATL Quantum; and in banking, US major Citibank and Stellar Communications with their call centres—major internationals. Other companies that have established operations here in Queensland and expanded their operations in Australia, as the Minister for Emergency Services would know, include the New Zealand based specialty vehicles manufacturer Mills-Tui and the Greyhound Pioneer Australia coach plant recently opened at the airport. As the member for Logan would know, the milk and juice major National Foods has outlined a major expansion and a plant expansion at Crestmead—\$26m. That is just to name a few and they are across a broad range of industries.

We have not forgotten, of course, the mining sector or the agriculture sector. It has been this Government that has ramped up its support for the meat industry, making sure that those jobs, where they can be maintained, are maintained in regional Queensland. It has been this Government that did not accept the failures that the people opposite had as a Government—that had reports saying that they would lose the jobs. We have actually proactively gone out there and saved those jobs in rural communities. In the new minerals area such as light metals, the fact that AMC—Australian Magnesium Corporation—has produced magnesium is a credit to the Goss Government and the Goss Government's view in relation to light metals mills. That project has been facilitated by this Government.

Mr Borbidge: It started under Ahern.

Mr ELDER: I will tell honourable members what the former Government's contribution was. Its contribution was \$290,000 for a report. The contribution from the Goss Government and this Government has been in the millions of dollars.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the House. That project was ticked off by the Ahern Government.

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

Mr ELDER: Again we hear the half-truths. I say this to the Parliament: let the record stand for itself. Read the record. BST!

South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement

Mr LESTER: I refer the Premier to amendments moved by his Federal Labor Party colleagues to give the Senate the power to overturn any regional forest agreements

reached between the Federal and State Governments, and I ask: does he support these amendments, which would expose his Government's South-East Queensland RFA to veto by the Democrats and Labor in the Senate—yes or no—and, if he does not support the actions of his Federal Labor colleagues, what has he done to urge them to drop these amendments and support the jobs of south-east Queensland's 1,200 timber workers?

Mr BEATTIE: I will tell honourable members what I do support. I support a Queensland solution to protect jobs and protect forests. Let me make this absolutely clear: today is an historic day for this State because we have reached an agreement, and the Deputy Premier and I and other Ministers will be announcing that a little later on to all of Queensland. We have reached an agreement because the style of this Government is to sit down and talk with the parties, to negotiate a fair outcome. When I got all the parties together, I did not play politics, the Ministers did not play politics, the Deputy Premier did not play politics; we sat down and asked for two things: goodwill and common ground, and we got both.

Let me thank the parties today for the commitment they gave to the process and for the goodwill and good sense they demonstrated, because this is not only an historic day for the State; this day will go down in the history of this State as being one that not only protected the forests but protected the jobs and the industry. I am proud of what my Government has done in relation to this RFA process. In terms of the Federal Government, let me assure the honourable member that last night I spoke to the Prime Minister; the Deputy Premier spoke to Wilson Tuckey; the Minister for Environment spoke to Senator Hill.

Mr Welford: He was overseas.

Mr BEATTIE: He was overseas, but in the process he spoke to his office. We have communicated with the Federal Government. We have made it absolutely clear what this package entails. This package is a Queensland solution for a Queensland industry and a Queensland environment.

I have to say I was encouraged by the positive attitude taken by the Prime Minister. While it does not technically fit within the RFA framework, it is a negotiated and fair outcome. I have indicated to the Prime Minister that we will provide him with the full details today, and that is in the process of being done. The Prime Minister has indicated that he is prepared to

consider the proposal on its merits; he is prepared to consider the agreement and, in those terms, consider funding for the agreement. I have to say that I was encouraged by the positive attitude that the Prime Minister demonstrated to what has been a positive outcome for this State where we put politics aside and looked at the interests of Queensland.

I urge all members opposite today to support this plan for Queensland, to rise above their National/Liberal Party considerations, put the State first, put jobs first and put the forests first.

Mr Borbidge: Do you think the Senate will support it?

Mr BEATTIE: If they do that, if this plan goes to the Senate, it will have the support of the Labor Party and hopefully will have the support of the Federal Government. Under those terms, it will almost have the unanimous support—and I believe it should have the unanimous support—of the Senate and the unanimous support of any decent Australian who wants to see jobs and protection of the environment.

Sydney Olympic Games; Tourism

Mrs LAVARCH: I ask the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing: can he inform the House whether Queensland will play a major role in any upcoming international campaigns to promote Australian tourism and the Sydney Olympics?

Mr GIBBS: I thank the honourable member for the question, because it is a most significant day on which the honourable member should ask that question. I am delighted to announce that Queensland will obviously have a starring role in the largest Olympic promotional project ever undertaken in the United States. In New York this morning the giant Bank of America and the Australian tourist industry launched a United States \$8m road show campaign to promote the Sydney Olympic Games and Australian tourism across the United States.

Queensland will be represented on the Bank of America Down Under Tour by four specialist tourism ambassadors hand-picked from around the State of Queensland. Over the next 12 months the tour will journey over 18,000 miles and visit 48 cities and 21 States of the United States to promote the Olympics as well as Queensland and Australian tourism destinations and culture. Queensland's ambassadors will welcome visitors to the road show, provide information about Queensland

and Australia and participate in an extensive public relations program associated with the tour.

The tour is the biggest consumer promotion that the Australian tourism industry has ever been involved in and it is one of the most exciting opportunities for Queensland arising from the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. The exposure that the tour will generate for Australia in the lucrative US market pre-Olympics will be invaluable. It is an adventurous, multisensory travelling exhibition, bringing the excitement of the culture and natural landscape of Australia as well as the Sydney games to home town USA. It includes the largest travel agent promotion ever conducted in the US and a special Australian publication which includes more tourism product from Queensland than any other State.

Features of the tour include: an Olympic flame tower, which is a five-storey tower lit to create the look of an actual Olympic torch; the Sydney Opera House, a huge inflatable model housing an 80-seat theatre which will show an eight-minute film of Australia; outback airline experience, a high-tech, four-minute simulated experience of Australia from outback exploration to white water rafting; indigenous art exhibits, a visual and performance gallery of Australian indigenous arts; a map of Australia and information kiosks featuring a five by eight interactive map of Australia flanked by information kiosks; and an Olympic gateway, an interactive entrance comprising tributes to American athletes and great Olympic moments.

Some of the budget of Tourism Queensland will be involved in financing this campaign. It will be a great roadshow for Australia, but more specifically for Queensland and will ensure more than ever, I believe, that the 850,000 international visitors we are expecting to Queensland as a result of the Olympic Games in Sydney will in fact be delivered.

Business Name Registration

Mr DAVIDSON: I refer the Minister for Fair Trading to her much publicised business name registration system, and I ask: why is it the case that applicants who wish to register a business in Queensland are forced to wait up to four weeks for their application to be processed and, further, given the Government's catchcry of jobs, jobs, jobs, and given its inability to register small business, how does it expect to reach the 5% unemployment target? After all, small business

is the engine room of the Queensland economy.

Ms SPENCE: I thank the honourable member for the question. As some members would know, Queensland has recently changed its small business name system from an ASCOT computer system to a new system called BACHCO. We were forced to do that because of the way the Federal Government changed its business name system from a similar name system, which we all adopted in the past, to an identical name system. Queensland retains a similar name system, but the Federal Government is operating the identical name system, so we were out of sync with the Federal Government in that respect and we were forced to change from ASCOT to the new BACHCO system.

I am informed that BACHCO was planned to commence operations on 2 August 1999. Prior to that, the staff in the Office of Fair Trading were involved in testing BACHCO. It was not possible to test all components of BACHCO as only limited data was available in the test system. The data conversion from ASCOT to BACHCO commenced on Friday evening, 20 August 1999 and was largely completed on Wednesday, 25 August 1999.

It was always planned that document processing would cease for three working days prior to commencement, and this fact alone was predicted to cause arrears of work. CITEC encountered data conversion difficulties and unfortunately the system was not available for commencement on 26 August 1999 as planned. The business name information brokers encountered some access problems in the initial stages but all six brokers are now operational.

Action has been taken to organise overtime and it is anticipated that the critical arrears will be overcome by tomorrow, Friday, 17 September. The operations of the Brisbane public counter and public counters at Office of Fair Trading regional offices were disrupted due to the problems. However, as from 8 September all public counters were operational and applications for business names were able to be processed.

I acknowledge that the public has been inconvenienced due to the down time, but as the critical problems associated with the registration of new business names have now been resolved the position, I am confident, will improve dramatically from here on in. On behalf of the Government, I apologise for the inconvenience that has been caused to certain businesses; however, I am confident that the

problems have been overcome. I thank the shadow Minister for the question.

Queensland Health Assistance, East Timor

Mrs ATTWOOD: I refer the Minister for Health to the current crisis in East Timor, and I ask: has Queensland received any request to provide medical assistance, and what has been the response?

Mrs EDMOND: I am sure I speak for all members of this House when I say that, obviously, we are all distressed at the continuing tragedy unfolding in East Timor. My department stands ready to do whatever is needed to help. I am pleased that other groups have also indicated that they are prepared to show support.

The Queensland Nurses Union, on behalf of the Australian trade union movement's humanitarian aid agency, APHEDA, has asked for assistance in obtaining drugs and dressings for use in East Timor. I am advised that the Brisbane Airport Corporation has agreed to donate a quantity of dressings and first-aid material that it has on hand in case of emergencies. I understand that a number of pharmaceutical companies have also responded and Queensland Health's emergency coordinator is working with them to coordinate that response.

The Northern Territory Government has asked Queensland to assist in refugee reception and screening in Darwin. So far we have agreed to provide a nursing expert in tuberculosis, who is departing for Darwin today. Other specialist medical, dental and nursing staff are on 12-hour stand-by if required. Many health professionals are members of the reserves and are also on stand-by in that capacity.

I take this opportunity to thank everybody who has volunteered for this service. I also commend APHEDA on its work. It has been providing medical and nursing services in East Timor for some time, despite the dangers that this involves. As members may be aware, APHEDA was established in 1984 so that Australian workers could contribute directly to justice, human rights and development internationally.

Queensland Health stands ready to do whatever it can to support in this terrible situation as it evolves, but I think it is important that we work in a coordinated way rather than just rush off in an ad hoc way as that may contribute to more chaos in places such as Darwin. We are ready and willing to do everything we possibly can.

Magic Millions

Mr HEALY: I refer the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing to his answer to a question asked yesterday regarding the future of the Magic Millions race and sale on the Gold Coast, and I ask: did the Minister at any time give any of the owners of Magic Millions any indication that \$1m per year would be forthcoming from the State Government?

Mr GIBBS: To the best of my knowledge, no. At no time, as I said, can I remember ever giving an undertaking to the owners of Magic Millions—to any one of the partners—that there would be \$1m paid. I do recall—I think this is where they have probably jumped on the bandwagon—that I attended the sale on that particular weekend when the announcement was made that there was a contract to be signed for the amount of \$600,000. We were in Opposition at that time. There I indicated that, in my opinion, if it required money to be paid to keep the event on the coast certainly \$1m would not be an unfair figure. But that was made as a statement in Opposition. I never gave any undertaking to the owners of Magic Millions that that would be forthcoming from this Government.

I reiterate what I said yesterday: I asked them not to enter any agreements until after the election, but they chose to exercise their option, and good on them. They have every right to do that. They signed a contract and it is now a contractual situation with Queensland Events Corporation for that amount of \$600,000. I think that is good for the next three or four years.

There is one point I did not make yesterday. When I attended a lunch with the owners after coming to Government, a dispute had arisen between them and the Gold Coast Turf Club in relation to that club wanting to keep the naming rights sponsorships of each race on the program that day. They were not able to resolve that conflict. As a result of that, I put in an additional \$50,000 to the Gold Coast Turf Club from the Racing Development Fund to make up for what it believed would be lost sponsorship if Magic Millions took over that race.

I believe I made it clear that that was for one year only and I asked them to go away and resolve it over the next 12 months. They came back to me some weeks ago and put the fangs in again for \$50,000. We have been forthcoming on that, but I ask members opposite to remember that a company with the expertise of Magic Millions should not try to sell me the idea that it cannot raise more than

\$10,000 in naming rights per race on the day of that carnival. With its expertise it can certainly do that. If there is not considerable revenue involved in that, then I am not here.

I reiterate what I said yesterday. They signed the contract. I never made them sign. We put an additional \$50,000 into the Gold Coast Turf Club last year and this year. It is doing exceptionally well out of the carnival and out of this Government.

Subterranean Termites

Mr MUSGROVE: I ask the Minister for Fair Trading: would she please provide the House with information on how Queensland householders can best protect their homes from the scourge of subterranean termites?

Ms SPENCE: I am very pleased to speak about this very important consumer issue of subterranean termites.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Schwarten: They think it's funny.

Ms SPENCE: This is not a humorous issue. I encourage all members to listen to this answer, because this is an important consumer issue.

Termites have challenged Queenslanders and Queensland home builders ever since we started clearing the land and building permanent timber structures. For decades we have protected ourselves against the scourge of the subterranean termite by using an organochlorine chemical barrier before laying our concrete slabs. In 1995, we banned this particular chemical because of health concerns and because of the important export beef market. Ever since then, we have been using an alternative treatment of organophosphates and synthetic pyrethrin, which is an effective treatment but is a lot more expensive than the previous treatment. This has led to some pest controllers duping Queensland consumers by watering down the chemicals that they use or by using fewer chemicals than they claim to use.

It is important, though, that consumers and home owners are aware that they need to have their houses tested and checked each year for termites and that they should use a licensed pest controller—one that is licensed by the Queensland Building Services Authority.

The Queensland Building Services Authority has taken a lead role in educating consumers about the subterranean termite by producing fact sheets not only for the building industry but also for home owners. It has also taken a leading role in doing what it does so

well, that is, cracking down on shonks. Recently, the QBSA conducted a successful prosecution of a pest control company when the Queensland Building Tribunal fined Guardian Pest & Weed Control Services \$4,000 for incompetence.

Queensland builders are now bound by law to furnish new home owners with a notice clearly stating how they have treated their homes for termites together with a timetable for ongoing maintenance. The QBSA has also formed a committee of industry bodies—pest controllers, insurance industries and Government agencies—and the aim of this group is to devise ways to give optimal advice to consumers and to industry. The committee's work will enhance the effect of a new Australian standard on termite protection which is due to come into force early next year.

I am very concerned that the great Australian dream does not get eaten away and that we educate Queensland consumers properly about this issue.

Regional Forest Agreement

Mr FELDMAN: I direct a question to the Premier. With reference to my continuing concerns in relation to the RFA process, and following a report in today's Courier-Mail confirming a deal between Government, the timber industry and environmental groups that would guarantee no jobs being lost in real terms, I ask: can the Premier clarify the meaning of "in real terms"? Will there or will there not be jobs lost in small rural mills at the expense of bigger operators? Will this not, in turn, precipitate further job losses in associated industries in rural towns? Constituents of mine in Caboolture and Woodford are waiting with trepidation for the Premier's answer.

Mr BEATTIE: This is a great day for the member for Caboolture and it is a great day for the constituents of the member for Caboolture, because what is going to happen as a result of the plan that will be announced at 1.30 or thereabouts today will be not only a securing of jobs but at the end of this plan—at the end of this strategy—there will be more jobs than there are now. That is what is important. All the details will be spelt out later today.

I make the point very clearly. The honourable member has raised with me—as he did yesterday—the issue of jobs for his constituents. I am clearly indicating to him that, out of this negotiated agreement that we have reached—out of this sensible, constructive, positive move for this State—there will be more jobs in the timber industry. What we are doing

is safeguarding an industry for the future—not for the next 10 years, but for the next 50 or 100 years. We are safeguarding the timber industry for the future, and we are putting it where it ought to be: in plantations.

It is significant that we have been able to protect the icon areas, and we have been able to protect the environment, but at the same time we have been able to drive jobs and protect those communities. All those communities, such as the one represented by the member for Caboolture, all those communities through the South Burnett and all those communities all the way up to central Queensland will be able to sleep safely tonight because my Government has protected those communities. We have protected those jobs. Unlike those members opposite who, through this whole process, have sought to divide and to cause anguish and pain, we have sat down—notwithstanding all that provocation—and negotiated an outcome and an agreement which is in the best interests of this State.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Here we go! The Opposition Leader seeks to undermine. He had two and a half years and could not deliver. And what does he do today? He sits there sniping away in a negative, divisive way. At the end of the day, the Opposition does not care about those communities. All it wants is a cheap political trick for today's headline.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: He criticises it before he has even seen the plan. We are not about politics. We are about Queensland. We are about looking after this State. And that is exactly what we have done. And if ever there was a difference between the Opposition and us, it is that. We are interested in Queensland first. Politics is second. The difference between us is that we are out there looking after this State. For the Opposition Leader, it is politics first, politics second, politics third, and then somewhere along the line he will think about the people only to try to get their votes. We have come up with a plan for the future of this State.

Internet Auctions

Mr CONNOR: I refer the Minister for Communication and Information to the decision by the Local Government Association of Queensland to enable Queensland councils to sell used vehicles, plant and equipment via online auctions on the Internet, and I ask: is the Minister intending to convert any

Queensland Government used vehicles, plant or equipment sales to online auctions and, if so, which ones and when?

Mr MACKENROTH: The disposal of Government vehicles is the responsibility of the Minister for Public Works.

Mr CONNOR: Mr Speaker, I asked about used vehicles, plant and equipment across-the-board.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Under the Standing Orders, the Minister may reply as he sees fit.

Allgas Discounts

Mr WILSON: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: can he tell the House whether Allgas plans to provide discounts for early payment of gas bills as it has done in the past?

Mr McGRADY: It is certainly a good news day for Queensland today. Members may be aware that, earlier this year, Allgas removed a 10% discount for customers who paid their bills by a certain date. The removal of this discount created problems for some people, especially pensioners, who could ill afford a sudden increase in their bills. This refers to a speech which the member for Nicklin made this morning.

A number of members received representations on this matter and, obviously, members came and discussed this with me. I had discussions with the chairman of Allgas and, as a result of those discussions, I am delighted to inform the House that Allgas has responded to my submissions in a positive manner. Allgas will reintroduce a 10% discount for its customers who hold a pensioner concession card, repatriation health card for all conditions, or a Queensland Government Seniors Card. This is a good result for a sector of our community that sometimes needs a helping hand. The concession applies to natural gas purchases, reticulated domestic gas or, indeed, gas hot water customers. However, I do point out that, to get the discount, pensioners must apply now. There are Allgas customers in Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, the Darling Downs and, of course, the Gold Coast. Allgas will advertise further details of the new arrangements, and all members in those general areas should pass on the good news to their constituents who could be affected.

I thank those members, particularly on this side of the House, who raised the matter with me so that together, working as a team, we could get this positive result.

Townsville/Thuringowa Youth Justice Service

Ms NELSON-CARR: I ask the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care: can she outline to members some examples of recent efforts and successes of the Beattie Government to reduce youth crime in Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: I am pleased to report to members concerning the Government's latest initiatives to reduce juvenile crime in Queensland. Earlier this month, I opened the Townsville/Thuringowa Youth Justice Service. The member for Mundingburra attended the launch of this new service, as did her colleagues the member for Thuringowa and the member for Townsville. I thank them for their support for and interest in this project.

The service has been operating for three weeks and it has already recorded successful outcomes. For instance, one young person with a significant criminal history has already been successfully placed in employment. On completion of community service orders this young person was eager to continue fruitful work in his community. The officers of the service successfully found the boy a job working in the trades area and he is now pursuing external studies. Other young people have begun vocational training and more have prepared work resumes for the first time. This means one less young Queensland in our justice system and one young Queensland embarking upon a more fruitful life of employment.

The Townsville/Thuringowa service is the first of three pilot services targeted at young offenders. In the 1998-99 State Budget the Government dedicated \$6.3m over four years to establish these services in areas of high need. The program is part of this Government's commitment to reduce the incidence of juvenile crime throughout Queensland. The other two services will soon be established in Ipswich and Logan.

These service mark a new approach to juvenile justice by this Government. The services are designed to nip the offending cycle in the bud and to stop the shoplifters of today from becoming the bank robbers of tomorrow. The services will provide intensive supervision of court orders and rehabilitation services to repeat young offenders aged from 10 to 17 years who are on community-based court orders. The aim is to turn these young people away from criminal activity, keep them out of detention and reintegrate them into the community with a reduced risk of re-offending.

In my view, the services find a balance between young people accepting responsibility for their actions and providing real opportunities for them to reintegrate into the community. These efforts include, where necessary, support for these young people to return to school. Some of them are the very same young people for whom the member for Indooroopilly professed concern earlier this morning. At the same time, the programs ensure that young people comply with their court orders.

The services also seek to reduce the overrepresentation of indigenous young people in the youth justice system. The Townsville service has a number of indigenous staff. This is a good example of what can be achieved when Government departments work together. A full-time employment officer from the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations is placed within the service. This officer provides specialist assistance in relation to job search, career planning and employment-related activities. I am pleased to recognise the enthusiastic response from that department to this project.

I also congratulate the Queensland Police Service representatives in Townsville and the Townsville and Thuringowa City Councils for their support. A strong partnership with the local community is central to the success of the program. The service is supported by a community reference group. We are lucky that that group is chaired by Mr Peter Nolan, a serving police officer in Townsville, who also operates an establishment called The Station.

Time expired.

Naltrexone Treatment Program

Mrs SHELDON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. In view of the fact that naltrexone treatment for heroin addicts in Perth is free—the only city in the world where the heroin overdose rate has fallen 60% and the heroin death rate has fallen 70%—and that naltrexone is fully subsidised by the Western Australian State Government, I ask: why does the Minister and her department seem to be moving to close down the largest naltrexone program in Queensland, which gives every indication of performing a major service to the community, and why are not the relevant sections of the relevant Act being reviewed as a matter of urgency?

Mrs EDMOND: I am delighted to answer this question because there has been a lot of misinformation about this matter. We regularly read in the newspapers that this is the largest,

and only, naltrexone treatment program in Queensland. That is a nonsense. There are strict controls on naltrexone. Some 30 GPs have been trained in the administration of naltrexone and those GPs are offering their services.

There has also been a suggestion that the action taken by Queensland Health in asking the particular GP concerned to reply to certain matters is really a matter of sloppy bookkeeping. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is not about sloppy bookkeeping. It should be made clear that this is about controlled and restricted drugs—not only naltrexone.

The doctor involved claims that the law is preventing him from treating patients as he sees fit because it would involve him in obtaining approval to treat each and every drug-dependent person. That is something that each and every doctor working in this area has to do—and does.

Mrs SHELDON: I rise to a point of order. The doctor in question was on the phone for 20 minutes yesterday waiting for someone to answer him. The bureaucrat was too busy and would not speak to the doctor. That is the problem; the bureaucrats will not speak to this man.

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

Mrs EDMOND: I can contradict that. I was present when the doctor was spoken to, at length, on speaker phone.

Mrs Sheldon: Was that 30 minutes after he rang up and was told to hold on?

Mrs EDMOND: I was there. The phone call was on a loudspeaker. I listened to the doctor concerned saying that these laws are sensible laws and that he agreed with them. He is just a bit muddled and confused and does not know how to comply. We are trying to help him to comply because this is a safety issue. This is about looking after the quality of care that is given to very vulnerable patients. It is about maintaining quality and standards which have been approved and agreed by all of the doctor's peers.

All medical practitioners in the State have to work within this legislation and they all acknowledge the importance of doing this in order to meet professional standards. Indeed, the doctor concerned has acknowledged the importance of doing this. The treatment of drug-dependent persons with the use of a drug which is not currently licensed for this purpose—buprenorphine—and which is not currently available in an appropriate

formulation for this purpose is not good clinical practice.

The clinical trial of detoxification using this drug in an appropriate formulation is occurring in Queensland, but the approval to treat drug-dependent persons has been part of Queensland legislation—

Time expired.

Promotion of Women in Corrective Services

Ms BOYLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. The Beattie Labor Government has attempted to promote suitably qualified women through the ranks of the Public Service. I ask: can the Minister outline what advances have been made in Corrective Services?

Mr BARTON: Corrective Services has traditionally been considered a male-dominated profession and a male domain. However, a quiet revolution is taking place in corrections facilities around Queensland. More and more women are taking on corrective services as a career, and we are welcoming them.

I am pleased to announce that we have recently appointed Ms Ann Dutney as Deputy Director-General of the Department of Corrective Services. This makes Ms Dutney the second highest ranking public servant in Corrective Services in Queensland. I am very confident that Ms Dutney will play a crucial role in implementing the reforms that we want to make in Queensland's correctional facilities.

Gaining Ms Dutney's services has been something of a coup for the new Department of Corrective Services. She was carving out a very successful career in corrections in the private sector. We managed to steal Anne from Corrections Corporation of Australia, where she held the very important position of director of operations since 1997.

She will not be coming into the job without knowledge of corrective services in Queensland. She began her career in Queensland in 1984 as a probation and parole officer in the former Queensland Probation and Parole Service. She worked her way through the ranks, taking up senior positions at the John Oxley Youth Centre and at the old Boggo Road jail. In 1991, she became the first female general manager of a correctional facility in Queensland when she was appointed to Moreton Correctional Centre at Wacol.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BARTON: I take that interjection from a previous Minister for Police and Correctives

Services: she was then considered to be the best general manager in the system.

We also have another woman performing a major role in Queensland Corrections at this point as general manager of a correctional centre. I refer to Kerrith McDermott, who is currently running the Rockhampton Correctional Centre—one of our oldest and most difficult prisons to manage. Kerrith has done a great job since she took over.

In Queensland Corrections, 37% of all staff are women. Approximately 32% of staff in custodial centres are women. In community corrections—a very important area—some 57% of the staff are women.

I also want to pay tribute to the Director of Community Corrections, Angela Musumeci, who is doing a great job in handling the 20,000 offenders that her staff look after every day. I would like to put on the record that as part of the restructuring of the new department, we have established a Women's Policy Unit to look into why there has been a threefold increase in the number of female offenders in recent years. This unit will also develop rehabilitation programs that are tailor-made for women. At this point, most programs are not designed specifically for women; they have been designed for men.

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

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from 14 September (see p. 3829).

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): This is an incredibly disappointing Budget to carry Queensland into the new millennium. It has as its bottom line the worst and the most irresponsible public financial outcomes for this State for decades, possibly since Statehood. It is the work of clearly the most irresponsible Labor Government in the history of the State, and one which is setting itself up to sit comfortably with the record of Cain, Kirner, Bannon, Wran, Lawrence and Burke.

In order of deficits, according to Queensland Treasury for 1998-99 we learn that, in this Budget, the member for Brisbane Central and his Government delivered a \$375m GFS deficit, rounded out yesterday by the ratings agency of the Premier's choice, Standard and Poor's, to \$0.4 billion. We learn

that this is an absolutely paltry number compared with what is in store in the current, far more disastrous Budget. In this Budget the \$0.4 billion deficit blows out to \$1.2 billion, again on the agreement of the Queensland Treasury and Standard and Poor's. According to Treasury, by the end of June next year there will be a \$350m cash deficit in the general Government sector and a deficit of a massive \$1.235 billion when an \$885m negative result for public trading enterprises is added.

It could be even worse. The column containing other potential, more damaging numbers, the Government censored. They have been blacked out. The Premier must uncensor them. In old movies, in dictatorial regimes in South America, or during the old days of Stalinist Russia, when the Government of the day wanted people not to know something, the newspaper would be published with whole paragraphs blacked out or photographs of people who the Government of the day did not want people to know about were blacked out. In the best traditions of South American banana republics, in the best traditions of Governments that do not want the people to know, for the first time for as long as anyone is aware in the history of this State, we have censored Budget documents. Charts in the Budget documents have been blacked out, hidden from the people of Queensland. The pathetic, lamentable excuse given by the member for Brisbane Central for that is commercial in confidence. It might be commercial in confidence if they related to Queensland Rail, or if they related to some other Government entity. However, we do not even get the totals. This censored Budget, a Budget that had a hidden deficit, a Budget that has been shown to have that massive deficit as confirmed by Standard and Poor's, does not even provide the Parliament with the information that, obviously, Treasury provided the Government but which the member for Brisbane Central is not prepared to provide the Parliament.

The data for the following year, which would cover the Premier's final Budget—if he lasts a full term—is even more heavily censored. His Government is projecting a slight cash surplus for the general Government sector for 2000-01, but all data below that—covering public businesses and public financial institutions—is blacked out totally. They said, "Gee, this won't make us look too pretty", and so they got out the black paint and blacked it out, denying that information to the Parliament and to the people of Queensland.

Mr Springborg: Not really open and accountable.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says, it is not very open and accountable. What we can see, from Government activities that do not include the performance of the financial enterprises, is that the negative result projected for the election year Budget is a deficit of \$275m. However, as I say, thanks to the dishonesty of the acting Treasurer, that may well be only part of the story. He must uncensor that column, too.

The disastrous numbers that the Premier, in his speech on Tuesday, hid so deliberately from the Parliament explains a great deal about some of his most recent irrational behaviour. There simply had to be an explanation as to why the acting Treasurer, in his own Budget week, was seizing on a Standard and Poor's assessment dated April this year—a six-month old document—assessing the 1997-98 coalition Budget as having what the agency termed "a modest cash deficit". As we all know, he worked that old and previously publicised document very hard. He did that even though his own Treasury Department and, indeed, his own former Treasurer, had disowned it—by ignoring it—in repeatedly reporting a billion dollar surplus for the coalition's final Budget. The former Treasurer did that in his 1998-99 Budget. He did it again in his consolidated financial report for 1997-98, published after the Standard and Poor's assessment.

The records of this Government and of the acting Treasurer have been contradicted by the stood-aside Treasurer and contradicted comprehensively by the Treasury Department. For example, the 1998-99 Budget of the stood-aside Treasurer, Mr Hamill, presented in September 1997 reported an actual Budget outcome for 1997-98 of—

"A surplus of \$1,102 million in the General Government sector and \$1,132 million for the total State Government; and an Operating Statement surplus of \$39 million and a Consolidated Fund cash surplus of \$3 million."

That statement appears in Budget Overview, Budget Paper No. 2, at page 1.

Then Treasurer Hamill's consolidated financial report of the Government of Queensland for 1997-98, published on 29 April—after the Standard and Poor's assessment—stated—

"The whole of Government operating surplus for 1997-98 before abnormal and extraordinary items was \$976 million, an

increase of \$494 million on the 1996-97 result. The operating surplus after abnormal items and extraordinary items was \$1,031 million (1996-97, \$923m) an increase of \$108 million. The surplus of \$976 million or 4.6% of total revenue provides capacity to fund future capital works and is consistent with the Government's objectives of maintaining budget surpluses and disciplined fiscal policies."

The acting Treasurer—with the emphasis on "acting"—has been caught out again. The truth is that the final Budget of the coalition Government contained a surplus on both a cash and accrual basis, unlike the deceitful exercise of the current Government that has undermined Queensland's strong financial position and plunged our great State into the red.

The Premier's frothing over that assessment was astounding. The member for Caloundra—the former Treasurer—and I were "The worst financial managers in this State this century". Apparently, I had run the State "like an overcharged Bankcard".

Now we have an assessment of a deficit for the Queensland Budget for the current financial year at virtually 10 times the level suggested by Standard and Poor's, and this time Treasury agrees. Treasury also says that the deficit is \$1.2 billion, but the acting Treasurer did not think to tell the Parliament, the people of Queensland or the media in his presentation of his Budget to the State. I wonder if Standard and Poor's is quite the Premier's favourite ratings agency this morning, as it was a few days ago. I suspect not, now that it has revealed him to be unarguably, and by his own standards, by far the worst financial manager in this State this century and doubtless in either century that Queensland has been a sovereign State. By the end of this Budget he will be able to claim to be the worst financial manager of this State across three centuries, because I firmly believe that no Premier in the century that we are about to enter will match this Premier's abysmal economic performance of a \$0.4 billion deficit in his first Budget and at least a \$1.2 billion deficit for his second Budget. Heaven knows what deficit will be in his election Budget.

The Premier was so fundamentally dishonest on Tuesday as to have denied this information to Queensland. There was absolutely no mention of these shameful bottom lines in his speech to this Parliament. In my view, he misled this place. The data, as I

say, was presented in back-of-the-book numbers, buried in half blacked out columns in the back of Budget Paper No. 2. I think that all Queenslanders will agree that that is deeply disappointing and deeply troubling.

Queensland Governments have bipartisanly cherished a tradition of sound economic management in this State, which has been maintained unbroken by both sides of politics for decades until this week and until this acting Treasurer and Premier. In typically boastful rhetoric, when he delivered his Budget the acting Treasurer said that it was a Budget of which Jeff Kennett would be proud. In light of what we now know, the member for Brisbane Central insults Jeff Kennett. He should apologise. The member for Brisbane Central is clearly confused about his role models. Joan Kirner, John Cain, John Bannon, Neville Wran, Brian Burke and Carmen Lawrence might be proud of the smoke and the mirrors, the mass of red ink, the censored Budget tables and the many tricks in this Budget, but he insults Jeff Kennett.

Jeff Kennett style Budgets for Queensland could become a reality if the foundations being laid by this Government in this series of Budgets continues to bear fruit of the type that has already been achieved and is projected, and has resulted in a Standard and Poor's watch on the public finances of the State of Queensland. However, Kennett style Budgets will never be delivered by the member for Brisbane Central. They are clearly not his style. By the time that need arises he will be reviled, like his role models, and he will be gone.

Another bottom line of this Budget that also makes it a depressing entrance for this great State to the new millennium, well apart from the deficit issue, is its central pessimism reaching way out into the Forward Estimates—very un-Queensland pessimism. Economic growth, which has been revised upwards to 5.7% from 4.75% for the coalition's 1997-98 Budget, fell to 4.75% in the first Beattie Budget of 1998-99 and is projected to be 3.75% in 1999-2000. That is almost two full percentage points down—a near halving of the growth rate between the coalition's last Budget and the acting Treasurer's election-year Budget. Those numbers are not expected to improve right out to the end of the Forward Estimates in 2003 and the reasons given are domestic and local, not international—it is not the Asian financial crisis but domestic considerations. That is a defeatist outlook.

Employment growth, which has been revised upwards to a strong 3.2% for the

coalition's 1997-98 year, was down to 2.75% for 1998-99 and is expected to ease further to 2.5% for 1999-2000 and right out to 2003. Those are disappointing numbers. They are defeatist numbers for a Premier who says that he remains committed to 5% unemployment within the next three years. The coalition took jobs growth from a mere 5,800 under Labor in 1995-96 to over 30,000 in its first year and to over 50,000 in 1997-98. Who has the credentials in respect of jobs, jobs, jobs? Last year, growth fell numerically to just over 40,000 and a similar result is predicted in this Budget. According to the acting Treasurer, the jobs prospects are as relatively gloomy as the growth forecasts.

Business investment, which was over 10% for 1998-99, is expected to come back to 4.5% this financial year. That is a key number, because it is ultimately private business investment that drives jobs. Dwelling investment, which was up 12.9% in 1997-98, fell to 6.5% for 1998-99 and is expected to remain subdued this year. Household consumption is projected to be down from growth of 6.5% last year to 3.75%. Public final demand is projected to be not even one-third of the 7% growth last year. It is projected to be just 2%. In other words, almost every major indicator is down, down, down—and down both significantly and chronically—right out to 2003.

Therefore, this should have been a Budget of confidence building, which was the big issue for the coalition in 1996. The State had emerged haltingly from the recession that we were told by Paul Keating we had to have. What was needed from Government at that time was the creation of a mood: a restoration of confidence. One can do that in Budgets, and we did that in our Budgets and the coalition in Canberra did the same. It worked. The economy revived, and revived very strongly. That is what should have been attempted here.

On the surface, the use of deficits on the scale that has been employed by this Government might suggest that that is just what has been attempted, perhaps to the extent of being overdone, but it has not. Instead, we have a range of measures that are mostly constraining, not liberating, via both the revenue and the outlays side. We have an extraordinary level—an unparalleled level—of neglect of the basics.

I cannot remember a Budget where we have seen such an assault on the areas of Government service delivery that most concern the average Queenslander. The Health budget

was flagged for a 6% increase in pre-Budget publicity, which would in itself have been the lowest increase in Health funding for almost a decade. In fact, the increase was barely \$138m, or 3.7% on actual expenditure last year, when the already infamous 6% capital charge is included. That is despite a massive increase in health funding from the Commonwealth achieved by the previous coalition Government in negotiations with the Prime Minister, the Federal Treasurer and the Health Minister just before we left office.

In the same terms, the equally crucial Education sector gets an increase of barely 3.6%, which is again the smallest increase from either the Goss, the Borbidge or the Ahern Governments for more than a decade. Adjusted for inflation and enrolments, it is an effective cut. The Queensland Teachers Union is right.

Incredibly, the entire suite of law and order portfolios—Police, Corrective Services, Justice and Attorney-General—get between them barely half of what the Premier has awarded his own pen-pushing department. The increase to the Police budget is an absolute disgrace at 0.15%, or \$1.2m—an addition to a budget of \$800m-plus that really takes it backwards. The increase for the Police Service is absolutely dwarfed by the increase of \$58.7m, or 41.4%, for the Premier. To any thinking Queenslander that is a disgraceful, ridiculous and outrageous comparison. But it is the reality of this Budget.

The increase for Corrective Services is 0.48%, or \$1.9m, compared with an increase of \$58.7m, or 41.4%, for the Premier. The increase for Justice and Attorney-General is 7%, or \$26.7m, compared with an increase of \$58.7m, or 41.4%, for the Premier. Between them the cornerstone law and order departments get total real increases in this Budget of just \$30.8m. But what did the Premier do to his own department? What did this selfish Premier and acting Treasurer do for himself? He gave himself \$58.7m—48 times more than the increase he could find for the Queensland Police Service, 30 times more than the increase for Corrective Services, more than double the increase for Justice and Attorney-General and almost double the increase for the entire law and order arena. No Queenslander will see the slightest sense in that. No Queenslander will be able to understand a Premier who gives himself a budget increase 48 times that for the Police Service, 30 times that for Corrective Services, double the increase for Justice and Attorney-General and almost double the increase for

the entire law and order arena. No Queenslander should forgive that.

The 41.4% increase for the Premier's Department compares with a cut of 9.1%, or \$26.6m, for the Department of Primary Industries. The 41.4% increase for the Premier's Department compares with a cut of 14.9% for the Environmental Protection Agency. The increase of 41.4% for the Premier compares with a cut of 30% in the budget of the Department of Mines and Energy. The Premier gets 41.4%; the Department of Natural Resources gets 2.6%, which in dollar terms is less than one quarter of the increase for the Premier. The Premier gets 41.4% more; the Department of Public Works gets its budget slashed by 33%. The Premier gets 41.4% more; the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing gets 29.2% less. The Premier gets 41.4% more; Main Roads gets 9.6% less.

Mr Elliott: Shame on him.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the honourable member said, shame on him. Most disturbingly, the Premier gets a 41.4%, or \$58.7m, increase this financial year, but this year he can manage only \$10m of the \$100m the Forde inquiry recommended be applied urgently to child protection improvements in this State.

Mr Elliott: They should hang their heads in shame.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the honourable member said, they should hang their heads in shame.

That is far and away the most distasteful of the comparisons that can be made between the Premier's own greedy self-largesse and his scrooge act in relation to the bulk of departments. His claim that the bureaucrats could not deal with a greater increase defies the faith in his own ability to expand his own bureaucracy effectively and in an unprecedented manner. Growth in the staff of the Premier's Department is projected to be 107 by the end of this financial year, compared with the figure as at June 1998. He says he is going to fund out of that \$10m how many additional child abuse counsellors? Was it 16 or 17? He mentioned a number like that the other day. There will be 107 extra bodies in his department. Where are his priorities, his political sense of duty and morality? I would have thought that, if the Premier can manage to absorb an increase in his own budget of over \$100m in two years and find productive work for over 100 new staff in the same period, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, with the Forde blueprint to

work from, could have managed a similar output and perhaps even more.

Only a handful of the front-line areas of Government get any substantial increase in this Budget, but only one beats the Premier's. It is not Health, Education, Environment and it is certainly not law and order. It is not a front-line service delivery department; it is the department of the Deputy Premier. The real increase in his department is \$79.6m, or 65%.

Mr Elliott: He must be in the right faction.

Mr BORBIDGE: He must be in the right faction this week, anyway. Again, there seems to be little doubt about the ability of that department to absorb dramatic funding increases as compared with the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care in the context of the Forde recommendations. That is another shameful signal to the people of Queensland as to where the priorities of this Government lie, that is, in the selfish, self-serving interests of the two big boys of the Beattie Labor Government. Such is the dramatic reordering of priorities of the Government of Queensland under the Beattie Labor Government! The basics are under siege. Central Government is looking after itself. Labor is back in town. There is much more money for the Premier, but much less for front-line service delivery—built around a 6% capital charge that will act as an extraordinary disincentive to the development of this State via social and capital infrastructure, particularly in rural and regional areas. It is a tax that will inevitably lead to real service cuts across-the-board. That is what undoubtedly is going to happen. That is what the Government wants to happen.

Under the BST, departments will either cop their budget cuts on the chin or they will seek to wind back their costs by an equivalent amount. There are a number of ways in which they can achieve that. They can simply slash their service delivery by the appropriate amount to meet the bill. In the case of Health, that would be by 4%—greater than its real increase in funding. That could be done by the closure of beds, wards, operating theatres and accident and emergency services—perhaps even by the closure of entire hospitals. There should be no illusion that that is precisely what this Government intends.

What it says, in terms that the National Competition Council and Mr Samuel would love, is that this tax will force departments to better manage their assets. We can read for that "reduce their assets"—our assets, the assets of Queenslanders. The reason they would do this is that to increase their assets is

to increase their tax exposure; to reduce their assets is to reduce their tax exposure. What price, literally, the small isolated one-teacher rural school when its sale could help defray the costs associated with an enrolment increase in town? What price, literally, the small one-man police station in the rural village when there is a need for extra cars to fight the crime waves in the cities, with the cars and the batons being taxed? What price, literally, the community health centre in a regional town when there is a desperate need to defray the costs of a new operating theatre a long way away and the region cannot afford to cop the cost?

We get this furphy, "But the Feds do it." How many country hospitals does the Federal Government run? How many country schools, how many suburban police stations does it run? It does not do it. Of course, in capital works expenditure, in recent years large amounts have been spent in Queensland because the other States are not developing to the same extent. So obviously what fits somewhere else will work against us here time and time again.

This is hard core economic rationalism. Instead of going to Cabinet Budget Review Committee hearings, scratching and scrounging and fighting for schools, the Education Department will be trying to minimise its capital base to minimise its exposure to the Beattie stealth tax. Instead of going to Cabinet Budget Review Committee hearings, fighting for new capital expenditure in Health, the Health Department bureaucrats will be desperately trying to make do with what they have got. On and on and on that will go.

Why keep the Crown lands, carefully built up over the years, for future roads? Why not sell them and avoid the tax, particularly when there is, as Main Roads has this year, an effective 10% cut in its budget while vast sections of the State are crying out for roadworks. The department would sell the land to avoid the tax. What sort of planning is that encouraging? What sort of foundation is that for future roadworks? Why hold on to the land for a new hospital, a new school, a new DPI office, a new police station? Avoid the BST! Sell it! Reduce your ability to deliver better services in those areas!

BST avoidance will be the new game on the George Street block. That is going to reduce the scope and quality of Government services to the people of Queensland and that is precisely what the BST is meant to achieve. Along with the massive deficit, along with the defeatist forecasts, the BST is another of the

facets of this Budget that make it a lemon—a big, yellow, Beattie Labor lemon and a very disappointing entrance for this great State to the new millennium.

There are many more. The alleged cut in payroll tax is another because it is an assault on another of the fundamentals. Queensland Governments have, for many years, again on a bipartisan level until this week—under this acting Treasurer, under this Premier—sought to absolutely maximise our tax advantages over the other States. Our prosperity over the years has relied on the maintenance and even the widening of those advantages. Ostensibly there is a cut in payroll tax in the Budget from 5% to 4.95% from 1 July and to 4.8% from July 2001. In reality, the cut represents a significant increase. How typical of the deceit and the duplicity of this acting Treasurer—a significant increase—because for the first time the superannuation contributions of Queensland employers from Budget day on Tuesday—he could not wait until 1 January; it is from last Tuesday—will become assessable for payroll tax.

Compulsory super contributions are now 7%. In three years' time they will be 9%. The inclusion of super contributions, therefore, means a major increase in the payroll tax burden, both by increasing the exposure of all existing payers and by bringing into the net many more employers who would otherwise have been below the \$850,000 threshold. So the Premier's description of that dishonest, deceitful manipulation as a tax cut is as honest as his description of the capital tax as an equity bonus. Of course, the measure is designed to bring in the maximum extra dollars in the election year Budget.

There is another such trick in the Budget, and it is only hinted at. It is potentially far more damaging. I refer to the new arrangements for public sector superannuation. What the Premier has done is reduce the Government contribution to public sector superannuation from 14.55% to a maximum of 12.75%, and the key word is "maximum"—not a firm, not a committed, not an always will be there 12.75%; a maximum of 12.75%. The proposition from Treasury was that 12.75% was adequate to protect the actuarial soundness of the scheme.

That may well be accurate—and I go to that level of certainty only because we have already seen before from Labor Governments in this State that actuarial assessments can differ. I refer in particular to the unfunded liability of \$400m in the workers compensation scheme that the previous coalition

Government inherited and which was denied, allegedly on actuarial grounds, by Labor right to the death. In the same way, there is great danger in what is now going to occur in relation to the State super scheme because there is now indisputably a hole in the super bucket. The clear danger is that it will be widened as necessary to meet the political needs of the Government, not the actuarial needs of the scheme.

Last year the Government's contributions to super, according to the Budget, were \$732m. This year they are budgeted at \$674m, a reduction of \$58m. The result this year and the real time projection for the election year Budget of 2000-01 should be watched very closely right across Queensland because the reduction in Government contributions to super—potentially very major reductions in the contributions to super—means that those funds are now a source of emergency cash for strapped Governments. This is clearly a strapped Government, based not only on Treasury's calculations but also on Standard and Poor's calculations—the Premier's preferred rating agency on the issue of deficits. At least, it was his preferred agency until yesterday afternoon when it backed the assessment of Treasury in relation to the massive scale of the deficit in this Budget.

The cornerstone of this Budget is said to be the Premier's commitment to the Smart State. With the superficiality of the marketing tag aside, it is an effort to foster new industries and a new high-level skills base in this State that has been under way under Governments of both political persuasions in Queensland for a number of years with considerable success. It was not invented by the member for Brisbane Central. His predecessor in Labor, Mr Goss, worked hard at it. It was being worked on in the days of Mike Ahern and Russell Cooper and Joh Bjelke-Petersen. There was considerable progress made in the 26 months of the coalition Government and, to that extent, obviously any such program has our ongoing support.

Indeed, considerable aspects of the funding that the Premier now claims as his own, particularly in relation to his pet aspect of the effort, biotechnology, was in fact funding committed by my Government and by the Commonwealth as Centenary of Federation funding, secured and announced during the period of office of the previous coalition Government. It was not his idea; it was not even his money. It is a very worthwhile project and one that the coalition will seek to foster

when it returns to Government, just as we did when we were last in Government.

I would make a number of points because on Tuesday the Premier in reality used this aspect of the Budget as his principal diversionary tactic. The numbers that back it up are in amazing disproportion to the spin that the acting Treasurer sought to put on it. This was, in reality, the glossy side bar of the Budget that was aimed at drawing attention away from the deficits, away from the BST, away from his abysmal performance in relation to child protection and away from his absolutely miserly treatment of the basic concerns of Queenslanders. It is in the context of those aspects of the Budget that the so-called centrepiece really has to be put in its rightful place.

The cornerstones of the Queensland economy remain mining, tourism and primary industries. The core service responsibilities of the State remain health, education and law and order. The broader core responsibility remains maintenance of a business environment that will maximise job creation in numbers sufficient to get the unemployment rate down.

They are the immutable facts. They are the sectors of the public economy and they are the public responsibilities that Governments must meet first. If there had been an adequate place for those core responsibilities in this Budget—adequate respect and adequate dollars—then I could give the Premier considerably greater credit for his so-called centrepiece, but it earns its place as a side dish in this Budget by a vast range of measures. Many of them are related to measures that are in the Budget. Many are related to some measures that are markedly absent from this Budget.

We have an abysmal increase in the Health budget. We have an abysmal increase in the Education budget. We have levels of funding across-the-board on the law and order front that are simply disgraceful. We have the unforgivable neglect, on a very spurious basis, of the Forde inquiry's primary recommendation. We have significant effective cuts in the support mechanisms for our major industries at a time when, on the Government's own judgment of the future of the economy, there is a clear need to increase our efforts. The DPI budget was slashed by \$27m. That is the pattern across the core Budget areas in terms of those portfolio responsibilities that have the highest capacity to create most of the jobs in Queensland.

I do not recall reading in any Budget paper the words "small business". Small business is our biggest employer. It is the biggest employer not only in this State but also in this country. Where is it in the Budget? It does not even rate a mention. We have plenty of gloomy projections that must mean very major challenges ahead for the entire sector. This is a Government that claims to be preoccupied with jobs, jobs, jobs. I say: deceit, deceit, deceit—lies, lies, lies.

Where are the imaginative measures from Government to give small business a hand over the next four years of apparently moderate growth? The fact is that they are non-existent in this Budget. That is another reason I find it difficult to get overly excited about the designation that this is a smart Budget for a Smart State. It is a half smart Budget by a half smart acting Treasurer.

The final reason I find it difficult to get too excited is that, in the final analysis, the commitment to the Smart State is as modest as many other commitments in this Budget, even in comparison with the benchmark increase the Premier has given himself.

These are undoubtedly the main issues in this Budget. There are many important matters that I have not canvassed. As the debate proceeds, other speakers will detail the shortcomings in particular portfolio areas. I will, however, conclude with this assessment. This is probably the worst Budget presented in this Parliament in my experience and, I suspect, in the experience of any member present.

Mr Elliott: Hear, hear!

Mr BORBIDGE: The father of the House concurs. It was presented in a fundamentally dishonest way. It contains a massive deficit, with deficits piling upon deficits across all three of his budgets at levels we cannot reasonably even guess at because of the level of censorship. It is disgracefully neglectful of the basics. Its capital tax will derail and distort the development of this State, and it is intended to do just that.

As I said at the outset, this is a massively disappointing way for this great State to enter the new millennium. I suspect that a major reason for all of that, to be charitable to the Premier and to the stood-aside Treasurer, is the net bet scandal. I think this Budget is evidence of a Government that fundamentally dropped the ball, that effectively lost the plot. With the former Treasurer gone and the acting Treasurer acting, there were no brakes—no active political minds at work on it—and the result is an unmitigated disaster for Queensland.

Who would have thought that in this great State, with the strength of our public finances built up over generations, we would have seen a media release issued by Standard and Poor's to the effect that it had placed Queensland on watch? Who would have thought in such a short time the member for Brisbane Central could have taken action that resulted in Standard and Poor's releasing a statement, entitled "Queensland Budget Shows Weakening Finances", which states—

"The fiscal forecasts in the Beattie Labor government's second budget brought down yesterday is for the underlying finances of the Queensland government to weaken in fiscal 2000 before recovering in subsequent years, said Standard & Poor's.

'In contrast to recent years'—

Who was there in recent years? Guess who? It continues—

"In contrast to recent years, the general government sector is expected to slip into the red in fiscal 2000."

These are not my words. They are the words of Rick Shepherd, the director of public finance ratings. The statement continues—

"A general government underlying cash deficit of A\$0.4 billion is forecast compared with a small surplus in fiscal 1999."

It goes on to state—

"For the state sector as a whole, a cash deficit of more than A\$1.2 billion is forecast in fiscal 2000."

And further—

"Standard & Poor's will be watching closely that the government is able to realise the forward estimates of an improving underlying financial position."

What an achievement! What a Premier! What an acting Treasurer! What an actor. What a danger. What a threat.

To be fair to former Premier Wayne Goss, both sides of politics sought to maintain the financial legacy that we inherited in this State after decades of conservative Governments up to the late 1980s. The Goss Government essentially did. The Borbidge Government did. Now what we have, according to Treasury and according to Standard and Poor's, is a watch on the performance of the Government of Queensland. A \$1.2 billion deficit in fiscal 2000—

Mr Beanland: Queensland's John Cain.

Mr BORBIDGE: Queensland's John Cain, as the member for Indooroopilly says. I just hope that he will not be there long enough to take this great State down the path of disaster that his counterparts in Victoria and elsewhere did.

Mr Springborg: John Cain with a smile and less hair.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the honourable member says, John Cain with a smile and less hair, although the latter applies to many of us these days.

This could have been a good Budget. This could have been a Budget that positioned Queensland for the new century and the new millennium. Instead, this Budget is an unmitigated disaster. This Budget has set the alarm bells ringing. Instead of the light going to green, it is on amber. This Premier, this acting Treasurer, has sole responsibility for the way in which he has undermined the proud financial legacy of successive Governments of Queensland. He will pay for it. He will live to rue the day.

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (12.18 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to enter the Budget debate for this year. Following the Leader of the Opposition, I wish to explore in some detail some of the issues upon which he has already touched.

As the shadow Treasurer and a former professor of commerce, I would usually approach the delivery of the annual State Budget with a certain degree of expectation. After all, it should be an opportunity for the Government to outline its policies and a vision for Queensland not just over the next 12 months but for a longer period. It is an opportunity for the Government to present detailed costings of its proposed expenditures, its plans for capital investment and the sources of revenue on a consistent, transparent and accountable basis. Unfortunately, this year, it is with a sense of disappointment that I must report that the second Budget of the Beattie Government is not only very underwhelming, it also reveals some very worrying trends which spell danger for our State economy and for the future standard of living of all Queenslanders.

This Budget may be the rushed product of a fragile Premier and part-time Treasurer but, frankly, the Queensland public deserves more. There is no doubt that there was disruption behind the scenes—disruption in the preparation of this year's State Budget—which has probably tarnished the product. It was a sad sight when David Hamill sat over there the other day. One of the Courier-Mail reporters said that he was "looking like an Olympic

athlete disqualified for false starts and forced to watch from the sidelines."

My starting point for analysing this year's State Budget begins with a number of questions. Does this Government have a vision for the future of Queensland? Is this Budget outcome driven? And what is Peter Beattie doing to achieve the "jobs, jobs, jobs" of which he is so fond of speaking? The answers to all of these questions are, sadly: no, no and no. And in addressing those issues in detail, I thought I might start with what was the centrepiece—supposedly—of this State Budget. That was, of course, the Smart State. But when we scratch beneath the surface of the Premier's rather glib grab, we find a lot of rhetoric and very little substance.

Let us look at the commitment. There is probably no better place to start than to look at the highlights that were issued with the Budget, because presumably that was the part on which most Queenslanders, including ourselves, were supposed to concentrate. Let us look at the first issue that comes up in the Smart State, that is, the \$270m commitment to biotechnology. That \$270m is spread over a 10-year period—an average of \$27m a year. What was the first year's commitment? There is supposed to be a commitment this year to the Smart State, but what was the first year's commitment? \$20m! That is less than the expected average. It is like the old adage that the cheque is in the mail—"We want a Smart State, but we want to make sure that we do not have to pay for it."

Mr Laming: What a smart Premier.

Dr WATSON: What a smart Premier? Half-smart, perhaps!

When we look at education, the same kind of issue comes to the fore: there is \$40m. But again, when we look at the details of the Budget paper, we find that that figure is spread over four years. When we look at the commitment to IT in Queensland schools, we find \$55m. Although we are not sure over how much time that is spread, it looks like four or five years. So again, we are looking at \$10m or \$15m a year. The figure for TAFE is \$2.6m to equip Queensland's work force with TAFE skills through TAFE. But when we look at the numbers in the staffing of TAFE, particularly in the vocational education and training services, we find a reduction in the number of people. Are we led to believe that the Government is actually going to increase the number of people using TAFE to develop IT skills; that the Government somehow has a magic formula to reduce the number of people who

are able to teach in the vocational and further education sector?

Last week, Terry Mackenroth, the Minister for Communication and Information, launched his product for information technology in Queensland. He indicated at that launch that the Government was going to commit \$1 billion over the next five years—\$200m a year. But we have to look at that \$200m a year in the context of this Budget. Let us be generous for a moment and assume that the \$200m is there—and I will come back to that. We have a Budget that was put forward of \$16,845m, presumably. \$200m in this year represents less than 1.5%.

This is the cornerstone of the State Budget—a Smart State—yet the Government can commit only 1.5% of the revenue that it expects to receive to try to achieve it. What kind of commitment is that? And that is presuming that it is all new. But when we look at the things that have been highlighted in this Budget statement and the things that we did as a Government, we will probably find that there is very little that is new. Quite a number of these things had already been committed by the previous Government. So if we peel that away and look at the real commitment, I suspect we will find that it is well less than \$100m—well less than 1%. The cornerstone of this Government's strategy for Queensland demands less than 1% of the resources that we collect.

Mr Gibbs: It must be heartening to you when you look up at the public gallery and see the packed masses there listening to you.

Dr WATSON: It is heartening to know that you are here listening to me. I value your willingness to devote to this Parliament your very valuable time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order!

Mr Borbidge: His department is down about 26%.

Dr WATSON: Maybe he is actually going to learn to find out where it went.

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

Dr WATSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your protection from the Minister.

The other thing that concerns me about the cornerstone of the Smart State is that there is no indication from this Government, either in the Minister's statement last week or in this Budget, of exactly how this Government sees society changing and the impact that changing technology in the communication

and information sector will have. There is no indication that this Government has an intellectual or emotive understanding of how our society is going to change in the future. That is unfortunate, because there have been some reports in the past that give us an indication of the kinds of changes that are going to take place.

I refer honourable members to a Federal Parliament report by a committee that was chaired by Barry Jones, the former Labor Federal Minister for Science and, of course, Federal ALP President. He addressed a number of issues in that report which any Government—whether it be Federal or State—should consider. For example, he pinpointed the growing disparity between information rich and information poor. That was in 1991, and he started to identify some of the issues.

One would have thought that, in this Budget, if we were going to try to promote Queensland as a Smart State, that first issue would have been addressed up front. We would have had some real ideas of how we were going to achieve that—not some very weak attention to education. My colleague the member for Merrimac will detail some of the issues associated with that in his contribution. This Budget should have started to address those real issues, but it does not. If members read that report from 1991, they will see that Barry Jones highlighted quite a number of points that any information policy and any attempt to bring any part of this country into the 21st century should address.

The other thing that I think comes through in this Budget is that not only is there a lack of a financial commitment in the sense of actually applying resources that this Government is collecting in tax revenue to addressing some of the fundamental issues of the Smart State, but there is actually no intellectual commitment anywhere in the documentation associated with the Budget or, might I say very glibly, associated with what the Minister for Communication and Information developed last week. There are many other aspects of this Budget which need to be examined in detail.

A Government member interjected.

Dr WATSON: We should table you and take you as read. It would be a very short story.

Mr Borbidge: He has lazy equity mixed up with lazy Ministers.

Dr WATSON: As the Leader of the Opposition said, he has lazy equity mixed up

with lazy Ministers. We will talk about that later on. The outlook for the Queensland economy is very solemn. We see a slowing down in economic growth. We see a slowing down in investment growth. We see a slowing down in employment growth. This Budget makes Queensland a slow State.

I want to cover some of the other areas where I see problems with this Budget. Before referring to matters dealing with growth, I want to refer to some of the worrying signs which, if allowed to continue, will pose great danger for the Queensland economy. If there are any doubts about this, they were well and truly dispelled by yesterday's warning from the rating agency Standard and Poor's. Part of the Standard and Poor's report said—

"For the state sector as a whole, a cash deficit of more than A\$1.2 billion is forecast in fiscal 2000 after recording a cash deficit of A\$0.4 billion in fiscal 1999. A 25% increase in the capital program of the public training enterprise will be financed by an increase in borrowing of A\$1.3 billion."

I will address that matter later.

If we refer to page 87 of Budget Paper No. 2 we can see in the General Government GFS Statement of Cash Flows—and this type of presentation is made across Australia, so there is some comparability between the various State Governments and the Commonwealth Government—that the GFS deficit is \$350m. On page 88 we can identify a GFS deficit in the Public Trading Enterprises of \$885m. I believe this represents a record in our recent history. It is 22 years since Queensland previously faced a deficit in this area.

We know what the Government is up to. The Government cannot hide and it cannot run away. The member for Hinchinbrook presented some very important evidence to this House a couple of weeks ago. A series of letters was sent to every public trading enterprise in this State. These letters demanded that there be a dividend of 95%. I want to refer to a couple of these letters.

The chairman of the Far North Queensland Electricity Corporation is Councillor Tom Pyne. Councillor Pyne was appointed under the former Goss Government. He continued as chairman under the coalition Government and is still in office. He is a life member of the ALP and is not in any way a coalition stooge. The letter in question was signed by the then Treasurer, David Hamill, and the Minister for Mines and Energy. The

letter written on 25 September 1998 said this—

"We have considered your Corporation's likely recommended dividend payment in light of its current financial structure and the returns the State, as owner of the Corporation, desires from its investment this financial year. On this basis, it is considered that your corporation is in a position to offer a dividend of approximately \$11.7m, based on 95% of your Corporation's net operating profit after tax. In light of the Government's Budget imperatives, we request that your Board reconsider its initial dividend recommendation in framing its final recommendation to shareholding Ministers for the 1997-98 dividend."

On 17 November Councillor Pyne replied to the Treasurer and said—

"Whilst the Directors appreciate the Government's desire for suitable financial returns, the Directors nevertheless wish to highlight their concerns. These are that a continuing high percentage of dividend payouts are likely to adversely affect the Corporation's ability to raise capital for ongoing infrastructure works, given that the debt to equity level is rising towards 70% and that FNQEB has now been downgraded to an 'A-' credit rating. The Directors have resolved that:

based on the recommendation of the shareholders, payment of the recommended dividend of \$11.7m be made;"

This is somewhat prophetic, because the letter continues—

"... the detrimental impact of an ongoing dividend policy of 95% of after tax net profits on the Corporation's capacity to maintain cash capacity to meet capital works and maintenance needs be highlighted; and

the payment date be set to coincide with the Corporation's best cash position in December to minimise borrowings."

The Treasurer and the Minister were not satisfied with that because they indicated that the then FNQEB forecast of \$12.3m was what led them to the \$11.7m. When they received FNQEB's revised profit they found that the ratio was only 62.1%. They then sent another letter recommending that the dividend be increased to \$18.17m, which is equivalent to the reported profit of \$15.1m plus an admitted profit of \$3.95m.

When we look at page 111 of Budget Paper No. 2 we see the effect of that. In the last financial year dividends rose substantially to \$780m. In the last year this Government increased dividends and put all the public trading enterprises—the generators, the distributors, the port corporations and everyone else—under financial pressure. They were put under so much pressure that this year they are borrowing \$1.328 billion.

This Government shored up the performance last year by extracting very high dividends from the public trading enterprises. This year the poor old cash-strapped PTEs had to borrow \$1.328 billion to cover their projected capital works and other cash flow requirements. This is a strategy of short-sighted stupidity. Over the past decade and a half, when Australian Governments have found themselves in financial difficulties they started off with a Budget process similar to this. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the black holes left by such people as Kirner, Cain, Burke and Bannon. I suppose we could add Keating and Beazley to that list. We now have the Beattie Government's black hole. The Government cannot rob Peter to pay Paul. The Government cannot undermine the financial viability of the public trading enterprises in this State simply to cover the failure of its policies in Government.

The Government cannot undermine the financial viability of the public trading enterprises to prop up the general Government area. That is what the Government is doing. It ripped the cash out of there and made them pay. In essence, the Government is getting them to borrow on its behalf and it is getting the cash from them by using the extremely high dividend payment.

Mr Fouras: You've got a cheek to be making those statements.

Dr WATSON: It is not a question of having a cheek; it is a fact.

Mr Fouras: You sold assets.

Dr WATSON: The member for Ashgrove has a very short memory. Mr Deputy Speaker, he was sitting in your chair and allowed a Budget to go through the Parliament. He was sitting in your chair when the Goss Government took \$1,000m out of the electricity industry in order to pay partly for Keating's \$10 billion black hole.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Dr WATSON: The member knows that.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! The member for Ashgrove will cease interjecting. The member for Moggill will speak through the chair.

Dr WATSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was actually referring to when the member was in your position. The member for Ashgrove ought to remember that because that billion dollars was not necessary after all. It was paid early prior to a Federal election. We found out when we saw the Commonwealth papers. It was not disclosed here. It was only after we got the Commonwealth Budget papers that we actually found out precisely what was going on in this place. So the member for Ashgrove has nothing to talk about. This is a similar situation. The Government has taken \$1.328 billion out of the public trading enterprises, not to prop up a Federal Labor Government but to prop up the State Labor Government.

The other issue—and perhaps I might even say that it is less important, but I do not want to downgrade it—is, as the Leader of the Opposition was saying earlier, the next move that we have to be concerned about, and that is the downgrading of the commitment of this Government to the financial viability of the State's superannuation funds. Although in times of high growth it may be very easy for the Government to reduce its financial commitment due to the increasing market—and, after all, over the past few years we have seen phenomenally high growth on the stock market both here and internationally—it is something else to put that reduced financial commitment into legislation so that at some future time when there is less optimism about growth than there is today, there is a downgrading of the contribution of the State to the State superannuation fund from 14.55% to 12.75% as a maximum. That is cause for concern. It is particularly a cause for concern when we have seen what is happening with the public trading enterprises.

Yesterday, the Premier hailed a record level of capital outlays. In the cold light of day, we see a different reality. When one peels away the Government's rhetoric, one finds a picture of underlying capital investment. In the first instance, I should say that it is impossible to verify accurately whether or not there is a record level of capital outlays. We are finding ways of working that out. My own view is that when one looks at Budget Paper No. 5, one finds that those capital outlays have been inflated in particular ways. I will get to that at some later time.

The Government has seen fit to change the basis upon which the figures are reported.

We support the move to accrual accounting. However, the Government has not given a full reconciliation between the items in the Budget—the capital outlays budget—in terms of last year's Budget with the Budget that was presented. Although at the end of Budget Paper No. 5 there is a statement giving the general outlays, we cannot see them item by item. It is not until we see that that we can really understand what is going on.

However, let me say that, by the Premier's own admission, he does not expect to reach the target that was set by the Government. This is a second year in a row that that has occurred. In other words, the Premier is a chronic, self-confessed underachiever. It is interesting to note that the capital works budget is one of the very few areas in which the Government has provided, in a different set of statements, its policy intentions going beyond the extremely short perspective of one year. In that respect, it has not revealed a record high. In fact, it reveals a continuing low.

On page 75 of Budget Paper No. 2—and I am concentrating only on the general Government sector but the same kind of arguments that I put forward in that regard apply to the PTEs—the gross fixed capital formation is shown as decreasing from \$2,321m down to \$1,604m over the next three years. So between now and 2002 we see a forward estimate of a commitment to gross fixed capital formation of a 40% drop. I am sure that the Government would argue that that is because it has not put in the policy changes for the future. However, when one looks at other parts of the Budget papers, one sees that this reduction in commitment to gross capital formation is really driving the figures that allow the Government to claim that it is going to fix its cash position in future years. In other words, the major thing that is driving the Government's ability to tell Standard and Poor's that it has a better cash position in future years is the fact that the Government's forward projections expect less gross fixed capital formation.

I ask: is the Government going to permit the deterioration of the public infrastructure of this State? If it intends to maintain and expand the public infrastructure, if it intends to create more gross fixed capital in the State, how is it going to finance it? The Government cannot have it both ways. It has to say either that it is going to allow the capital to deteriorate in this State—because that is what the figures show—or if it is going to fix it because it is going to make other policy changes, then it has to identify the sources of revenue. It is no use looking at the future tax revenue, as the

Government has projected—even though expenses have also been projected—because that will not of itself satisfy the requirements.

Of course, that projection has a real impact upon potential jobs. Even using the Government's figures, it has the potential to mean the non-existence of 20,000 extra jobs in the future. Recently, we have heard the cry from the AMWU that capital projects such as Callide C will do more for jobs in Europe and America or elsewhere than jobs in Queensland. When one considers the Budget in terms of the capital works for regional Queensland—and earlier the member for Keppel referred to the problems in regional Queensland—one sees that outside south-east Queensland there has been a dramatic drop.

Mr McGrady: You never go outside of south-east Queensland. You wouldn't know.

Dr WATSON: I get around the State and I know what is going on around the State. You travel only from Mount Isa to here and back again.

An Opposition member: By aircraft.

Dr WATSON: By aircraft. You fly over all the problems; you do not actually get down on the ground to them. A number of times, I have driven through the area. The only time—

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

Dr WATSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, through the Chair to the Minister: if I recall, the last time the Minister drove around the areas, he could not address the problem at Cooktown. There were some problems with blackouts at Cooktown. The Minister could not be contacted to address those problems. For a couple of days, he disappeared. He was then found on the gravy train down at Longreach, or somewhere like that.

I return to the point. Let us look at areas outside of south-east Queensland. In the south west, capital works have fallen by 18.43%. In the Fitzroy region, capital works are up by 29%, only because of the Callide C, which was a project of the Borbidge Government. The contracts were signed under the Borbidge Government and this Government tried to get out of it.

Mr Borbidge: They called for the contracts to try to get out of it.

Dr WATSON: Yes. If it had not been for that, the Fitzroy would have also gone down by approximately \$128m. It is up, but only because of Callide C. Capital works in the

central-west are down by 28.3% this year. I do not know where the member for Mackay is, but he was heard on the radio this morning extolling the virtues of the Government. However, he did not actually tell his listeners that \$48m has been cut out of the Mackay area, which is a fall of 19.62%. The northern area is down by just over 1%. The far north is just down a smidgen, 0.26%. Who is the member for the north-west?

Mr Borbidge: Mr McGrady, isn't it?

Dr WATSON: Is it? It is down by 43.15%.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind the member for Logan that, if he is going to interject, he will do so from his correct seat. It would be very helpful and would assist the debate if the member for Moggill continued.

Dr WATSON: I appreciate your comments, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am only try trying to induce a bit of debate across the Chamber when the Minister interjects and in the spirit of the Parliament, to respond to him in an appropriate way.

The Budget papers show that all increases in capital works—forgetting for the moment whether or not the numbers are correct—occur in the south-east corner of the State, and significant parts of this State will experience major shortfalls. As I said earlier, the Forward Estimates that we can see indicate that, under current policies, we are going to see a reduction in the capital works or the capital formation in this State, which is what is driving the cash forecasts for the future of Queensland.

I turn briefly to the Treasury forecasts associated with the Budget. Table 1.2 in Budget Paper No. 3 shows quite clearly that we can expect a deteriorating financial and economic situation in Queensland. According to Table 1.2, virtually every measure or forecast shows a deteriorating economy in Queensland. Household consumption is down from 6.5% growth to 3.75%. Private investment is down from 5.25% growth to 4.25%. Business investment, which was mentioned earlier by the Leader of the Opposition, is down 60% from a growth rate of 10.75% to 4.5%. Other buildings and structures are down from 7.5% to 6.5%. Investment in machine and equipment is absolutely critical to job creation and small businesses. Machine and equipment expects a decline from 12.75% to 3.5%. Private final demand is down from 6.75% growth to 3.75%. Public final demand is down from 7% growth to 2%. Gross State expenditure is down from

6.75% to 3.25%. Gross State product, of course, is down from 4.75% growth to 3.75%.

Every one of those indicators paints a picture of a declining economy in this State, which is borne out when one looks at unemployment. Last year there was 8.3% unemployment and this year the figure is projected to be 7.75%. However, the unemployment figure for last month, seasonally adjusted, was 7.6%. The expectation of Treasury is that there is going to be very little change in the level of unemployment. In addition, the Treasury forecast for jobs growth this year has fallen from 41,500 to 40,000. Every one of the estimates in the Budget paints a dismal picture for growth in Queensland in this financial year. Chris Murphy from Econtech is actually a little more optimistic. Even though he sees a decline in these areas across Queensland, and he sees that decline continuing to the years 2003 to 2004, he is somewhat more optimistic in terms of growth generally. However, he is more pessimistic in terms of employment growth.

The latest statistics in terms of capital expenditure in the business area also confirm some of the things that are occurring in Queensland. According to the latest forecast, there will be a decline in business investment in mining, manufacturing and other industries in this State. It is fair to say that rather than promoting increasing growth this Government has actually slammed the brakes on economic growth in Queensland. After two years of significant investment by the former coalition Government culminating in its third Budget and a rising trend in investment, employment growth and so on, it is all very well for the Beattie Government to come into office last year and take credit for that. However, this is the Beattie Government's first Budget. This is the first time that the Beattie Government has been in a position to have an impact on the Queensland economy, and the overwhelming message from this Budget is that the Government expects to have either no impact or a negative impact.

Revenue also represents a picture of deterioration in the State. One of the great boasts of Queensland for probably 30 years is that it is a low tax State. That was true under former coalition Governments, it was true under the Goss Labor Government and it was certainly true under the Borbidge Government. In this Budget and, indeed, throughout the 14 months of the Beattie Government, Queenslanders have been slugged an extra \$269 per person on average every year. The tax per capita collections have gone up to

\$1,599 per person per year in this latest Budget. When we left Government, they were just \$1,330. That is the kind of increase that we have had.

What is even more disturbing than the absolute increase in taxes is the State's relative position. All one has to do is compare the Budget Highlights booklet of the last coalition Budget with this one to see that. Under the previous coalition Government, Queensland had the lowest tax position of any State in Australia. Under this Government, we have actually lost that status. Tasmania has a lower set of taxes than Queensland.

Mr Borbidge: Fancy being beaten by Tasmania.

Dr WATSON: Fancy being beaten by Tasmania indeed. The Government may not think that it is particularly important that we have lost the position of the lowest taxing State in Australia to Tasmania. However, when one looks at the Queensland position compared with that of the other States, one will see that we have also lost our competitive position. The gap between Queensland and New South Wales, and Queensland and Victoria, has narrowed. In a competitive environment, businesses look at how their employees will fare in a particular State. We are losing our competitive advantage.

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

Dr WATSON: Prior to the luncheon recess, I was speaking about the rise in State taxes and the loss of our competitive advantage with respect to the other States. Importantly, even though the Budget does not show this—and the Government may not want to admit it—when, for example, tax revenue goes up by about 7.1%, as it is now, but the gross State product goes up by only 6%, there is a marginal decrease in our relative competitiveness. Nothing illustrates that point more graphically than the proposed changes in payroll tax. Whichever way we look at it, we see that the payroll tax on Queensland companies has gone up. The Premier crows about the reduction in the headline rate from 5% down to 4.9% this year and 4.8% the year after. However, by including employer superannuation contributions in the payroll tax base the Government is unquestionably increasing the effective rate. Eventually, that measure will add 9% to payroll calculations. When we make a calculation based on the existing payroll tax base, we see that at that time the amount of payroll tax paid will effectively be about 5.23%. Little wonder the Premier, as he has said, can afford to be

stingy. The Premier's cynical changes to payroll tax mean that more and more businesses will simply pay more payroll tax. I indicated earlier that the figures on page 86 of Budget Paper No. 3 show that in aggregate payroll tax is going up from \$1,246m to \$1,345.8m, or an increase of 8%. That is about \$100m.

Mr Beattie: Yes, but \$70m of that is fiscal drag.

Dr WATSON: I recognise that. I will refer to that now. Of that \$100m, \$28m is specifically due to the supposed tax reductions. The fact of the matter is that the effective rate, before any reduction and once superannuation is included, which will add 7% to 8%, goes from 5% to 5.23%. Then, of course, it will be brought back. But at the end of two-year period the effective rate will be 5.23%, that is, when it is compared with the existing base. If we divide a company's existing payroll tax liability by its base and also work out the payroll tax liability in two years' time and divide that by its base, we see that there has been an effective tax increase. That will erode our competitive position, which I was speaking about prior to the luncheon recess.

Mr Beattie: I was listening to you.

Dr WATSON: The Premier would understand that erodes our competitive position. That will impact on continued business investment and, in the longer term, employment. Also, by increasing that base the Government will bring a few thousand more firms back into the payroll tax net.

Mr Beattie: It's between 30 and 40. We did the calculations.

Dr WATSON: When we raised the threshold—and these were Treasury figures at the time—from \$800,000 to \$850,000, some 3,000 firms were going to be exempted. That was in our Budget papers.

Mr Beattie: Treasury worked this out for me. They say it is about 30 or 40.

Dr WATSON: Thirty or forty?

Mr Beattie: Yes.

Dr WATSON: That is interesting.

Mr Beattie: That's not my figures.

Dr WATSON: When we were in Government, the Treasury figures indicated that by raising the threshold by \$50,000 we were removing 3,000 small firms from the payroll tax net. In terms of the inclusion of contributions, 7% of \$800,000 is \$56,000. I would be amazed if the number of firms brought back into the net is not approximately

the same as the number of firms exempted when we raised the threshold.

Mr Beattie: I just checked it with Treasury. The threshold difference has made the figures different. That's why.

Dr WATSON: I do not think so. Firms that had a payroll of \$800,000 —

Mr Beattie: It was 850.

Dr WATSON: Firms with payrolls between \$800,000 and \$850,000 are exempted. Seven per cent of \$800,000 is \$56,000. That is more than the amount by which the threshold was raised. I would be amazed if it made that much difference. I am willing to accept that there have been changes.

Mr Beattie: The difference is between the 800 and the \$3.4m. That's the difference as well. That is why it works out to be 30 or 40. I will give you the details later.

Dr WATSON: The Premier can give me the detail in his reply. Although the figure of \$28m is interesting in itself, even if it is only 30 or 40, the Government has raised the effective tax rate and a number of firms—somewhere between one and 3,000; the Premier says it is 40—are now paying payroll tax when they were not paying it before.

Mr Beattie: It is only a small amount—a tiny amount. We are going to review it at the end of the year.

Dr WATSON: Perhaps they are paying only small amounts. However, that does not make any difference. The fact is that each and every one of these factors makes businesses marginally less competitive. Rather than going through the agony of having to fill out payroll tax forms and so on for a small amount of tax, small firms will end up either cutting back or not hiring employees. Importantly, instead of those small businesses at the margin feeling burdened by red tape, forms and so on, they will choose not to hire employees. The question of how many firms are affected is an empirical one, and I accept the number given by the Premier, if it is based on reasonable calculations. Interestingly, the Yellow Pages Small Business Index, which the Deputy Premier mentioned the other day—but he did not quote it all—

Mr Beattie: He didn't have time.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Dr WATSON: I agree with Mr Springborg; I do not think that was the reason. I think he forgot to read a couple of things on purpose.

In terms of the reaction of small businesses to the Government's policies, a lot of small businesses now think that the policies

of the Beattie Government are working against them. I am sure that is related to IR and workers compensation. When the Government makes changes to the payroll tax arrangements, it cannot blame small business for being cynical about that. Even if, as the Premier claims, only a few firms are affected, the fact of the matter is that that increase in tax works against small businesses, reduces their competitiveness and adds to their workload. I think that will create problems for small businesses. Before I conclude, I will turn to a couple of other matters.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Dr WATSON: I understand that, but the principle is still there.

Mr Fenlon: This isn't a very good speech from a shadow Treasurer.

Dr WATSON: All I can say is that the member opposite will never be in a position where we will have to worry about any of his speeches.

Mr Schwarten: Somebody said that about Joh once.

Dr WATSON: As the Minister knows, I will admit it if I am wrong.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Dr WATSON: I was giving my speech about payroll tax. The Premier came back in and made some comments. I am quite willing to have a debate across the Chamber. I feel quite comfortable talking about these issues off the cuff. There is no acrimony; it is a question, and that is fair enough.

Let me talk about the wagering tax for a moment. I know that the wagering tax and things like that—

Mr Beattie interjected.

Dr WATSON: I just want to talk about it for a moment because I know that this Government is an open, honest and accountable Government! When I look at it, I say, "Fair enough." When I see that the wagering tax is going down by 44.5%, I say, "Isn't that good?" But if the Premier had been really straightforward and honest elsewhere in the paper, he would have indicated precisely what he expected to get from the privatisation of the TAB and how much of that was due to capitalising the tax reduction.

I understand how the Premier values firms when he is going to the market. What he is doing, of course, is lowering the effective tax rates and capitalising when he privatises. That is precisely what is happening. The Treasury people in the lobby are smiling because they know that that is precisely right. If the Premier

had been really open and accountable, he would not have gone ahead and said, "Look at me. Aren't I wonderful? I'm lowering the tax", because that is only true technically. What he is doing is lowering the tax and collecting it up front as part of the privatised route. He has converted part of the longer term revenue into a capital gain now.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Dr WATSON: That might be true. The question is: what did the Premier do and how is he being open and accountable? That is the question. He says one thing, but people get caught out in these kinds of things. I guess all I can say is that obviously the advice that he gets from Treasury is up to its usual professional high standard.

I think there are also some issues with respect to accountability in relation to accrual accounting. I just want to say a little bit about the presentation of the Budget papers. My own view, of course, is that the presentation really leaves a lot to be desired.

Mr Fenlon: The colours—is that what you mean by presentation?

Dr WATSON: I know which university the member went to and where he tried to study business. However, I would have thought that even they could have taught him a little bit more about it than that the colours are different. Even he should have figured out by the end of a university education that, when people are changing these kinds of things, there is a little bit more to it than changing the colours.

One of the problems in moving from cash accounting to accrual accounting is that they are simply different concepts and it is not an easy transformation. At the back of Budget Paper No. 5 on page 135 there is an indication, of course, of how one reconciles capital outlays between the 1998-99 Budget and the 1999-2000 Budget. The problem is that, when one wants to read it and make comparisons, it is not done on an individual basis. There ought to have been in the Budget papers a reconciliation of the figures, but it is completely absent. The Premier must have done it. He has either done it on an aggregated basis, in which case he should have shown us how he did it, or he has done it by individual items, departments, programs or whatever. If he really wanted to do a transparent transformation from last year to this year, then there should have been a schedule in the Budget papers showing that movement.

Mr Beattie: Budget Paper No. 2 had all this recorded.

Dr WATSON: No, it did not. In terms of capital outlays, it did not have recorded how the Premier is doing it. Only in Appendix A of Budget Paper No. 5 is the general formula given. However, when one looks at the details of Budget Paper No. 5, one cannot move from Budget Paper No. 3 of the previous year—

Mr Beattie: I just signed an agreement to save the forests, otherwise we'd have had no forests left.

Dr WATSON: It could have been put on the Internet. I would have been quite happy to access it that way. Then the Premier would not have lost any paper—and he can bet on that!

The other thing that ought to be said—and I note that the Premier actually said it in a radio or TV interview—is that there is no reason why, when one is moving from cash accounting to accrual accounting, one needs to end up with a cash deficit in the way described by Standard and Poor's. If I remember correctly, last year the Federal Government moved from cash accounting to accrual accounting in its Budget, but it still had a surplus whichever way it was calculated. There was no reason for this Government to move from cash accounting to accrual accounting and end up with a cash deficit in those Budget papers, as is pointed out by Standard and Poor's. That deficit comes about because of policy decisions of this Government, not because of some change in accounting procedures.

That is the last thing I would suggest. When we are looking at the application of accrual accounting to Government departments, as we are now doing, we have to really ask the question: does it capture all the things that are relevant to decision making within the Government? I think this is probably the most significant question that remains outstanding. I notice the application of the 6% equity return, which I think we have appropriately dubbed the Beattie stealth tax—the BST.

Mr Fenlon: You don't really believe that.

Dr WATSON: Of course I mean it because, despite what I have heard, that is not inherently part of the accrual accounting system.

Mr Beattie: I think you're being a bit inconsistent.

Dr WATSON: One of the things that concerns me in terms of getting the rate of return is that a lot of decisions made in Government organisations, for example in

Education, are not necessarily quarantined from effects on other departments, such as Transport and Health. The difference between a Government organisation and many business organisations is that those decisions can be quarantined and, if they are not quarantined, they usually have effect through a market system external to the organisation.

Mr Beattie: You would have done this.

Dr WATSON: No. The important thing is what the Premier did, and he has to actually account for it. There are some significant concerns that we have—that I have—

Mr Quinn interjected.

Dr WATSON: It was not adopted by the Cabinet and the Premier knows that. This is his decision and he ought to be proud to stand by that decision and not try to palm it off on everybody else. The objective of this Budget could have been laudable. Unfortunately, in the performance, it is simply not up to expectations.

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (2.49 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in this debate on the Appropriation Bills. Today we have heard from both the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer. There was a theme to Mr Borbidge's discussion on the Budget. On the one hand he was crying crocodile tears about how Government departments were grossly underfunded while on the other hand he referred to the Standard and Poor's newsletter which expressed concern about the underlying financial position of the Budget. That shows the classic contradiction of the Leader of the Opposition. He always lacks consistency.

I have been a member of this House long enough to know that when we hear concerns expressed by those in the Opposition, for example about child protection services, they are not fair dinkum. I was a member when a director of Children's Services presented to the Parliament a report which stated that his department could not meet its statutory obligations to protect children. What happened? He was sacked. He was removed from his position.

The study on homeless children, which I was involved with when I was on enforced sabbatical leave, received a submission from the State Government that the majority of children on the streets were or had been wards of the State. Following the Forde inquiry, members opposite are now concerned about the fact that we increased relevant funding by \$103m per year. They are saying that we should have done that but also that we should

be very concerned about the underlying financial position. Dr Watson agreed with that proposition.

On Tuesday I was amused to see a letter to the editor in the Courier-Mail from Joan Sheldon. I will quote that letter. This morning Mr Borbidge tried to rewrite history by telling us how good he and Mrs Sheldon were as financial managers. I think it is important that we revisit that, because he should not be allowed to get away with this totally slippery position. The letter from Mrs Sheldon states—

"Peter Beattie displays a remarkable lack of understanding of the budgetary processes for a Premier and acting Treasurer, as well as being typically barefaced.

I made it crystal clear in successive Budgets that the major expansions of capital works programmes by the Coalition were based on one-off proceeds from the sale of assets and the restructuring of the power industry."

That is worth repeating: the expansions of programs in the coalition's Budgets were based on one-off proceeds of sales and money such as the \$850m taken from the power industry. The letter continues—

"To claim, as Mr Beattie does, that these monies went towards creating recurrent expenses, is profoundly contradicted by those Budgets, and was never contemplated."

Let us look at some of the facts. I think it is Mrs Sheldon who shows a remarkable lack of understanding of the budgetary process. On becoming Treasurer, Joan Sheldon used the discredited Commission of Audit report by Vince Fitzgerald to indicate that she had inherited an underlying deficit from the Goss Government.

Dr Watson: You're not calling Vince Fitzgerald a shonk, are you?

Mr FOURAS: I am saying that the report was totally discredited, as I will prove. The facts are that during the time of the Goss Labor Government net debt was improved by \$7 billion in six Budgets with an underlying financial strength that was the envy of every Australian State. There was a \$7 billion reduction in Government net debt.

Today the member for Moggill said that the Goss Government paid Keating \$1 billion. That is a red herring. Somehow or other we magnanimously gave \$1 billion to Paul Keating because he was our mate! In fact, we retired net debt early. The outcome of that in budgetary terms was that we actually paid less

interest. Our overall financial position was improved through that process.

In each year of the Goss Government there was an underlying surplus in GFS terms—that is, in uniform accounting terms—of more than \$1 billion. The surplus in 1992-93 was \$1.292 billion. In 1993-94 it was \$2.322 billion. In 1994-95 it was \$1.711 billion. In 1995-96, the last year of the Goss Government, it was \$1.466 billion. In her first Budget, in 1996-97, Joan Sheldon halved this \$1.466 billion underlying surplus to \$570m. That Budget was the beginning of what destroyed our underlying surplus in GFS terms. \$400m was generated from the sale of income producing assets, and that was included in that Budget.

In her next Budget, in 1997-98—thankfully that was the last Budget of Borbidge and Sheldon—we saw a further sharp decline to a \$99m deficit in GFS terms. Of course, this was accompanied by the famous raiding of the electricity industry to the tune of \$850m in order to balance the Budget. Then Under Treasurer Doug McTaggart, an academic, used fuzzy terms such as "lazy equity" and Joan Sheldon's oft-repeated phrase "one-off revenue".

I do not ever like being personal in this Chamber, but I will say this. We in this State have been well served by excellent Under Treasurers but, unfortunately, history will record that Doug McTaggart was the exception. I think that is a shame, but I think the facts prove that. As I have said here before, in two Budgets—

Dr WATSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Ashgrove is attacking Doug McTaggart and —

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Nelson-Carr): Order! Is this a point of order?

Dr WATSON: The point of order is that this Government allowed Dr McTaggart to be appointed as chief executive of QIC and to be in charge of looking after all the superannuation funds of all the public servants, including his own.

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

Mr FOURAS: I think the proof of the budgetary position of Queensland is in the eating. I think it is inexcusable to have expenditure not matched by revenue, which is a fundamental principle that was broken in both Sheldon Budgets. As I said before, Mrs Sheldon as Treasurer took an underlying Budget surplus of around \$1.5 billion to a deficit of \$99m over two Budgets.

When the coalition won Government, a report indicated that this was not the true position, that somehow it inherited an underlying deficit. Even if that had been so, it added \$1.4 billion in its first Budget. That is an increase of 11.9%. It is totally incomprehensible that those opposite could argue that they inherited this terrible financial position when in the next Budget they went ahead and increased spending by \$1.4 billion. I think it needs to be clearly understood that Mrs Sheldon did not understand that expenditure must be matched by revenue. It is totally incomprehensible for Mrs Sheldon to now try to justify selling asset producing resources and for her to do what she did in terms of propping up her Budget.

The Beattie Government's second Budget is tight. There is no doubt about that. There is a budgeted net operating surplus for the year 1999-2000 on a GFS basis of only \$13m. We need to talk about the fundamental principle of revenue matching expenditure. We had an increase in revenue of 1.3%, from \$16,627m to \$16,845m, and we had a similar increase in operating expenses. We are implementing the principle of expenditure being matched by revenue. I wonder where Mr Borbidge would find the extra \$90m in this year's Budget, for example, for one item: funding the Forde inquiry recommendations. He also complains about what Standard and Poor's said, to which I will refer later.

I am pleased that this Budget was prepared in accordance with the Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility. I hope that this charter will end the inane posturing of people such as Mr Borbidge about what is or is not transparent publicly and what is or is not accountable. The first fiscal principle in this Budget is that State taxes and charges are to remain competitive with other States. On that basis, great concern has been expressed by members opposite that because Tasmania has a lower tax base than Queensland, this is an indication of how badly this State has been run. In fact, the gap between the taxes and charges collected by Queensland and the average taxes and charges collected by other Australian States has not increased. In fact, it has declined marginally. So that is something that this Budget sustains.

The second fiscal principle is that sustainable service provisions be maintained by operating a GFS surplus. Again, this Budget does that, although I believe that the figure could be higher. The next fiscal principle is that borrowing for capital investments will be undertaken only when borrowings can be serviced from an operating surplus. That is

what these fiscal principles are all about: managing financial risk and building the State's net worth. I will talk about that later when I discuss the news release that Mr Borbidge so proudly tabled and spoke about. The Goss Government practised prudent financial management. However, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to pretend that his Government did that, too, but that is not the case. And he is trying to use that Standard and Poor's news release to prove his point.

There is no doubt in my mind that the fiscal principles that I am talking about do recognise that, broadly speaking, each generation should pay for the services that they consume. It is not fair for the present generation to leave a debt for services that they enjoy to be paid for by future generations. There is no question about that. We need to maintain a strong financial position for this State.

It is unacceptable for Joan Sheldon to be arguing in this week's Courier-Mail that it is prudent and justifiable to fund major expansions of capital works by the proceeds of one-off sales of revenue-producing assets. The Premier was critical of the fact that the underlying surplus was eaten away in two Budgets through deficits created by Joan Sheldon. He also expressed concern about our AAA credit rating. No amount of posturing by Mr Borbidge or Mrs Sheldon can rewrite history. Their lack of fiscal responsibility was inexcusable. It was as if the coalition Government was worried about being a one-term Government and was trying to buy its way into continuing in power. It is as simple as that. It inherited a set of books that was second to none and left behind books that left everything in doubt.

We have heard about the Cain Government and how it discovered that its chickens had come home to roost. Of course, chickens will always come home to roost. We were indeed fortunate, as Queenslanders, that we had only one term of Government by members opposite. If they were so good, why did they join the Moore Government from 1929 to 1932 as the only other one-term Government in the history of Queensland? Members opposite claim that they were great managers, providing services and running this State, but they were oncers.

I turn now to yesterday's news release from Standard and Poor's, of which Mr Borbidge made so much. It states—

"A general government underlying cash deficit of A\$0.4 billion is forecast

compared with a small surplus in fiscal 1999."

Notwithstanding Standard and Poor's observations of the position in cash terms, I believe that there is an underlying cash deficit. We must understand that this is the first Queensland Budget that was done on an accrual accounting basis. We must also understand the deficiencies of cash accounting. We have a professor of commerce as the shadow Treasurer. He should understand the deficiencies of cash accounting. There is no better demonstration of this than in the fact that, on a cash basis, expenditure is recorded at the time of payment. So expenditures are actually recorded when they are made.

The Standard and Poor's press release states—

"An increase in subsidy payments, particularly community service obligation payments to Queensland Rail, contributed to a decline in the operating cash flows in fiscal 2000 compared with fiscal 1999."

That is true. So when we are looking at this on an accrual basis, these increases in subsidy payments are effecting a cash result this year while these subsidy payments accrue over a number of years. The Standard and Poor's news release also states that "the particularly strong Queensland government balance sheet will continue" and mentions "the forward estimates of an improving underlying financial position".

This Budget contains a GFS surplus of \$13m under the normal accounting process. The bottom line is what is happening with Queensland's net worth. Under the Beattie Labor Government, this State's net worth is expected to grow from \$55.3 billion as at 30 June 1998 to \$58 billion by 30 June 2000. As Standard and Poor's say, they—

"... will be watching closely that the government is able to realise the forward estimates of an improving underlying financial position."

They also say—

"However, the particularly strong Queensland government balance sheet will continue to underpin the state's 'AAA' local currency rating."

We have that. In two years, the State's net worth will increase from \$55.3 billion to \$58 billion—an increase of \$2.7 billion. Any business—any group of people—would be proud to have that in their balance sheet.

Undoubtedly, Queensland has a strong and growing balance sheet. This bodes well for the future. I predict that, in the future, the Beattie Government will make sure that we do fund recurrent expenditure in service delivery. I have a great passion—a great belief—in the provision of services, particularly Government services, as a great equalising force in our society. We need more than just efficiency as a criterion. We must be concerned about equity issues, increasing funding for disability services, child protection and public housing. I am confident that the next two Budgets will show an improving situation.

This Government has behaved responsibly, unlike its predecessor, the last coalition Government. And for members opposite to come in here and try to rewrite the records is shameful. I am pleased to put on the record that the Goss Labor Government did keep to fundamental fiscal principles. We now have a charter of fiscal principles which will transparently indicate, through progressive reporting and Budget papers, that this Government will behave fiscally responsibly. And in the future, the public of Queensland will make sure that they get increased funding for school maintenance and the provision of services, together with capital works for job creation, buildings and infrastructure. I am proud to support this Budget today. I hope that we will have no more restating of history by members opposite.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.10 p.m.): In joining in this debate, I have to say at the outset that I was most disappointed in the presentation of the Budget the other day. I am also disappointed that not everything has been uncovered in the 1999-2000 State Budget. It was one of the most lacklustre, visionless Budgets that I have ever seen presented in Queensland.

I have been in Parliament for 10 years—as has the honourable member for Everton—and I believe I have sat through six Goss Budgets, two full Borbidge Budgets, one Borbidge Budget which we did not have the opportunity to implement, and a Beattie Budget. There was little reason to turn up at this Parliament and listen to the Budget which was delivered by the acting Treasurer because, quite frankly, there was nothing new.

Dr Watson: It was worse than the second De Lacy Budget.

Mr SPRINGBORG: There was a fair bit of smoke and mirrors but, to be fair to Mr De Lacy, there was a bit more substance in his Budget. I do not think there was too much in

the acting Treasurer's first Budget to excite anyone. If it was not for a very careful and deliberate process of leaks on the part of various Ministers and the Government, it is probably fair to say that we would not have seen very much media coverage of the Budget. I suppose it is the prerogative of the Government of the day to decide how it wants to sell its Budget, but there was little point in even turning up at this place. A lot of people say, "What's new in the Budget?" I think that is a fair point.

The shadow Treasurer has referred to the situation with regard to the way in which the Budget papers have been written. This has caused problems for members of the Opposition and members of the public. It has been difficult to read and understand some of the issues which have been funded through the Budget.

The other day, members of this Parliament had an opportunity to attend a briefing with Treasury officials at the conference room on Level 5 in relation to the Budget. I thank the Government for organising that briefing. However, I think it is probably fair to say that, whilst we were much better informed, a lot of us were not very much wiser. I suppose it will be a matter of time before the true implications of this Budget appear.

One of the issues we must consider concerns the changes in the appropriation process. This is set out on page 7 of the document with which we were supplied at the briefing. Everyone could easily understand the old process because basically everyone in the community operates on a cash basis. I know that a lot of major businesses do not operate on that basis, but a lot of smaller businesses do. Under the old system, fees or taxes were collected, they went to the Treasurer, the Treasurer distributed them to the various agencies and then it was returned to the people who probably paid the taxes in the first place.

The new process is somewhat more complicated. We are told that it is revolutionary and that it is something we need to do in the 1990s because we need to be able to properly apportion expenditure for something in the year when it actually happened. We also need to factor in depreciation and all those sorts of things. This will enable Government, we are told, to stand on a more level footing with private enterprise.

Whilst I accept that Government probably does need to become a little bit more efficient and a little bit more transparent in the way that it does things, I think it is also very important to

point out that Government is not business. Government still has to worry about social infrastructure. Government still has to worry about delivering services to people in the community. I would caution Governments, irrespective of their political persuasions, about how much Government would want to be like business.

I would like to add that there is a great deal of difficulty in tracking down the money trails. It is not easy to understand what is actually being planned to be expended under the 1999-2000 State Budget.

If we look at a number of the Budget papers and compare them with the ministerial program statements of particular portfolios, we find references to different amounts of money for the same sorts of items. There may be a perfectly good explanation for that, but over the past few days I have been going through it and there is a considerable degree of inconsistency between the various Budget papers.

We have had an interesting debate in this House with regard to Standard and Poor's. I noted that the other day the Premier was clutching his heart and wringing his hands with regard to the Standard and Poor's statement. He went out and put something on the front page of the Courier-Mail about how the Borbidge Government was supposedly running Queensland into debt. Yesterday, Standard and Poor's issued a media release. That media release has been quoted by members on both sides of the House during this debate. Members opposite have been cartwheeling around the place in an attempt to explain it away. However, they did not do a very good job.

The report is entitled "Queensland Budget Shows Weakening Finances". In part, the report reads—

"In contrast to recent years, the general Government sector is expected to slip into the red in fiscal 2000," noted Rick Shepherd, Director, Public Finance ratings. 'A general Government underlying cash deficit of a \$0.4 billion is forecast compared with a small surplus in fiscal 1999.'"

I would have thought that that would have debunked the article which appeared on the front page of the Courier-Mail. As I said, the Premier tried to accuse other Governments of undermining Queensland's very sound financial position when, in fact, it was his own doing.

The Premier also tried to explain it away yesterday at the post-Budget business

breakfast. I am not sure how many members have had the opportunity to read Melba in today's Australian, but it is a very interesting article. I will read it into Hansard for the benefit of members currently in the House and for future generations. It reads—

"Queensland's snappily dressed Premier Peter Beattie is well outside Jeff Kennett's league when it comes to dealing with the Press. Try this for size. At the post-Budget breakfast in Brisbane yesterday, Beattie, pictured, made the outrageous claim that The Australian's report saying Queensland's Budget has gone into the red was wrong."

Standard and Poor's has proved that the Australian report was correct. The article continues—

"He indulged in a bit of babble about accrual accounting before saying: 'But I am delighted with the coverage in the Courier-Mail, they were right. I've always said a lot about the Courier-Mail, but I tell you I love it dearly, it's a great newspaper.'"

Dr Watson: Yet a couple of weeks ago down at the Gold Coast he was bagging it.

Mr SPRINGBORG: That wouldn't be right because he tells us that he is an honest and trustworthy bloke. He says that in the Parliament and also on radio stations. I have been listening to him. The article continued—

"'Maybe you should buy several copies of today's edition, buy a few for your grandkids. It's a great edition. Is the editor here? He's not. Someone, tell him I said I love him.' Although thousands of kilometres from the action, we can feel editor-in-chief Chris Mitchell's ears burning with embarrassment. But what makes Beattie's assessment of the Courier-Mail so remarkable is the torrent of pre-Budget leaks that somehow fell into the paper's hands."

PS: Melba's economics guru assures us there might be one Premier or State treasurer in Australia who understands accrual accounting, although he doesn't know which one. But he's sure it isn't Premier Beattie."

Mr Welford: Who said that?

Mr SPRINGBORG: It's in today's Australian. I can tell the Honourable Minister for Natural Resources and Environment that the Australian newspaper saw right through the facade which has been tossed up by the Beattie Government with regard to the very sound state of Queensland's finances and the

attempts by this Government to blame the underlying deficit that has been identified by Standard and Poor's in this particular financial year on previous Governments in previous financial years.

I would like to take the opportunity to speak about some of the issues relevant to my own electorate before I touch on my shadow portfolio. As I went through the ministerial program statements trying to identify new capital works in my electorate, I became very disappointed. During the Goss era I was usually able to put a highlighter through six or eight, or even 10, individual things that were to occur in my electorate. On this occasion, however, there were only two.

Although I know that when the coalition was in Government it addressed a whole range of issues relating to education and roads, a number of other areas certainly required to be addressed further. I note that the Minister for Emergency Services is in the Chamber. I commend her very much for what she has done for the Inglewood community with the provision of the new fire and ambulance station. The fire station was an absolute shambles and the ambulance station was in need of a new area in which to grow. However, that is where the kudos stop for the Government, because it has not even tried to address a whole range of other issues around my electorate. This is the first time that I have sat in this place and gone through the capital works budget without being able to draw a line under any new road infrastructure project in my electorate, and a whole range of other issues need to be dealt with urgently.

While I am speaking about the road and transport budget, for the 1999-2000 financial year, the budget for Main Roads and Transport has been combined and for the Darling Downs—

Mr Lucas: I reckon you would look good making a speech on Lenin's tomb.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I will do that at another time. When Mr Mickel is finished with that book, the honourable member for Lytton should look at it. It is a very good and interesting book. He might even learn something. After the next election, the honourable member for Lytton will be needing some of those embalming techniques for the honourable members on his side of the House

The budget for Transport and Main Roads has declined from \$69m to \$27m. There may be an explanation for that decrease. The explanation may be the new, funny way in which these accrual accounting Budget papers have been put together. Certainly, on the

surface that appears to be a reduction of over \$40m on infrastructure spending that is planned for Main Roads and Transport.

A moment ago, the honourable member for Ashgrove carried on in his contribution about the Government's Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility. As I have said, we have already heard the Premier wax lyrical, put his hand on his heart, and wring his hands about openness, accountability and all those sorts of things. However, one thing that we have to consider is that, this year, accrual accounting has been used to actually hide a lot of things and make things a lot less transparent.

Mr Welford: Why did you bring it in?

Mr SPRINGBORG: That may not necessarily be the fault of the accrual accounting process. I am saying to the Honourable Minister for Natural Resources and Environment that, in terms of this Budget, some very, very good lessons can be learned about openness and transparency and making it a lot easier for members of Parliament to be able to pick up Budget papers and understand what they mean. We are going to have to go into the Estimates process to get information about a whole heap of really important areas that concern people—prize out one by one by one things that in previous years would have been indicated explicitly in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements.

We have seen the Darling Downs Health budget cut by \$5m. I believe that that cut will have a major impact on the ability of the health service professionals on the Darling Downs and in my electorate of Warwick to deliver services to those people who genuinely expect them to be delivered. I know that there is a responsibility on those health services and facilities to make sure that they are getting value for the Government dollar. However, over a long period it has also been apparent to me that it has been most difficult for our district managers to make savings in their budgets and still deliver those services. Unfortunately, if they have to take money from one area to put into another to deliver those services, the people who deliver the primary health service, such as nurses, particularly casual and part-time nurses, are the ones who suffer. On the surface, there appears to be a \$5m cut in health services in the Darling Downs region. That issue needs to be addressed.

Although in the current Budget the Government has forgotten about this matter, I challenge the Government to make sure that it does not forget in future Budgets the need for a decent administration block and home economics block at the Allora school. They

have been waiting for those facilities for a while. When this Government took office, they were at the top of the planning list and should have been the next project that received a guernsey. Also at Inglewood school, which I attended between 1980 and 1982, the science block is absolutely appalling. It has no floor coverings and nothing to stop any chemicals that are dropped on the floor leaching right down to the lower levels. Owing to the layout of the science block, the teachers are not able to instruct students properly in any science experiments. The consequence of that is that the students are not tutored in the areas that they need.

Mr Swarten: That didn't happen overnight. That was a problem when you were in Government.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I am saying that, when the coalition was in Government, it addressed the resource centre issue at that school very, very quickly. This issue also needs to be addressed. It has been going on for a long time and the Government must consider it. I concede that, whenever I have come to the Minister about issues, he has been very, very good and very open. At this stage, I am not sure whether the Minister has the primary responsibility for this issue. However, when it comes to the construction of the facility, he will have that responsibility. The Stanthorpe State High School also needs a new science block. In that regard, I hope that we are not seeing another example of Labor's ongoing contempt for people in rural areas.

The honourable member for Everton is present in the Chamber. When it comes to new water infrastructure, we really need to see the Government's colours—what its forward plans are, what it is going to do about dams and weirs, and what it is going to do about the remaining Water Infrastructure Task Force projects that were put in place by the previous Government. That was the first time that we had a properly planned process. We need the Government to continue to fund those projects so that those people in rural and regional areas can have some hope.

I turn briefly to the Justice portfolio. I welcome the adoption by this Government of the coalition's drug court policy. I commend the Attorney-General and the Premier for taking that proposal on board. According to the media releases—although, once again, it is very, very difficult to be able to ferret it out; I will have to do it during the Estimates process because it is not completely explicit in the Budget—something like \$3m odd is being made available for a trial drug court process. I

believe that this is a real way of getting to the nub of some of the problems in our society, particularly crime, which so often is related to drug dependency. The other day in New South Wales, I had the opportunity to see that program work, and it is working quite well. Obviously, it could be enhanced. However, I caution the Government to make sure that it has a proper reporting process back to the magistrate who is in charge. The magistrate needs to be able to look at the progress of an offender or the drug court will not work. There also needs to be a good, regular testing process of these people—at least in the early stages—three times a week. Otherwise, if those people are tested randomly, after four days it is very difficult to pick up morphine traces in a person's urine, which is what indicates a heroin addict.

This Budget makes no real commitment to the new Magistrates Court in Brisbane. We need some innovative way of dealing with that. When the coalition was in Government, it put in place a planning process and it was considering inviting private enterprise to be part of that process. The Government appears to have given up on that initiative. Currently, the Brisbane Magistrates Court is an absolute shambles, and it is a dangerous shambles. The Government needs to commit itself—

Mr Swarten interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I will talk to the Minister privately about the issue, because I do not have much time left in which to speak. There is a real problem with the Magistrates Court, and the Government needs to be serious about addressing it.

It is difficult to ascertain in this Budget if more money has been allocated to legal aid. The Government contends that there is more money available. However, I think that there are a couple of problems. An amount of \$0.5m is being taken out of reserves and we are going to have six fewer staff. So that indicates that things are not quite as rosy as we are led to believe.

The reform of the legal profession is at the forefront of the Attorney-General's mind. However, where is the funding for it? How is that going to happen? What is going to be the situation? Is the legal profession about to fund it? The way I see it, that proposal will build up a huge bureaucracy. The only way that that reform can be funded is for the Government to fund it or for the legal profession itself to fund it.

This Budget also gives no clear indication of a provision for extra judges or magistrates, which are needed to be able to deal with the

increasing number of civil and criminal cases that are coming before our courts. The other issue is the unilateral decision of this Government to transfer funding for victims of crime from the Attorney-General's department—out of the justice system—and into the welfare system without any consultation with those victims of crime. In that regard, the other point I want to make is that the pool of money, which the Government says has been transferred over, has not really been identified clearly. Funding for victims of crime is going to be competing with all of those other social programs and agenda in the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. In terms of welfare, although that department does a good job, victims of crime do not require a welfare prerogative, they require a compassionate justice prerogative, and funding for victims of crime should not rest with that department. Those people are very concerned about that.

Time expired.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (3.30 p.m.): The Beattie Budget is yet another step in the right direction to create a Smart State with a stable Government that honours its commitments. As I come from north Queensland, it is heartening to see that more than half of Queensland's capital expenditure will be spent on regional communities—communities that have suffered neglect in recent years. Townsville is no exception with the Regional Centres Program injecting millions to improve community infrastructure and facilities.

This is a sober Budget, but a visionary one. It boosts Education, Health and Justice, and concentrates on eliminating waste across other departments. Redundant programs or any carryovers are out and the development of high-tech industries is in. The Budget delivers on community programs and social services ranging from job programs and child protection to community renewal. Children in State care will receive better care with \$100m to be provided over four years for child protection and \$63m to improve Queensland's youth detention centres, including the closure and replacement of the notorious Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre.

The Government is committed to the maintenance of a free, modern, public hospital system for all Queenslanders. The Budget reflects that commitment with a record \$3.45 billion in recurrent Health funding and a continuing commitment to take health services to the community. The Budget includes additional funding for the successful Positive

Parenting Program, a boost of almost \$5m for palliative care and a \$13m injection to improve mental health services. This Budget provides \$40m over four years to provide one computer for every five children in State schools and continued funding of Labor initiatives such as Education for All that prevents disadvantaged children slipping through the cracks. It provides \$3.6m for an intensive literacy and numeracy program targeted at ATSI children and students for whom English is a second language. Class sizes and students with special needs or those who are in need of learning support will continue to be an area on which I focus for increased improvement at a local level and, indeed, at a political level.

The Budget also continues the Beattie Government's commitment not just to fight crime but to fight the causes of crime, with \$1m being granted this year to establish drug courts and \$15m being provided to continue the successful Community Renewal Program. The Townsville/Thuringowa region has done extremely well in attracting State Government budgetary allocations. The Health budget has allocated \$53m to the Douglas Hospital and committed a further \$8m to the James Cook University Medical School.

The Budget commits \$15m to the National Highway, \$6m to the Bluewater/Leichhardt Creek construction, \$3.5m to the Garbutt and Upper Ross Road development and \$5.5m to the Herveys Range Development Road. This is very welcome news. I am also delighted at the Government's ongoing commitment to rail infrastructure in the Townsville region, with \$4.5m being allocated to the Stuart rail servicing site, which is Stage 2 of the development. The Beattie Government's commitment to industry growth and development in the Townsville region has been further reinforced with a \$16.4m infrastructure grant for development associated with the Sunmetals project and a \$2m infrastructure commitment to the Western Mining Corporation, which will go towards developmental works in the region.

I particularly welcome aspects of the Budget that impact on sections of the Mundingburra electorate. A sum of \$109m will be spent over four years to implement child protection legislation. Our commitment includes the provision of another \$30m per year to increase funding to disability services. It must be remembered that the massive boost of \$100m to the disability sector in last year's Budget was more than had ever been provided before. A sum of \$30m was provided last year and another \$30m will be provided

this year. Our predecessors ignored disability services completely. The urgent need for funding in this area does not go unrecognised. In the future I will continue to do all that I can to lobby for extra money for people with a disability and for those who care for and help to decrease the burdens of people with a disability. Another \$3m is set down in the Budget for the Positive Parenting Program. These are wonderful initiatives of the Labor Government that will help to strengthen the fabric of our community.

The final \$4.3m allocation to Townsville's Strand development, \$6m to the Nelly Bay development and the final \$4m allocation to the Dairy Farmers stadium will give the region a continued and added bonus. The Beattie Government recognises the dynamic nature of Townsville and its position on the threshold of industrial boom, and the State Budget is reflective of this.

Townsville's families will be taken care of in the second Budget from the Beattie Government. Disability Services Queensland is a new agency that will focus specifically on support services for people with a disability. The Budget also ensures the continuation of post-school service options for people receiving support through the Moving Ahead Program, with additional funding of \$12.5m to be provided over four years. I know the post-school options program in Townsville, Pathways, was concerned about the two-year transitional nature of the current Moving Ahead Program, so this commitment should make families rest easy. Family support initiatives will also be completed and support will be provided across the State to at least 130 families that have children with a disability.

I am particularly pleased by the inclusion of Townsville as one of the sites for a youth justice centre where young offenders are encouraged to right the wrong and are given opportunities to address the causes of their offending behaviour. As a former teacher and guidance counsellor, I know how important a centre like this will be in Townsville. It is something that we have been working on for a while and I am very pleased to see that it is becoming a reality.

I am proud to be part of a Government that takes the role of the family so seriously and that prides itself on its education policies. Ours is a Government that can identify community needs and, instead of ignoring them, makes an effort to fix them. I will be pursuing the new Police Beat shopfront for Townsville, to have it strategically placed in my electorate. Queensland has a strong, stable

and effective Government that has delivered on all of its commitments and is not afraid to tackle the difficult problems that previous administrations have chosen to ignore.

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (3.37 p.m.): The fact that this is the first Queensland Budget for many years that has gone into the red should be of concern to all Queenslanders. It is a disgrace for many members opposite to stand in this place and say that they are proud of this Budget.

For many years in Queensland we have prided ourselves on our strong financial position, which has meant that we have been able to build up the surpluses in superannuation funds and such things. Now this Government has taken us into the red for the first time in many years, which is something that we all ought to be concerned about.

We should not rationalise the situation, as the member for Ashgrove did, by saying that it is immaterial what international ratings agencies such as Standard and Poor's or Moody's say about us. It is critical that we take notice of what those agencies are saying about us, because it affects our long-term borrowing rates and other financial measures that can be to our long-term advantage. To stand in this place and say, "Don't worry about that. Read our Budget documents. Don't take any notice of what independent international agencies say about us, but believe our spin and propaganda", and then walk out of the Chamber feeling good, warm and fuzzy is a head-in-the-sand attitude. We have to take account of these things. We are a part of a global marketplace where capital is extremely mobile. It moves around the world seeking the best advantage. The fact that the Government is putting its head in the sand and is saying, "We won't worry about Standard and Poor's or Moody's" should be of concern to all Queenslanders.

If honourable members, particularly Government members, say that they are proud of the Budget, I think that should be seen as a black mark against them. As I said before, what Standard and Poor's is saying will have enormous consequences for us. Although I am not saying that we are in a precarious position at the moment, Standard and Poor's has definitely indicated that it is putting us on a "watch" footing. Should this sort of budgeting continue, it will have long-term effects on our international competitiveness and our borrowings on financial markets. Its second paragraph states—

"In contrast to recent years, the general government sector is expected to slip into the red in fiscal 2000."

In other words, prior to now we have been in the black. Under the coalition Government over the previous two years and the Goss Government over the years before that we were always in the black. This year is the first time that we have been in the red. It continues—

"A general government underlying cash deficit of A\$0.4 billion is forecast compared with a small surplus in fiscal 1999."

It further states—

"For the state sector as a whole, a cash deficit of more than A\$1.2 billion is forecast in fiscal 2000 ..."

The member for Moggill, the shadow Treasurer, indicated the areas from where he thought the moneys were being dragged in order to fund Government services. However, we should not be surprised that the acting Treasurer has delivered the Budget with a deficit.

Let us cast back our minds to the previous Labor Government. Which honourable member was the Health Minister who, upon leaving office, left behind an enormous black hole in the Health Budget of some \$1.2 billion? Who was the Health Minister at that time and who was his predecessor?

Mr Littleproud: Can I guess? Peter Beattie.

Mr QUINN: This is not Pick a Box or Who Wants to be a Millionaire. We do not have to guess. It was the member for Brisbane Central and the member for Capalaba. We are not surprised that they take this attitude to budgeting. They showed us their colours when they were in Government previously. This is no surprise to us. However, it is a surprise that they would seek to do so in the context of the whole State Budget. They got away with it in the Health budget. When we came in, we had to find the money. But that they have repeated their crime in the State Budget is unforgivable. They show a reckless disregard for financial responsibility. The prospect of our being placed on a watch footing by Standard and Poor's and having our financial rating downgraded is something that no Queenslanders should have to contemplate.

There are some other areas of concern in the Budget papers, which indicate that business and housing investment and public consumption are forecast to move lower. Of

course, employment growth will follow. It should be of concern to all of us that every major indicator is starting to fall. That will have serious consequences in terms of employment rates. I do not think any honourable member is happy about that. A combination of factors is involved. These are worrying trends for the State.

Also of concern is the threat to our low tax status. I was struck by a graph in the Budget documents which indicates that Tasmania, of all places, is now the low tax State. Queensland is slightly behind Tasmania. More worrying is the fact that we are closing the gap between New South Wales and Victoria. Although some honourable members might not think that the narrowing in the gap is important, I think it is. For a long time we have traded on the fact that we are the low tax State. That has been an advertising gimmick that we have taken to the market and we have been able to trade on that status to entice other companies to Queensland. That aspect is attractive to anyone, be they business people or companies, contemplating relocating to Queensland.

The Government's response to these worrying trends is to turn us into the Smart State. I have no problem with that. It is a worthwhile ambition. When we look at the evidence, we see that Queensland has been moving in that direction for some time. This is not simply something that has been discovered by the Labor Party over the past 12 months. Over many years a number of initiatives have been taking us in that direction. However, the problem I have with the Smart State concept is that we hear plenty of rhetoric, but there is not much funding. There is plenty of smoke and mirrors, but there is little of substance.

As we have come to expect from the Labor Party, it has produced a glossy brochure—again, nothing more than smoke and mirrors—which indicates where the Government intends to focus its energies. Quite rightly, the first area being focused on by the Government is education. The first double-page spread in the Smart State document highlights a number of initiatives. However, when we look at those initiatives, we see that not much funding is attached to any of them. For the Networked Learning Community initiative there is a total budget of \$40m. In this year's Budget, \$5m is provided for that program. That is hardly the average amount that we would expect to be funded in each of five years. Under that program, professional development and technical support to teachers in classrooms will be provided. Those

sorts of programs have been running for some time in Education Queensland. One suspects that this may be a rebadged program from somewhere else. In the Estimates we will examine whether that is the case.

In relation to online access for schools, the paper indicates that local area networks will be funded to the tune of \$10m. There will also be some additional money for Connect-Ed. Those are programs that have been running in the department for a number of years. I instigated both of those programs when I was the Minister for Education. Those programs mentioned in the Smart State document are not new.

In terms of supplying additional school computers, this Budget allocates an additional \$3.6m. That is barely enough to put additional machines and technology into classrooms. If the Government is really going to provide the number of computers needed to reach its target—that is, one computer per five students—it needs to allocate much more money than the \$3.6m allocated in this Budget. That funding needs to be in place over a sustained period. It is not only about putting new technology in classrooms; we must also replace the existing technology as it becomes outdated. The Government has a five-year rolling program. Each year an amount of the order of \$10m to \$15m is needed just to put the additional technology in the classrooms let alone to replace the existing stock. The \$3.6m allocation will barely scratch the surface, although I acknowledge that it is a start. However, based on my memory of the Schooling 2001 initiative that we put in place, I suspect that this also could be part of another rebadged program.

All of these are examples of programs not matching the rhetoric. We are hearing rhetoric, but there is very little substance to the programs. I mentioned Connect-Ed and the Schooling 2001 initiatives, which I think have been rebadged. Based on that document, we are seeing a lack of real policy and funding. Providing anything less than substantial funding for these sorts of initiatives is dumb politics, if the Government hopes to reach its target. It is mouthing the rhetoric and raising expectations, but it is not providing the funds. That is certainly not the way to go.

I will turn to the other area about which I intend to speak, and that is education. Allied to the notion of our becoming a Smart State, there is a line in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements for the Minister for Education, which I will read; it is a good line. It states that the link between the quality of educational

outcomes and the quality of educational infrastructure is well documented. It further states that we need good classrooms and good infrastructure, whether they be computers and other teaching aids in order to achieve the optimum outcomes for students. That is positive rhetoric. However, again, it is not backed up by funding.

In relation to additional public works for Queensland State schools, there is a shortage of money. Last year, the Minister for Education issued a press release saying that the Budget that year would include \$47m for 10 new schools, \$175m for other school projects and \$18.6m for the tertiary sector. Taking out the tertiary sector, this is a capital injection for capital works in State schools of some \$222m. What does the press release state this year? There is \$182m—a shortfall of \$40m. We hear rhetoric about needing top-quality educational infrastructure, but again there is a funding shortfall.

One has to ask: why has there been a reduction in the capital works program in schools when there is this soaring rhetoric saying that we need to go in the other direction? How can we have a Smart State if the Government is reducing the funding to upgrade and modify existing facilities to suit the new educational environment? That is just another example, as I said, of fine words not supported by a funding commitment. The problem to date has been that we have focused too much on the rhetoric and not the funding issues. It is simply getting to be a bit like the magic pudding trick: you put a little or nothing in and you expect to get a lot out. It cannot be done.

The other thing I want to talk about now is what we on this side of the House have dubbed the BST—the Beattie stealth tax—that is, the equity return. For members opposite to stand up and say that it is part of the accrual accounting system is simply nonsense, as everyone knows. It is to be applied to the variation of the capital base on each department from next year. As we found out in a briefing the other day, it is unfunded from July onwards.

Quite rightly, when members on this side of the House heard about it, they started thinking about their small country schools which might be in very close proximity to a larger school. The prospect could arise that the department or the Minister will say, "Well, we can close this small school down", and provide transport to the nearest larger school for the children without having any idea of the impact it might have on the school community. I think

they were rightly concerned about the impact that would have on their smaller school communities.

I will suggest from experience that, whilst the members on this side, particularly the country members, have something to worry about in terms of the impact of the equity return on Education Queensland's budget, members in the metropolitan Brisbane seats are going to have a lot more to worry about—mainly members of the Labor Party—because the real savings to be made, where the larger bikkies are, is not in closing the smaller country schools; it is in closing the inner city schools where the population has drifted from the inner city core to the outer suburbs. There are a number of schools in electorates of members opposite which come under that definition. I know that a couple are being looked at currently. Those are where the largest savings are to be made, in amalgamating the schools, selling the sites, reduction in recurrent expenditure and those sorts of things.

I will name some of those schools in the Brisbane metropolitan area that have been closed or amalgamated in the past couple of years: Chermside, which I did, was done with the consent of the local member and the broader community; in Taringa, the same thing occurred after community consultation and was sold.

Mr Welford: Oh, no, you didn't!

Mr QUINN: Oh, yes. The Inala State High School and the Richlands State High School were not done by me, but by the previous Labor Minister for Education. The Salisbury State High School and the Coopers Plains State High School are now known as the Nyanda State High School. That was another one that was done. Those are where the larger gains are being made in terms of efficient use of capital.

When this equity return is applied to education, those areas where substantial savings can be made without taking into account the educational consequences are really highlighted. Previous to this equity return being a requirement of the Budget process, Ministers for Education made decisions about which schools to close or amalgamate on educational grounds—not financial grounds—where we could see that there would be a benefit to students and where we could see that we could refurbish a new school complex and move students from the older school into the newer complex to improve their educational prospects. I was not the only Minister who saw that; the previous Labor

Minister also saw that and also had a number of those projects on the board.

Dr Watson: What about Mr Wells?

Mr QUINN: He has done nothing yet about this particular issue, but I expect that the equity return will start to drive those considerations within his department as well as other departments across Government.

My view is that the Budget, as I said, does not live up to expectations; it does not live up to the rhetoric, particularly when one considers that the Education budget is up by only 3.6% overall. That is the lowest increase in a decade. Is paring back Education budgets any way to create a Smart State? We will not know this until we see the enrolments, but that 3.6% is probably not even enough to cover inflation, CPI adjustments and enrolment growth. Contrast that with the large increases in the Premier's and Deputy Premier's departments. How smart is that? Where is this Government's priority? Certainly not in education, certainly not in creating the Smart State!

As I said before, we all ought to be concerned about what Standard and Poor's and possibly even Moody's will say about the financial health of this State. It has ramifications far beyond simply a press release. Other financial institutions take serious note of what those international ratings agencies say about our financial health. For members opposite to walk in here and dismiss it and not be worried about having an underlying Budget deficit—the first for many, many years—I think is of concern, particularly when we know that the person in charge of the Budget has been the person who also ran the Health Department into the ground. Remember Beattie's black hole. This Budget is from the same person, except this time he has done it on a grander scale. Those, I think, are the reasons why we all ought to be concerned about what is happening in this Budget.

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (3.56 p.m.): I want to comment—

Dr Watson: You would never have got that land under this guy.

Mr ROBERTS: Which land is the member talking about?

I want to make some comments on the Budget measures affecting my electorate and also on some recent improvements to facilities throughout the area. Firstly, I wish to make some general comments on the Budget. I want to commend the Government for ensuring that this Budget concentrates on the things that matter, in particular having a major

focus on jobs, education and health. Facilitating employment creation and growth is certainly a significant and necessary role for Government. This Budget does that in a number of ways, and I just want to mention two.

Firstly, there is the continuance of a major Capital Works Program—\$5.4 billion, which will help create around 41,000 jobs—and, secondly and very importantly, there is a focus on educational initiatives that are going to stimulate the innovation that we need to sustain employment growth, particularly in those areas where there is innovative use of new and emerging technologies. It is no longer sufficient for us to rely upon traditional industries and occupations to provide the jobs growth of the future. We need to be supporting and creating opportunities in those areas that make the best use of job creating technologies. To do that we need educated and highly skilled workers. That is why the focus in this Budget is on increasing the use of and knowledge about information technologies.

I want to commend the Government also for the Smart State initiatives that have been outlined in the Budget papers, particularly those that will focus on enhancing the knowledge about information technologies in our schools. It is important to note that that is not going to be at the expense of the basics, because the Smart State initiatives provide around \$114m, which is targeted specifically at literacy and numeracy programs. With respect to the use of technology as a generator of jobs, I just want to give an example of a local company in my electorate that is an illustration of what can be done.

Recently the Premier visited my electorate to open the new premises of a company called Security Mailing Services, which is located at Northgate. Security Mailing Services is a smart business. It is a business which has used modern data communications to develop a major stake in database management and software development in the country to service the mailing needs of major Australian companies. In fact, 60% of the company's revenue comes from interstate business. It has grown from having 14 employees in 1989 to having 180 full-time and 50 part-time employees in 1999. The growth of that company's business and the growth in employment is essentially as a result of the innovative use of information and computer technology. Its employment continues to grow on a monthly basis. Security Mailing Services is a fine example of a company that is making

the maximum use of new technologies to grow its business.

With that sort of success in mind, it is pleasing to acknowledge the Smart State initiatives in the Budget. Particularly, we have allocated \$40m over a four-year period with the aim of providing at least one computer for every five State school students. The maximising of our understanding and use of computer technology is essential if we are to develop the skills and knowledge required to make companies such as Security Mailing Services the success that they have been to date.

I now turn to some local issues. I am sure that many members of this House are aware that the Australian Catholic University is on its way to Banyo—in fact, to the Banyo seminary site in my electorate. I am very pleased to see that this Budget provides the first payment of \$1.33m out of a total \$6m allocation that will be provided for this great initiative.

I am particularly proud of the level of support that the State Government has provided to this initiative. We are still awaiting a firm commitment from the Federal Government to ensure that the university can locate here as early as possible. With the current funding, the university is expected to open its doors at Banyo in 2004. With substantial Federal Government funding we are hoping that that can be brought forward to as early as 2002.

The relocation of the Catholic University to Banyo will be a major step towards establishing the Banyo/Nudgee community as the educational hub of north Brisbane. When it opens, as I said, hopefully as early as the year 2002, children will be able to attend kindergarten, preschool, primary school, high school and university all within the one suburb and within walking distance of their own homes. I think that is a great achievement for our community.

Mrs Rose: Everyone will want to live there.

Mr ROBERTS: Everyone will want to live in Banyo as a result of that. This is an achievement which I hope and in fact intend to exploit as much as possible for the benefit of my constituents.

There have been some other improvements to local schools recently. I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Public Works, Robert Swarten, and his department for their assistance in a number of initiatives at local schools. To give a few examples: the Nudgee State School has had some very

much-needed drainage work completed near the old tennis court; the Banyo State High School has a new verandah as the old one was in a bad state of repair; the Northgate State School has new classroom furniture and security grills; the Boondall State School has a much-needed bicycle platform; the Zillmere State School has had a driveway entrance and set-down area fully sealed; and the Geebung State School has had some sandpits at both the preschool and the school refurbished. These are all small projects, but their completion has enabled the school community to reallocate their much-needed maintenance funds to other necessary works.

The other big project in my electorate is the construction of a Police Citizens Youth Club at Zillmere. Funding for this was allocated about six months ago under the Community Sport and Recreation Facilities Program. After a series of negotiations, that funding has now been approved for use by the Police Citizens Youth Club to construct and manage what will be a major recreational facility for north Brisbane. While it will be located at Zillmere, the facility will service the neighbouring suburbs of Boondall and Geebung in particular, neighbouring suburbs of Aspley and Taigum, and nearby communities on the other side of my electorate such as Banyo, Nudgee, Northgate and Virginia. This recreational facility will be close enough for youth in particular to derive significant benefits from it.

The State has put \$1m into this project. We also have a commitment from the Brisbane City Council of \$100,000. I am looking forward to working with PCYC, which has an excellent track record of managing recreational facilities throughout the State, and my local community to develop a very strong partnership. We know that this facility will do great things not just for our local youth but also for the broader community.

There has been a recent announcement in terms of improvements to public housing in the Zillmere area. In fact, \$1.3m will be allocated this financial year for the upgrading of a significant number of homes. A total of 50 in the Zillmere area will be upgraded. Twenty have already been committed from last financial year and 30 additional homes will be included in that program this year. The upgrade program will include the provision of refurbished kitchens and bathrooms, roof sheeting and external painting. Of course, the works undertaken will depend on the particular needs of each individual home. The briefing I have had from the department is that the project will target a discrete block of houses within the suburb in order to avoid the

piecemeal approach of having upgrades that do not enhance the suburb in the way that this program can. I am looking forward to the next 12 months, when we can work with the community to ensure that that program delivers the maximum benefits.

There is also a need in the Zillmere area to provide more seniors accommodation, particularly on the eastern side of the railway line. There are a lot of residents in that area who may wish to voluntarily relocate to smaller accommodation. Currently they may be in a home that has two or three bedrooms and a large yard that they are finding difficult to maintain. I have spoken with the department and am hopeful that at some stage—hopefully it will be this year, but if it is not then I will continue to push it—we will be able to achieve a suitable seniors development which will enable some of those people to relocate within the local area. That is an extremely important principle, because that is where their friends and their community networks are—their doctor, chemist and so on. That is the position I will be putting and discussing with the department.

In that regard, the department is undertaking consultation with the community. I know that to date it has met with an organisation which is well known to the Minister—that is, the Residents Action Group of Zillmere—in particular its president, Mr Jim Freilich. I am hoping to work closely with that organisation to ensure that these redevelopments proceed to the maximum benefit of the community.

Recently the Banyo community, with my assistance, commenced a program to raise funds to construct a community hall in Banyo. As our preferred site we are looking at the Banyo high school. Thankfully, as a result of the support of the Treasurer, we have been able to secure a commitment that 100% of the proceeds of the sale of some land which was purchased by the community back in the 1920s—it is situated behind the newly refurbished Anzac memorial in St Vincents Road—can be retained by the community, provided it is put back into the construction of a community hall. We will be working with the community over the next 12 months, two years or however long it takes to raise the necessary funds or be in a position to make application for dollar-for-dollar funding from either the Education Department or the Department of Sport.

The Budget continues with funding for the Nundah bottleneck. It is very pleasing to see the signs going up and the work actually

commencing. The real construction work will commence early next year. We will be working with the department to ensure that that goes as smoothly as possible.

\$450,000 plus the price of land has been allocated by the Minister for Emergency Services for a new ambulance station at Northgate. I thank the Minister for that. Of course, she is more than welcome to come down and perform the opening.

Mrs Rose: I would be delighted.

Mr ROBERTS: We will make sure that the Minister gets an invitation. That relocation to Northgate will of course improve response times. Currently, the ambulance station is located next to Toombul Shoppingtown. There are some difficulties in terms of access to main thoroughfares. The relocation to Fraser Road in Northgate will improve response times and in fact improve the ambulance service in my community.

Additionally, a new fire station is being constructed at Hendra—not in my electorate, but it will, in fact, improve response times to Banyo, Nudgee, Northgate and other areas of my electorate when it is built. \$712,000 has been allocated for that. The current fire station is located in a difficult area in Nundah next to the railway line. The relocation to Hendra will provide it with better access to major arterial roads and main roads, which will improve the response times.

The only other issues that I want to mention quickly are the improvements to some of the local railway stations. At Northgate, a lot of work is being undertaken at the moment. Local residents have just about had enough of it, but I am sure that they understand that, once the construction work is complete, it will deliver significant benefits for the area, particularly with the car parking. A lot of cars are parked on the street at the moment, and a lot of work is being undertaken at night. I know that Queensland Rail is working to ensure that that work is completed as quickly as possible.

New lifts will be installed at the Northgate Railway Station, which will be an aid to those people who have difficulty in climbing the high stairs. At the Sunshine Railway Station there will be a new platform and station building. There will also be a significant increase in the number of car parks. This will provide easier access to people, particularly in the Geebung area, and to the large industrial estate next to that railway station.

The Geebung Railway Station will receive a new footbridge and ramp access. There is an issue there which I have taken up with

Queensland Rail. There are some difficulties in negotiating additional car parking spaces due to the encroachment of the third line which is being installed into the existing car park. I have asked Queensland Rail to give that matter priority to ensure that we can resolve negotiations with nearby land-holders to secure the parking space that will be needed. It is important that that car parking is made available there. Many of those people spend their money in the local shops. As I said, I have asked Queensland Rail to prioritise the resolution of that matter. As well, the Zillmere Railway Station is currently receiving new lifts. That will be well received by local residents.

Finally, in terms of the Banyo Railway Station—there is no actual work going on there at the moment, but I am putting in a bid for work. I recently made it clear to Queensland Rail that, with the relocation of the Australian Catholic University, there will be significant demand on the Banyo Railway Station. I have received an acknowledgment and at least a need to discuss that issue. Hopefully, I will be meeting with representatives from Queensland Rail over the next few weeks to discuss what improvements might be undertaken at the Banyo Railway Station. With those few comments, I commend the Budget to the House.

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (4.12 p.m.): The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services cannot be trusted, screams the Premier on page 8 of his Budget Speech. There is no confidence in the Minister and the department to spend money effectively, shouts the Premier. The budget of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is a betrayal of the hopes and expectations of those who had believed the Minister's rhetoric about world's best practice, about meeting unmet needs and about the implementation of the Forde commission of inquiry recommendations.

Commissioner Forde was quite specific in relation to the amount needed to bring child protection services up to just the national average—not to world's best practice standards. She recommended \$103m. Minister Bligh delivers \$10m. What do we call a Minister with that level of commitment or capability? Minister 10%? Well, not quite 10%, but nearly! As I will point out later, it may be Minister 0%.

And what explanation does the Premier and acting Treasurer now give for this virtual repudiation of the Forde commission of inquiry? He was correctly reported in the

Courier-Mail of 14 September as saying that he wanted the money used for services, not "building bureaucracy"—being confirmed on page 8 of the Premier/acting Treasurer's Budget Speech. Is he seriously suggesting that commissioner Forde was recommending that those funds should go towards bureaucratic empire building? We all know that commissioner Forde was not. Services to children were what commissioner Forde was proposing.

However, Premier Beattie was expressing the most damning statement of no confidence in a Minister that could be delivered, short of straight-out sacking of the Minister. The Premier's statement makes it clear that the Minister's department, under her administration, was simply not competent to handle the \$103m recommended by Forde. Yet expenditure in the Premier's Department is up by more than 40% and, in the Deputy Premier's department, by some 70%. There is \$250m for the Lang Park stadium, but only \$10m for children. That is what the public of Queensland are seeing.

Furthermore, I have highlighted this week how Minister Bligh, on 25 August this year, wanting a cheap political headline, misled this Parliament by indicating that the Government had accepted 41 of the 42 recommendations, including this recommendation No. 4 to allocate \$103m when, in fact, only \$10m has been allocated. In other words, this is another recommendation that has not been accepted, contrary to the Minister's statement to Parliament. This Minister's claims about world's best practice are seen for what they are: mere grandstanding, with no ability to deliver on behalf of the children she purports to represent. In any event, Labor has grossly underestimated the disillusionment with its approach to the funding of services in the families, disability and youth services areas. Condemnation has been clear and emphatic across a range of commentators.

Professor Ian O'Connor, chair of the Forde Inquiry Monitoring Committee, has eloquently but very effectively voiced his concerns. In essence, he is "very disappointed." The Courier-Mail of 15 September quoted him as saying—

"The level of services provided to children and families in this State will remain inadequate and the level of pressure on staff in the department and non-government sector will remain ... high."

The Children's Commissioner, Robin Sullivan—one of the Minister's own

appointees—was measured and guarded in her choice of words, but her meaning was clear. She is reported as indicating that "the funding was not enough". QCOSS President Shirley Waters' assessment was equally unambiguous. She saw the Beattie Budget as "an ineffective response to a significant problem". Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse Director Hetty Johnston made the valid comparison with the promised \$250m for the proposed super stadium, while finding a mere \$10m for children's services. Is that Mr Beattie's idea of smart? Is that the Cabinet's idea of a Smart State? We on this side of the House condemn it as a cynical and uncaring exercise. As Ms Johnston has said—

"Kids out there are suffering. We thought the Government understood that."

The Minister has let down a lot of people. There are many who thought that she was their friend and advocate. This is a Budget of shame in relation to her portfolio—whatever is the judgment about other aspects of it.

The picture is no better in relation to disability services. The comments of the spokesperson for the Unmet Needs Campaign reflect almost despair over the level of funding for this much-needed service. After all the rhetoric about a new Department of Disability Services, and especially about more funding for unmet needs, what is the reality? It is pathetic! Firstly, there is the \$14m of funds that were budgeted to be spent in the last financial year but which were unspent in the last financial year—at a time when there is a continuing need for additional services for people with a disability. \$13m of these cutbacks involve grants and subsidies to the community. What a farce!

The Minister's own portfolio statements, on page 14, has three footnotes, each offering an explanation as to why services have not been delivered in line with what was budgeted for. It is hard to believe that any Minister could face this House with three whimpering admissions like those actually printed for the world to see. Why were only 13 families—not 174 as budgeted for—provided with funding last financial year under the so-called Family Support initiative? Well, here is the Minister's answer—

"The number of families receiving funding was far less than expected due to the later than expected date of the new Family Support Initiative."

Can members believe it? Families did not receive the support they needed. More than 160 families did not receive desperately

needed support because the Minister's department could not get the scheme going in time. What was the Minister doing about that? More to the point, why did the Minister not keep on top of the issue and ensure that it was proceeding on time? This is another case of cheap rhetoric, but there is no relationship to reality. Where has the concept of ministerial responsibility gone? No doubt someone other than the Minister is to blame. But it is her portfolio and she is responsible for it.

The next note is a doozie! There was an 80% target/estimate for local area coordination pilots to be commenced on time. What percentage do honourable members think this Minister achieved? Maybe 80%? It could have been a hard year and she may have been distracted by other things. Let us say half of the 80% and only expect 40%. Sorry folks, the Minister's score was 0%. That is right—nil! Not one commenced on time! What was the reason? The reason was that "the local area coordination pilots did not commence on time because of a longer than expected consultation period." What an excuse! This comes from the Minister's own statements in her own documents.

One factor that most of us can all manage is the time taken for consultation, but clearly not this Minister. She started in this job with all the bluff and bluster that we have all become accustomed to hearing from her, but when it comes to producing the goods, to running a department, she just has not got what it takes. That excuse is an absolute insult to the Queensland community in general, and in particular to people with a disability.

The third note on page 14 is, if anything, reflective of a person grasping at straws in an effort to explain the inexcusable. All members of the House, irrespective of party affiliation, will know how desperate many families are for respite services in relation to disability clients. The Minister scored 0% again in the number of respite services developed by the agreed date. The estimate had been for 90%. She again failed to score. There must be a reason. It would not be—surely could not be—ministerial incompetence! What does she say in explanation? She says that delays were "due to a number of reasons, particularly delays due to wet weather."

Seriously, that is what is printed in her statement. Did the Minister expect a drought? Was it not reasonable to expect rain in the period concerned? Does she really think that construction work on projects across Queensland was so delayed that none finished on time because it rained this year?

Would members not think that the Minister might have fluked one—just one—on time? This document is the most compelling evidence of ministerial incompetence that I have ever seen and is worse than I hope to ever see again.

I will shortly turn to another area of the Minister's portfolio, namely, Families and Community Support. Before that, however, I raise a matter of concern that goes to the credibility of either the Premier or the Minister, or both. In his Budget Speech, the acting Treasurer, Mr Beattie, indicated at page 8 that the miserly \$10m being allocated this year for the implementation of the Forde recommendations would "see 70 new professionally trained child protection workers added to the front line". What is the true situation?

In the Ministerial Portfolio Statements at page 5, the number of relevant staff—full-time equivalents—is shown as rising from 1,013 to 1,035, an increase of 22, not 70, as repeatedly stated by the Premier. Perhaps the Minister can explain this apparent discrepancy in the Budget paper with another one of her now famous footnotes.

As far as Families and Community Support are concerned, the picture is just as bleak. The Government's priorities relevant to this program are listed at page 3 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements as: better quality of life; safer and more supportive communities; more jobs for Queenslanders; and building Queensland's regions. This is spelled out at page 16 as an output that "seeks to improve the quality of life for families and individuals through community development and the provision of community services for homeless persons, older people and people affected by domestic violence".

I refer in particular to the Minister's responsibility for homeless persons and to that aspect of her responsibility to improve the quality of life for those clients of her department. What practical steps is the Minister taking, or even planning to take, to improve the quality of life for that group of homeless young people whose plight was highlighted in recent media coverage of conditions at a residential in Kangaroo Point? The media article quoted "government officials" as saying that they were powerless to act in a situation where homeless youths were in a house "littered with syringes and garbage".

Community expectations seem to be of a higher order than the services the Minister is providing for those people. If the Minister's

officials, or those of other caring agencies, are powerless to intervene to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those young people, then surely it is the responsibility of this Government to empower them. That is what this Parliament is for, and the Minister is not likely to encounter much difficulty in enacting legislation in this House to ensure the safety and proper care of such young people.

Some of us actually care about them and want to see them receive the help that they so desperately need. The question is what has to happen before the Minister actually moves. We all know about the Premier's concern that the Minister may do nothing more than preside over an empire-building bureaucracy. What about proving him wrong in one or two matters and actually getting effective legislation and worthwhile services in place?

How true it is that children and young people are suffering and the Minister seems to be doing virtually nothing. The Minister should tell us if she is doing something of practical value for these young people. It is not very evident from where I sit or from where the media commentator viewed that appalling situation.

The next point I looked for in the Ministerial Portfolio Statements was services or funding relevant to the illicit use of drugs and related issues. Some weeks ago, I asked on notice for certain information relating to the 1998-99 Budget for this purpose. Whether the Minister likes it or not, and whether or not she chooses to believe it or tries to ignore it, the misuse of drugs is a major issue for many young people for whom she has ministerial responsibility.

In answer to my four-part question I received three answers that defy comparison for arrogance on the Minister's part. The answer given to three of those four questions was, "The information sought is contained in the 1998-99 Budget papers." It is now clear why such an answer was given to the questions about the amounts budgeted within her portfolio to address illicit drug use and related activities. I might say that a similar answer came from the Minister for Health. No amount was budgeted—not a brass razoo! The Minister had not budgeted a cent for this purpose and, being too ashamed to admit to this degree of negligence, tried to cover her tracks by brushing off the question with an answer of breathtaking arrogance. It was not an answer at all.

The attitude of this Minister is an insult to the Parliament and to the institution of parliamentary questions. In the meantime,

Queensland's young people are injecting and dying in hovels in our cities and remote communities and Minister O'Connell does not even include a single dollar to deal with their problem in her budget. Only Labor would have the audacity to call this a smart Budget!

I come now to the Minister's capital works program. This is another matter where gross ineptitude just oozes out of the Budget papers. Back in July, I asked the Minister about the year-to-date expenditure on these items—only to get a response similar to that just mentioned, namely that—

"The information sought will be detailed in the forthcoming 1999-2000 State Budget."

I thank the Minister. I thank her for nothing. Her disrespect for parliamentary practice is bad enough. Her failure to extend even elementary courtesy says more about her as a person, and to that extent she is to be pitied.

I come now to the figures that have been produced in the Budget papers. Now I see why the Minister was not keen to speak about her lack of progress last financial year. It certainly does not engender confidence with regard to what she is likely to achieve this year. The Beattie Budget is supposed to be about jobs. Did the Premier's office not advise this Minister of this supposed emphasis? Does this Minister not remember that, as a member of the Beattie Labor Cabinet, she is supposed to wake up each morning and think "jobs, jobs, jobs"?

May I suggest to the Minister that she simply wakes up and gets on with spending the funds appropriated for capital acquisitions by her department? If Mr Beattie is relying on this Minister to do something constructive about jobs, I can understand his reluctance to entrust this Minister with the rest of the \$103 million for child protection mentioned earlier.

I refer to page 29 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. The state of Queensland's youth detention centres has been widely publicised. The Minister's predecessor in the Goss administration actually disposed of the State's best and major facility during her disastrous years as Minister. It looked as though Labor was going to make amends for the folly of those earlier years when some \$30m was included in the 1998-99 Budget for a rebuilding program for youth detention centres. No doubt, if the responsibility for these had been left with the then Queensland Corrective Services Commission the money would have been spent and the facilities would now be available for the young people in custody. What has this

Minister achieved? Let me tell members that it is better than 0%, but only just. The Minister spent \$1.3m of the \$30m up until 30 June and asks us to believe that \$24.6m will be used this year. There was no footnote about fairies at the bottom of the garden but there was a footnote indicating that—

"Cabinet approved the Youth Detention Centre Infrastructure Plan in 1999. Construction of the new Youth Detention Centre will commence in 1999-2000."

What is that supposed to tell us? Is it a "Don't blame me; Cabinet made me not do it" or is it an admission of this Minister's own inability to get the planning process through Cabinet in time to get the construction phase under way? I say to Minister Bligh that that is very sloppy, negligent and ineffective administration. It is another major project that has not started on time. Whichever way one looks at this project, it screams incompetence. How long is the Minister going to get away with this mockery and misuse of ministerial responsibility? More to the point, is it little wonder that the Premier no longer has confidence in the Minister and her department?

It is a similar story regarding the Loganlea Residential Centre. No valid reason has been given for spending only \$963,000 of the \$1.7m that was budgeted for it for the year, just a footnote dismissing that further oversight with the words, "Delays to the construction of Loganlea Residential Centre", and that it is to be completed in this financial year. The note regarding the item on multipurpose centres is about as helpful as the other two notes that I have mentioned previously. It sets out to explain why only \$462,000 out of a budget of \$1.597m was actually spent. Again, it is a lame and totally inadequate explanation.

The whole capital acquisition statement is just more of the same. It paints a dismal picture of a Minister whose performances are dismal in any aspect of her portfolio that is examined to gauge her real as opposed to claimed performance. The Minister and her budget are a manifestation of a failure to live up to the claims and expectations that have been engendered by clever rhetoric. Those fancy claims have now been seen to be hollow. The Budget documents expose a sham that has been perpetrated on the people of Queensland, among whom are the most vulnerable members of our society. It is little wonder that the Premier and acting Treasurer says that the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services and her department cannot be trusted.

In addition, this Budget does nothing to address the issues raised in the Productivity Commission's July report into the effects of gambling on Queenslanders. Again, the Beattie Labor Government has been strongly criticised by Relationships Australia, which is at the forefront in helping Queenslanders who have gambling problems. This Budget, by introducing the Beattie stealth tax, introduces a new tax that will hit the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care severely in the future. The charge means that, while this Beattie Labor Government rips the heart out of this department, there will be less money for services and less money for those in need.

In addition, Standard and Poor's, that well-known international ratings agency, has confirmed the point made by the National/Liberal coalition that this Budget is in the red, that it is in deficit to the amount of \$1,200m—the first time in over 20 years that it has been in deficit. So in just 15 months, we now have a Queensland John Cain. Yes, Labor is on the way to doing to Queensland what Labor did to Victoria. It is little wonder that the community is so angry with this Budget.

In the few moments remaining to me, I want to make some brief comments about the redevelopment of the Ballymore sporting oval. Initially, some \$12m was budgeted for Ballymore. However, in the past financial year, only \$658,000 was spent. This year, some \$3.6m is budgeted for Ballymore. Although the total estimated cost for the redevelopment of Ballymore has been reduced from \$12m to \$6.9m, quite clearly this year the funding for Ballymore has suffered substantial cuts. A major redevelopment is now going to take place at Lang Park. The \$3.6m to be spent this year on Ballymore leaves a carryover of \$2.7m. Clearly, that indicates that, when it comes to funding, Ballymore is getting the chop and Lang Park—

Time expired.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.34 p.m.): It has been 15 months since I was elected as the State member for the electorate of Mount Ommaney and 12 months since the last Budget, the first of the Beattie Government. During this short period, a lot has happened both from a Labor Government perspective and in relation to my own electorate. When I was elected, I faced a number of major issues that were the result of the previous Government's lack of foresight and concern for the people they serve. When the new high school at Centenary was started

in early 1998, little attention was given to the residents of the local area. They were not consulted or kept up to date by the then local member and a number of issues arose both during and after the construction phase. Residents were concerned about dust, noise, pedestrian and traffic safety, drainage and the environment. I was constantly calling the project manager and the Brisbane City Council about these matters to ensure that they were rectified quickly and put to rest.

The Jindalee Golf Club, a not-for-profit organisation that is located directly opposite the high school, was flooded a number of times due to inadequate drainage and the build-up of silt from the high school oval. That is still a problem and funds are needed to remove the built-up silt to ensure that the course is not inundated with water after the next storm.

The Education Minister has approved \$1,801,000 to be spent on Stage 2 of the Centenary State High School, which is now commencing. A number of weeks ago I wrote to nearby residents, held a public meeting to discuss the plans and have again written to all residents outlining the issues raised and the Education Department's response to those matters. I believe that the project manager has been adequately alerted to possible problems and that Stage 2 will be completed bearing in mind at all times the welfare of the local residents as well as the students. The students at the school are achieving good results and have good support from their parents and teachers.

The issue of the cessation of bus subsidies for students who wanted to complete their education at other schools was difficult to address. After months of lobbying and petitioning the Transport Minister to compensate those parents who would lose their subsidies due to the proximity of the new high school, it became clear that millions of dollars would be lost in the setting of a precedent whenever a new high school was built in Queensland. Parents were advised that where financial hardship was an issue, the safety net provisions would offset some of the costs of transport. It was unfortunate that the previous member promised the parents of the affected children a gradual phasing out of those subsidies without even checking or budgeting the cost with the department.

For many years, the old hospital site on the corner of Dandenong Road and Arrabri Avenue has been the subject of public meetings after it was declared surplus to requirements by the Health Department. In

December 1997, the previous Government made a Cabinet decision to sell off the site for development, leaving 30% of the land for a public park. On the change of Government, I immediately lobbied the Health Minister for a better deal for the community. She later agreed to increase the amount of parkland to 41% of the site. When one considers that usually only 10% of a development area is designated as parkland, that is a fine outcome for the people of Mount Ommaney.

I have written to the Minister asking her to consider the construction of a retirement village on the site rather than the development being all high density and to also include on the site a community centre. I wish to acknowledge the Minister's support of our veterans by enabling a war memorial to be established on the site and the establishment of a hospice for terminally ill children. I am not an advocate of total development and I see that parkland in our suburbs is somewhat lacking. Considering the ever-increasing cost of health and the necessity for the Health Department to obtain a return from the land sale, it is better to consider a win-win situation rather than to wage an all-out war and end up with no parkland.

In my maiden speech to Parliament, I said that I was determined that there would be no more prisons built near the backyards of the people of Riverhills. The CRAMP group fought the previous Government hard to have a prison sited away from their homes. This was honoured by the previous Government and the new prisons, the Wolston Correctional Centre and the Brisbane Women's Prison, were built further away. However, because of increasing prisoner numbers, more prisons were required. The Police and Corrective Services Minister looked seriously at venues other than Wacol at which it was convenient to build another prison. Consequently, the new prison will be built in Maryborough, out of sight and out of mind of the residents of Riverhills.

The Beattie Government promised to consult about the prison land, which now lies dormant behind the homes of the Riverhills residents. I have consulted with the community about this land and, overwhelmingly, they have said that they would like to see it become recreational space or to see cattle continue to graze on it, as they do now. They do not want to see another prison pop up. The people are anxious that the land is utilised so that future Governments do not conveniently place on that land yet another prison. Moreton A prison will be demolished as promised as soon as the Maryborough prison is commissioned. Everything is running according to schedule.

Noise barriers along the Centenary Highway are near completion. This project, which includes the construction of a bikeway to link up with Coronation Drive, was started about two years ago. There is still some animosity on the part of those residents who live near the highway because noise is still an issue. A trial to measure the effect of traffic speed on noise has commenced with a lowering of the speed limit to 90 kilometres per hour near the Sumners Road exit. Residents say that the level of noise has been reduced. However, scientific results are not yet available.

Residents have requested that pedestrians be allowed to use the bikeway as, at present, its use by cyclists is sporadic. When the bikeway is completed and it links up with the bikeway along Coronation Drive, the number of cyclists using the bikeway is expected to increase. In the meantime, I have asked the Minister and the Lord Mayor to allow pedestrians to use the bikeway, but at their own risk.

Since the installation of noise barriers, some 2,000 trees have been planted along the Centenary Highway and another 4,000 are yet to be planted. The trees were planted and fertilised by the Main Roads Department and Greening Australia.

New public housing seniors units have been constructed in Corinda and the construction of six apartment units in Jerrold Street, Sherwood is expected to be completed by October this year. A total of \$1,170,456 will go towards funding the construction of further public rental housing in the electorate to alleviate waiting times for people in the area. The South West Home Assist Scheme will receive over \$300,000 to serve these suburbs, including my electorate of Mount Ommaney.

Over the past 10 years, traffic along the Centenary Highway has increased markedly and will increase further with the link to Springfield. Bottlenecks occur at both ends. The problem lies at the roundabouts at Toowong and Ipswich Road. I have asked the Minister to find some long-term solutions to these problems. There is no room to expand along Milton Road and adjusting the Ipswich Road roundabout will require Federal Government funding.

As a result of my representations that the police station at Mount Ommaney remain open outside normal working hours, it has extended its hours from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Patrol cars now operate between midnight and 7 a.m. every night of the week and during the day on weekends.

I have assisted a table tennis association in Centenary to prepare an application to the State Government for a grant for tables and equipment. That is currently under consideration.

Now to the other side of the highway and the suburbs of Oxley, Corinda, Sherwood and Sinnamon Park, which have equal importance to the progress of the Mount Ommaney electorate. To make access a little easier for those residents, many months ago I set up an office at the Oxley senior citizens' hall which I attend on the first Friday morning of each month. People often pop in to tell me of their concerns or just to keep me informed. On Saturday mornings I set up a stall at various street corners in the electorate to reach a broader cross-section of people in the community.

The major issues that have arisen from this side of the electorate include bus and rail transport coordination, the upgrade of Oxley and Sherwood stations, traffic problems along Oxley Road and Seventeen Mile Rocks Road, the DPI land abutting Corinda residences, sewerage smells and noise issues, the future of the Oxley secondary college, development at Seventeen Mile Rocks and Darra, parkland, the development of the old Corinda State School site, the need for a community health centre, the redevelopment of the Corinda shops, and Oxley Creek catchment issues. I am happy to say that most of those major issues have been resolved or are currently being given consideration by council and the appropriate Government Minister. I have made representations to the Health Minister for a community health centre in Oxley/Corinda.

Education is very important to me and I have been in regular contact with schools in the area to assess their needs. A number of long-term maintenance issues have been resolved, including funding for the Jindalee State School fire hydrant, maintenance of the Jindalee preschool, the painting of the Middle Park State School undercover area and buildings, and the drainage problem at the Jamboree Heights State School courts which is being fixed. Funding was made available to seal the Centenary State High School basketball court. An upgrade is expected at the Corinda State High School. Road safety maintenance at the Oxley State School has occurred. The Jamboree Heights preschool's flooding problem is on a list of priorities. A gaming machine grant has made it possible for St Joseph's at Corinda to make its footpath usable for all in wet weather and erect a safety fence.

With the Corinda Montrose Special School children needing to find alternative accommodation, the Minister has advised that \$1,627,000 will be provided to construct a special education facility at Grand Avenue School, which will be designed specifically to house those severely disabled children. A sum of \$371,000 has been allocated to purchase MacPherson Lodge in Corinda. This will enable a continuation of accommodation for adults with disabilities.

Education Queensland is opening up new high schools in developing areas in the western suburbs. Meanwhile, the Oxley secondary college has seen a decrease of 22% in its school population in 1999. Last month a public meeting was held to discuss the future of the college and parents have been asked to complete a needs survey to be assessed by Education Queensland. I am totally supportive of the role of the college, which caters for the disadvantaged. I have asked the Minister for Education, Dean Wells, to continue to provide this kind of service to the community. We must look after those young adults who do not fit into the conventional education system.

Mr BAUMANN: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mrs ATTWOOD: The Corinda State High School, which has a current enrolment of about 1,400 students, is due for an upgrade. I have been in close contact with the principal of that school in relation to needs that have arisen. Action will be taken in the not-too-distant future to strategically plan for those changes.

The Oxley Railway Station is utilised frequently by locals and people from neighbouring electorates. The station certainly needs upgrading to cater for increased patronage. I have made sure that the Minister is aware of the need for funding for ramps or a lift for the elderly and disabled at both Oxley and Sherwood stations.

A sum of \$750,000 has been set aside in this year's Budget for the purchase of land and the construction of a new ambulance station for the Mount Ommaney electorate. Over the past 12 months I have been working with QAS officers to select a suitable site that will provide quick responses to the Centenary suburbs, Sinnamon Park, Seventeen Mile Rocks and the outer reaches of Oxley.

The old Oxley Police Station will be refurbished to accommodate specialist squads

from Alderley. A sum of \$1,949,000 will be injected into the community to undertake this activity. The Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre has received a number of grants to support its programs. In the past 12 months many other community organisations, including P & Cs, have benefited from State Government grants totalling \$162,413.

Graffiti continues to be an issue in the electorate. The toilet block that was recently installed at the Jindalee skate park has already been vandalised. It took me two years of lobbying the Lord Mayor's office to get that facility built. While most young people value its usefulness, unfortunately some individuals do not.

In recent times, the issue of drugs and discarded syringes has been brought to my attention. Recently, an elderly woman was attacked at the tunnel linking Sinnamon Park with the Mount Ommaney Shopping Centre. This is a known meeting place for drug users. On this issue I am working with the Police Service and a mature-age research student from the QUT, who is undertaking a study of the effect of drugs on youth and the community. She will document her research in a report that I will use to work with the community in relation to this issue.

I have doorknocked the new Windemere estate and from time to time I continue this grassroots approach throughout the electorate. Apart from dealing with the major issues, the rest of my time is spent dealing with many individual issues, visiting community groups, attending official functions, attending Parliament and parliamentary committee meetings, and visiting schools, State Government organisations and retirement villages. The best part of my job is the opportunity it gives to converse with, inform and assist the people I meet every day. To be able to represent them is a great honour and a privilege.

Finally, I take this opportunity to acknowledge some hardworking local community groups that I have had some involvement with: John Oxley Orchid Society; the Centenary and Districts Chamber of Commerce; the Chinese Business and Professional Association; the Jindalee Lions and the Jindalee and Sumner Park Rotary Clubs; the Sherwood RSL; the Vietnamese Forum for Multiculturalism and Women's Association; the Hindu Alalya Sangan Queensland Inc; the Sri Lankan community; the Taiwanese Friendship Association; Focus on Youth; a number of Neighbourhood Watch groups; the Salvation Army, Centenary; the

P & C associations; the Sherwood respite centre; Concerned Residents Against More Prisons; Safety House committees; the Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre; the Oxley CWA; the Oxley and Centenary Senior Citizens and National Seniors groups; the Jindalee and Centenary Probus clubs; the Centenary View Club; the Centenary Project Group; the Sinnamon Park, Seventeen Mile Rocks and Oxley Progress Associations; the scouts, guides and Trefoil guilds; the Centenary and Sherwood Meals on Wheels; Benarrawa; the Oxley Creek Environment Group; the Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee; the Westlake/Riverhills Bush Care Group; the Jindalee Bush Care Group, the Zoe Reed Little Bridge House Association; the St Catherine's and Centenary soccer clubs; the Jindalee Jaguars; the Jindalee and St Catherine's netball clubs; the Jindalee and McLeods golf clubs; the Y West; the Jindalee and Corinda bowls clubs; the Young Widows and Widowers Support Group and the Centenary Suburbs Historical Society. I thank them for all the good work that they do in our community and for bringing people together.

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (4.49 p.m.): Yesterday, Standard and Poor's issued a press release headed "Queensland Budget Shows Weakening Finances" and which stated—

"In contrast to recent years, the general government sector is expected to slip into the red in fiscal 2000 ... A general government underlying cash deficit of A\$0.4 billion is forecast compared with a small surplus in fiscal 1999.

...

For the state sector as a whole a cash deficit of more than A\$1.2 billion is forecast in fiscal 2000 after recording a cash deficit of A\$0.4 billion in fiscal 1999. A 25% increase in the capital program of the public trading enterprise sector will be financed by an increase in borrowings of A\$1.3 billion."

That is a wake-up call. I did not think that I would ever see something like this. For decades in this State most Governments have insisted that the Budget be in the black. Both sides of the Parliament have had a very good record in adhering to that principle, and we have been the envy of all of the other States. We have seen what has happened in other States. For example, we saw WA Inc. and also what Cain did in Victoria. I would have thought that we would have learned from those lessons.

Obviously, the Premier of this State has not learned anything. As the acting Treasurer, he has to bear the responsibility for this Budget. Although the Budget might give him some satisfaction, there is underlying concern that we have gone into the red for the first time in decades. As I said, that is sending a dreadful message to the community. The Goss Government was a disaster for rural and regional Queensland. It closed down just about everything. It tore the heart and soul out of the Department of Primary Industries, which lost some 700 personnel. Courthouses and railway lines were closed. That Government was disastrous for the State. There was an attempt to rebuild rural and regional Queensland. However, in this Budget we see a slashing of some \$27m from the DPI budget. Again, that sends a very gloomy message to primary producers.

Last year, the Beattie Government had the luxury of releasing what was, in the main, the former coalition Government's 1998-99 DPI budget. Apart from some important changes, such as the scrapping of the western aquaculture project and the scrapping of the new conference centre at the Kingaroy DPI offices, it was in essence the same budget. But this year the Minister had to do it on his own. He has had to fight for the bush before the Beattie Government's Budget Review Committee. Sadly, the bush's worst fears have been confirmed. The Minister's lack of clout in the Cabinet and the Beattie Government's low regard for primary industries have been borne out in the 1999-2000 Budget. As I said, DPI's budget has been slashed by \$27m. This was the first real opportunity for the Beattie Government to show that it was serious about regional development and supporting Queensland's primary industries. But it has squibbed. The big claims have been shown to be no more than rhetoric.

The Beattie Government has failed to deliver and the Budget gains of the coalition are already being plundered to prop up this Government's pork-barrelling efforts in its own electorates and the marginal electorates on the coast. The DPI's capital works program has been slashed by 20%. Those cuts come on the back of some extraordinary capital works results over the past 12 months. The Centre for Dry Tropics suffered the Beattie Government's notorious go-slow disease in the past year, with only \$266,000 of the budgeted \$600,000 spent. After slashing our budgeted expenditure of \$3.8m for an upgrade of the pilot plant at Hamilton to \$3m and allocating \$600,000 for the past financial year, only \$1,000 was spent.

The go-slow meant that only \$387,000 of the budgeted \$420,000 was spent on the upgrade of the Maroochy post-harvest facilities. Only \$2.8m of the budgeted \$5.9m was spent on vessels replacement, and this year's allocation has been pruned back to \$1.7m. This is in spite of the problems with prawn poaching in Moreton Bay, illegal fishing and the like. How are Boating and Fisheries going to keep up with the crooks? And how telling are these cuts, given the Premier's regular bursts in the media about the ineffectiveness of the Federal Government-funded Coastguard? There has been no shortage of illegal activity within Queensland's jurisdiction. But what is the response of the Beattie Government? It cut the resources of the Boating and Fisheries Patrol. Vessel upgrades have been downgraded. The coalition wonders whether they have enough fuel to run their boats. Whatever happened to the Government cleaning up its own backyard before it criticises others?

Equity returns on the department's capital works—the new Beattie stealth tax—will cost DPI \$11.3m this financial year. This is one of the most regressive taxes ever imposed. In imposing this tax, the Government will stymie regional development. To use the Premier's words, departments will scramble to "maintain an efficient capital works structure". The Government has inevitably sounded the death knell for capital works in regional Queensland. It will not be a surprise when various departments start deeming rural and regional infrastructure and services as inefficient. Inevitably, that is what will happen.

This Government has forgone Government community service obligations. It has put at risk every single road, railway, powerline, bush school, bush hospital, water storage and DPI office. This is a tax on the development and growth of Queensland and the implications will be most serious for regional and rural Queensland. I make a prediction now: grassroots research and extension services will bear the brunt of the \$27m in budget cuts. Not only has this Government imposed a massive budget cut; it has now announced the establishment of what is shaping up to be little more than another layer of bureaucracy. The so-called Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences is little more than a reshuffling of the bureaucracy—the usual smoke and mirrors, at which this Government is a past master. No new money has been provided to fund it, and with \$27m in budget cuts, the money has to come from somewhere to fund it. The Queensland Food and Fibre Science and Innovation Council is to be

chaired by the Minister and include representatives from industry, science and business. It has a nice title. However, we question what it will do that is not already being done by the institutes and the advisory councils. Will it duplicate their work or will these bodies simply be sacked? Where will the money come from to fund these two structures? Will it come from the institutes or the advisory councils? What role will these bodies now play?

Mr Palaszczuk: The money's there.

Mr COOPER: We want to know more specifically whether the institutes will remain and not just hang around wondering what to do. They should have something of value to do, as they have had in the past. We are seeing a duplication. The new Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences is another layer of bureaucracy. Only time will tell whether it has a role. We are extremely concerned that this is an attempt to downgrade and do away with it.

Mr Palaszczuk: Don't be a knocker.

Mr COOPER: I am not being a knocker. We set them up. We do not want to see them knocked down. The Minister is the one who could be knocking them down. We do not want to see that. We are making our point very clear. We will get some answers from the Minister in due course.

The very great fear amongst industry—a fear that I share—is that the money will come from the institutes and from on-the-ground research and extension services. I am yet to be convinced that the AFFS will do little more than add another layer of bureaucracy and another layer of expense for little or no benefit to the farmers. We want the Minister to detail his commitment to those institutes and their roles. I hope the Minister can prove the industry's and my own fears to be groundless, and I challenge him to do so.

Mr Speaker, this is a Budget which takes us back to the bad old days of the Goss Labor Government, when millions of dollars were plundered from DPI's budget over a six-year period, during which time nearly 700 staff were sacked and a loan was taken out to pay out those staff—a loan that the coalition Government inherited and which the DPI is still paying off. The bush has already started to feel the impact of the Beattie Government's anti-water development, anti-timber industry and anti-vegetation management policies. Now it has received a budget to match.

The Beattie Government has again refused to uphold the coalition's Budget commitment to scrap stamp duty on crop

insurance and loan refinancing. That is an initiative that would encourage farmers to hedge against risk and reward farmers for insuring their crops by removing the 8.5% stamp duty on crop insurance. It is an initiative that would save \$1,200 for a farmer refinancing a \$300,000 loan, and it would save a farmer \$3,000 when refinancing a loan of \$750,000. This is not an expensive initiative for a Government in the context of a multibillion-dollar Budget. However, it is an initiative that would save farmers thousands of dollars. And every dollar counts.

This Budget has also grossly neglected the vital area of animal health. In light of the increasing emphasis being placed on clean and green animal products in all our markets and, indeed, all agricultural products, this is a glaring example of how out of touch this Budget is with the priorities of Queensland's primary industries. Market access is fundamental to the success of our primary industries. As international trade gets more and more competitive and consumers become more and more discerning about the food they eat, the maintenance and improvement of our disease status is paramount.

No more graphic example is the requirement of the European Union that Queensland now prove that it does not have mad cow disease. We know that we do not have the disease in Queensland, but our word is not good enough anymore. We have to prove that we do not have it in Queensland, and that requires research and testing, which requires money—money that the Animal and Plant Health Service in DPI desperately needs to improve our disease-free status for this disease and for others, to enhance our international reputation and to retain existing markets and to open new markets. It is getting harder and harder for our primary industries to compete on the world stage on price alone. Members have only to ask the pork industry about that.

Possibly our greatest advantage is animal health, but we can no longer take that for granted. With freer trade access, it is now more important than ever to maintain our quarantine standards. It is a big investment, but it is money more than well spent. The British have experienced the closure of their beef market virtually overnight because of BSE—mad cow disease. That nearly destroyed their industry. We never want to find ourselves in that situation.

Instead of diverting resources to this all important area, the Beattie Government has

slashed animal health spending by \$9m. Despite the strong support from industry and the coalition's commitment to bipartisan support, I am dismayed that the Beattie Government has not provided any funding or even a commitment to fund the proposed animal health institute. That institute, which would involve combining and capitalising on the financial and intellectual resources of the University of Queensland, the CSIRO and the DPI, has the potential to not only shore up our own animal health status but also develop a whole new market for Queensland—a potentially multimillion-dollar market in intellectual expertise. It is ideally suited for inclusion in any Smart State initiative. It is about planning and providing for the future. It is visionary stuff and, in refusing to back it, the Beattie Government has shown just how much it lacks vision for our primary industries.

While the Beattie Government likes to rant and rave and stage play on National Competition Policy, the Budget documents reveal no lessening in its commitment to pursuing it. No less than four NCP reviews are planned for the fiscal year ahead—for Fisheries, veterinary surgeons, sawmills and veterinary chemicals. Nowhere in this Budget is there any specific assistance provided to primary industries as a whole or individual primary producers who are hurt by this implementation of NCP.

This Budget also heralds the beginning of staff cutbacks. The Beef Industry Services Unit, which services Queensland's second biggest industry, worth some \$1.2 billion, is to lose 11 staff, down from 216 to 205. It is inconceivable that, after the hard work of the former coalition Government to reverse the tide of nearly 700 sackings, redundancies and retrenchments during the Casey and Gibbs era, the rot has set in again under the Beattie Government.

I wish to comment on some of the wish lists that we have seen around for Primary Industries from the Queensland Farmers Federation. It had a wish list as far as this Budget is concerned, as most of these bodies do. As far as funding and action for water infrastructure development is concerned, there has been no defined or significant commitment provided for water infrastructure. Funding was provided for St George off-stream storage and ongoing works in the Burdekin River irrigation area and the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area. That was last year, and there has been little or no progress. There is no mention of Nathan dam or Paradise dam, so the freeze continues.

A \$100m financial incentives adjustment package through QRAA over 5 to 10 years to assist land-holders to meet the requirements of new legislation for tree clearing has not been provided. DPI funding to be maintained in real terms is another one on the wish list, yet we see a cut of \$27m. That cut of \$27m is clearly stated in the Budget papers. In its own words, the Budget summary on page 56 of Budget paper No. 4 clearly states that the Department of Primary Industries 1999-2000 total estimated funding is \$275.3m. After adjusting for the equity return, which is the 6% tax, in 1999-2000 there is a decrease of \$26.6m on the 1998-99 total actual. There is no dispute about that. The funding comes from actual spending in 1998-99 of \$290.597m down to an estimate in 1999-2000 of \$275.285m. That is a difference of \$15m. Add to that the \$11.3m, and one comes up with the \$26m that the Budget papers refer to. It is there for anyone to see. I think that is unbelievably sad.

As I said, the Minister—or certainly the Government—has decided to ignore the wish lists from these various primary industries groups. I have mentioned their wish for the Government to abolish stamp duty, crop insurance and loan refinancing. That would not cost a Budget much at all—not in the context of over \$16 billion. It would not have been much to ask and it would have been a great thing for primary producers to be encouraged to take out risk insurance, which is what we want them to do. They must be encouraged to do that, but we have missed the chance again. The Borbidge Government did introduce that, but it was taken out, and I think that is tragic. There are always going to be natural disasters of some description or another. It would be good if we could start to get farmers to insure against those sorts of things by way of risk financing in some way, shape or form, and I know the Minister agrees with that. It is just a pity it was not provided.

Funding to assist rural industries and individual producers adversely affected by NCP—National Competition Policy—was on that wish list, and none has specifically been provided. Most people have found—and I know this includes members on that side of the House because I have talked to them—that in this Budget and the Budget papers it is very, very difficult, and deliberately so, to find out funding of these individual items. They are obviously not there. We will bring more of the detail of that out during the Estimates hearings. However, it is a pity that people have to resort to that sort of tactic to try to get their Budget through with an indication

that everything in the garden is rosy. It is always found out later—as we are finding now from Standard and Poor's, and more and more people and bodies will discover this—just how fake a Budget is. As I said, that sleight of hand will always be found out, as we will do that when the Estimates hearings come around.

I mentioned the Queensland's Farmers Federation. It gave the Budget a score of 7 out of 10. I find that incredible. Most of the people who normally support the Labor Government have belted the Budget. I do not know how anyone could rate a rural Budget as 7 out of 10. It is absolutely beyond me that they can do it when we have seen a \$27m cut in the Primary Industries budget. That will not even cover the increase in the CPI. The members of the QFF, Agforce and various other bodies are the ones who are going to suffer from a Budget such as this, yet the QFF seeks to praise it.

I am saying to those rural organisations that they should be sticking up for their own members, their own constituencies; they should not be crawling to a Government that kicks them in the teeth such as this one has. As far as I am concerned, if these rural organisations are going to hold onto their members, they should be sticking up for their members. That should be their first priority, just as it is with the union or any other such body: one sticks up for one's union, one sticks up for one's members—the people who pay the levies—and indicate to them that the trouble is on the way. It has to be on the way because when a Budget such as this cuts the funding in the rural sector that is on its knees and has been for 10 years, this is not the way that one demonstrates rapport. That sends a shocking message out to those people.

As far as I am concerned, who would want to be part of organisations when they give a tick to a Budget that has gone into the red for the first time in decades? The QFF giving it a score of 7 out of 10 I find unbelievable. As far as I am concerned, it would not be worth three and a half or four. As we know in relation to all Budgets—and I have seen quite a few since I became a member of this House—the devil is in the detail. We find that out as time goes by and we conduct more and more questioning and probing.

What is alarming though, of course, is the format of this Budget in that it is designed to hide. That again sends a bad message: if there is something to hide, there has to be something smelly underneath it. That will all come out in the long run. In the short run,

when groups comment on the day of a Budget and give it a big tick, they find out later how stupid they are and wrong they have been. They will find that out as far as the Department of Primary Industries is concerned. As I said, I think that is sad and tragic for an industry that is still on its knees and will take a long, long time to recover. This Budget does not get any marks as far as we on this side of the House are concerned. We will pursue the rest of the detail in the Estimates hearings.

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (5.09 p.m.): I am delighted to speak in this debate on the Beattie Government's second Budget. The 1999-2000 Budget is a balanced Budget that lays the foundations for building Queensland into a Smart State. It creates jobs, it provides record levels of capital works spending on infrastructure and it delivers on our key priorities. The Beattie Labor Government has achieved this without selling off capital assets to fund recurrent spending, without resorting to increased State Government charges and without mortgaging our future.

The Budget contains record spending of \$16.8 billion—up \$200m on last year's Budget. In two Budgets the Beattie Government has reordered the State's priorities so that they reflect the needs and challenges of our time. The Budget documents illustrate that this Government's efforts are firmly focused on achieving the following seven priorities: more jobs for Queenslanders; building Queensland's regions; skilling Queensland, the Smart State; safer and more supportive communities; better quality of life; valuing the environment; and strong Government leadership. These seven priorities embrace the aspirations of all Queenslanders. This Budget provides the framework through which all Queenslanders can participate in their State's growth and have confidence in their shared future.

The Budget forecasts that we will create 41,000 new jobs for Queenslanders this year. This expected boost in Queensland jobs is on top of the major improvements in the labour market that the Government achieved in its first 16 months in office. Between June 1998 and August 1999, 49,000 new jobs were created, of which over 73% are full-time; employment grew by 3.1%; employment in the 15 to 19 year age group increased by 6.5%; employment in the 45 and over age group increased by 5.6%; the number of people unemployed fell by 11,400; and the unemployment rate fell to 7.9%, which is 0.8% lower than the rate we inherited from the previous Government.

These exceptional results have been achieved through policies and programs that promote job creation and through innovative labour market programs such as the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives, which receive \$80.8m in this Budget—an increase of \$38m over the previous Budget. Queensland's average unemployment rate for the last year actually came in at 8.3%, and last month we smashed the 8% barrier with an unemployment figure of 7.9%. This is the lowest level of unemployment in Queensland for a decade. The Budget indicates that unemployment is expected to fall further this year to about seven and three quarter per cent.

Employment will also be boosted by continuing strong levels of business investment and another record Capital Works Program. As the Premier and acting Treasurer said on Tuesday, this Government and this Budget are about jobs, jobs and more jobs. The 1999-2000 Budget contains projected capital works spending of \$5.4 billion. Of this we expect some \$200m to be carried over as a result of factors such as bad weather, leaving an end target of \$5.16 billion. Some \$1 billion of this relates to energy projects.

Last September the Government budgeted for a \$5.1 billion Capital Works Program, of which it expected to deliver \$4.8 billion after carryovers. In fact, the Government delivered \$4.9 billion—the biggest capital budget ever delivered in this State. The capital budget includes \$585m for Health, \$328m for capital outlays in Education, and \$304m for law, order and public safety. Fifty-four per cent of this capital budget will be spent outside the Brisbane region. All of these projects underwrite job creation while also providing new infrastructure for Queensland.

The Beattie Government has also reduced the tax burden on business in Queensland by \$27m. The tax concessions include a substantial reduction in wagering taxes as well as a tripling of the rebate available on land tax, from 5% to 15%.

The Government has also moved to close off a growing avenue for tax minimisation in relation to payroll tax. This Budget brings Queensland into line with all other Australian States by including employer contributions to superannuation in the payroll tax base and it compensates for this broadening of the base by a progressive reduction in the base payroll tax rate from 5% currently to 4.8%. The cost/revenue estimates on this reform are still fairly rough. At present, the Government expects a net impact of \$30m, which is

negligible given total payroll tax receipts of some \$1.3 billion. Once the Government has a better picture of the revenue impacts of this move, it will review the base rate of payroll tax to ensure that the changes remain close to revenue neutral.

The Budget parameters have been achieved at the same time as maintaining Queensland's record of impeccable financial management. The Beattie Government has implemented and fully funded all its election commitments while at the same time maintaining a Budget surplus and ensuring that there are no new taxes or increases in taxes and charges above CPI. The Budget this year will be in surplus by \$21m. Queensland will maintain its AAA credit rating and is the only Australian State with a negative net debt position.

This Budget continues to provide a competitive tax environment. The tax burden for Queenslanders remains nearly 26% less than the average tax level for all other States and Territories. Based on the 1999-2000 estimates, Queenslanders pay \$653 a year less per capita than a New South Wales resident and \$288 a year less per capita than a Victorian resident.

The Budget forecast economic growth for the year ahead at three and three quarter per cent. Although this represents an easing on the four and three quarter per cent achieved in the fiscal year 1999, it remains historically strong and ahead of the forecast national growth rates.

The Budget also builds on the intellectual assets of Queensland. This is a Budget for a Smart State. This Budget is a pioneering Budget because, for the first time in Queensland's history, we have taken a truly whole-of-Government approach to skilling and advancing Queensland's human capital. The Budget nurtures emerging knowledge based industries such as biotechnology through historic investment in the research infrastructure of Queensland.

The 1999-2000 Budget enhances the effectiveness of Government service delivery to Queenslanders through the use of new technology. This will be achieved through increased funding in areas including telecommunications, biotechnology, information technology and far-reaching education initiatives.

The Government's \$270m 10-year plan for investment in bioindustries aims to establish Queensland as a leading hub for bioindustry development in the Asia-Pacific

region. This Budget commits the Government to \$3.75m in 1999-2000 and \$77.5m over 10 years towards an Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland. This will be the largest biological research centre in Australia. \$8m has also been provided over four years for the Centre for Biomolecular Science and Drug Discovery at the Griffith University's Gold Coast campus.

The Smart State Budget also includes \$5m in 1999-2000 and \$20m in total to support the new Comprehensive Cancer Centre at the Queensland Institute for Medical Research, which will be at the forefront of international cancer therapy. A new biotechnology office has also been established. This will work closely with the Commonwealth on genetic modification issues. The Government is also providing tailor-made assistance for IT & T industry investment, and Queensland will host international conferences in the field. The State's 1999-2000 Budget delivers on the seven priorities I outlined earlier while ensuring that the unsustainable spending increases of the previous Government are reined in without cutting services, jobs or infrastructure investment.

The Beattie Government is the first community-oriented Queensland Government. One of its key priorities is to focus on communities and their needs, including safety, family vitality and equity and reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Beattie Government places great emphasis on communities and their needs, because it is at this level that a progressive, caring and efficient State Government can make a real difference to people's lives.

Following the Forde Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, the Government will increase child protection spending by almost 50% over the next four years. This will amount to \$100m over four years, including \$10m this financial year, and represents one of the largest recurrent funding initiatives of the Budget. The funding will improve protection and support services for children who have been abused or neglected, and their families. In 1999-2000, an extra 70 professionally trained child protection workers will help in this effort.

The 1999-2000 Budget is addressing the wrongs of the past by providing \$25.4m over three years, including \$6.3m in 1999-2000, to compensate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who worked for the Queensland Government between 1975 and 1986 for less than the award wage.

The 1999-2000 Budget also contains a range of crime prevention programs, including \$15m—\$52.5m over four years—for the Community Renewal program. The program is a key component of the Government's Crime Prevention Strategy, which seeks to address the causes of disadvantage and crime through education, training, family support and improving the built environment. \$5m is also provided in 1999-2000—\$39 million over four years—for the Safe Station program, which is progressively upgrading facilities to make railway passengers feel safer as they travel.

These are just a sample of the numerous initiatives contained in the 1999-2000 Budget. It is a landmark Budget that enhances the future prosperity and quality of life of all Queenslanders. Through this Budget, the Beattie Government has clearly articulated its seven priorities and, in partnership with community, non-Government, private sector and other levels of government, is leading Queensland confidently into the next century. I commend the 1999-2000 Budget to the House.

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (5.22 p.m.): I welcome the opportunity to participate in this Budget reply debate. Firstly, I wish to make a few comments on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 1999 and the provisions in that legislation which will see moneys allocated over the next 12 months for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service.

I believe it is important that members of this House are given the opportunity to access the technology necessary to carry out their responsibilities as members of Parliament. I really cannot believe that here we are, less than four months out from the turn of the century, and members of this House are still not only not provided with computers in their parliamentary offices but also computer equipment on their desks in their electorate offices. I realise that there is a Speaker's Technology Advisory Group, and I realise that a lot of hard work has been done over the years. I can remember that, as far back as about 1992, when I was first elected, a trial was being conducted involving people such as the former member for Lockyer, Tony FitzGerald, and others with computer equipment in parliamentary offices. It seems that not a lot has transpired since then from that particular trial. I know that other trials have been conducted, and I ask: what is the result of those trials?

We have the Premier telling us that Queensland is set to become the Smart State.

Yet members of Parliament in his own State, unless they purchase or lease equipment themselves at their own expense—as some of us do—are not provided with access to computer equipment in their parliamentary offices, let alone able to access email or the Internet. I realise that this access is available through the Parliamentary Library and other staff offices, but goodness me! In any commercial office these days, and in any Public Service office anywhere, the staff have a computer screen, a keyboard and a printer in front of them. It is just staggering. I believe that the provision of this equipment would make the work of members of Parliament a lot easier. It would certainly make access to our electorate offices a lot easier. And in the long run, I believe that it would have to be a cost saving.

I know that the computer technology that is available is certainly changing with the pace of time. And whereas I appreciate the efforts that have been made so far, I really do believe that, in this day and age, this is something that we really have to consider. If some members do not want it, or they cannot or will not use it, so be it. But I believe that we should find out who does, and provide them with a resource that, quite frankly, is almost essential in this day and age.

The budget for the Parliament is, I believe, a very important one. It is important that we are able to provide that service to members of this House. This is our House, and we spend a fair bit of time in this House. We certainly all appreciate the amount of work that is done by members of the Parliamentary Service. They do a great job. But it worries me when—as was raised in this House the other day by the member for Broadwater—we see things like telephones being ripped out of certain areas that are accessed by members of Parliament. I cannot understand why telephones are being taken away, because members who want to make a telephone call will then do so on their mobile phones at a cost which would be considerably higher than it would be if they were making a call on a normal phone. With the numbers in the Parliament being so close these days, members are spending more time closer to the Chamber and, therefore, they require services such as telephones. It is a backward step that some of those services are being taken away.

I believe that the jobs that have been done in the renovation of Parliament House have been very good, particularly in the bedrooms that are supplied for members. This program was started under the previous coalition Government by Speaker Turner. The

work that has been carried out is extremely good, and I encourage further renovation of this Parliament House, which is the most important place as far as the people of this State are concerned and, of course, the members who serve here from time to time.

I turn now to the Appropriation Bill and the 1999-2000 State Budget. I have no doubt that this Budget will have a negative effect on business confidence in this State. The comments that came from business and industry leaders after the Budget was delivered were not actually glowing in praise for the efforts of the Government. Members of the QCCI did not exactly jump out of their seats with ecstasy after the Budget was handed down. In fact, while making cautious comments—

A Government member: Carla Gerbo was pretty happy.

Mr HEALY: I will come to that.

In making cautious comments about the perceived increase in capital works funding, the QCCI showed more than a little concern about things such as changes to payroll tax arrangements, and it has every reason for showing concern. More businesses—not fewer—are now going to be caught up in the payroll tax net once compulsory superannuation contributions are included in the new payroll tax regime. As the member for Moggill and shadow Treasurer has stated, while the Government is set to cut the headline rate from 5% to 4.9% next year and 4.8% the year after, with superannuation now set to be included for the first time Queensland businesses will find that their total liability actually increases by thousands of dollars. That means that compulsory superannuation contributions will add 7% to payroll calculations this year, 8% next year and 9% in the year 2001. And while the tax grab gets bigger each year, businesses will be reluctant to create jobs. That is another disincentive for business which has been created by this can't do Beattie Labor Government.

For the information of the member for Sandgate, I point out that the QCCI's industry policy and research manager was quoted in Wednesday's Courier-Mail on this issue. In fact, in that article, Carla Gerbo warned that the cascading nature of payroll tax meant that those companies paying the tax would pass it on to their customers and could contribute to significant increases in the final cost of goods and services. As well, she went on to say that the inclusion of superannuation contributions meant that a significant number of companies would now be liable for the tax and that the

existing 5% of companies already paying the tax would have an added tax burden. So again, so much for jobs, jobs, jobs when this smoke and mirrors Budget continues to create uncertainty and confusion out there in the wider business community. It is a smoke and mirrors Budget that does nothing for business and investor confidence in this State.

This is a Budget which has revealed some back-of-the-book figures, indicating a nasty little underlying deficit that the acting Treasurer failed to mention during his Budget Speech but which has since been revealed by the independent ratings agency Standard and Poor's and which has been referred to by many members on this side of the House.

When I picked up the Courier-Mail on the Wednesday morning after the Budget and started reading how the Budget had been reported, and how the Courier-Mail interpreted what it considered to be the highlights of the Budget, I began to realise that there was something missing. There were stories on biotechnology, stories on education, stories on health, stories on law and order, stories on the environment and, in fact, stories on most things. I thought to myself, "What about Queensland's second biggest industry? What about the tourism industry?" This Government keeps trumpeting about the importance of the tourism industry to the economic growth of this State. For months and months we had the Premier coming into this Chamber with ministerial statement after ministerial statement, telling us how important the tourism industry is and what this Labor Government was going to do for that industry.

What did I find on reading through the Courier-Mail the day after the Budget was delivered? Nothing! Not one positive story about what this Government plans to do for the tourism industry in Queensland in this Budget! Do honourable members know why? I will tell honourable member why: because suddenly tourism is not the flavour of the month with this Government. What has happened is that the Premier has found another of his little toys and has gone off on a tangent. Yes, it might be biotechnology and we do have a lot of potential in biotechnology. But let me say something: it is the tourism industry in this State which works, and works well, and has a proud history of working well.

We should be continuing to encourage the tourism industry in this State with massive increases in funding. When the acting Treasurer was delivering his Budget Speech I started to follow him and I thought, "Well, the acting Treasurer, who has trumpeted the

tourism industry, must be going to come up with something shortly when he talks about this Government's initiatives in regard to tourism." We went through the Budget page by page and there was no mention of tourism until, finally, we came to page 16 and found a six-line paragraph dealing with the tourism industry in this State. That was it!

This Government has tried to hide a funding cut to the tourism budget in real dollar terms. In fact, the Government included a story on tourism in one of its leaked stories a couple of days before the Budget was delivered in an attempt to try to soften the blow. Honourable members are aware of the leaks that seem to appear a couple of days before the Budget is delivered. Normally, these are the really soft announcements to let the people of Queensland know that some big initiatives are going to come out of the Budget.

What happened in this case? Tourism funding was included in one of those soft leaks. It has not worked. This Government cannot try to fool the tourism industry this year in the way it tried to fool the industry with last year's Budget because the figures do not lie. The tourism industry knows that last year's Budget clearly showed that the amount budgeted for 1998-99 was \$47.2m. It is there in black and white in last year's ministerial program statements. What is the figure that is there in black and white this year? It is \$46.008m.

The Government can go off all it likes about one-off special initiative funding to combat the Asian economic downturn in last year's Budget over and above the base funding allocated to Tourism Queensland. That is the line that is being used. The truth is that that funding is not there this year. This year, the Government has quite dishonestly changed the explanation. The Government has said, "Oh, we have increased the base funding with a \$6m allocation over three years with \$3m allocated in this year's Budget." The Government cannot fool the tourism industry.

I am not the only person who has picked up on this little smoke and mirror trick. Let us have a look at what the tourism industry is saying. The Tourism Council of Australia's Gary Smith said this on the Cathy Border show on ABC Radio on Tuesday afternoon—

"Well, Cathy, we're obviously very disappointed. I guess what we're seeing is about a \$1 million total cut in funding to the tourism budget that Tourism Queensland has to work with. Effectively that's the...5 million last year that the special rescue package put in place after

the Asian crisis, that's been now replaced with a 3 million special grant, so you've effectively got a net decrease there and we're disappointed given the challenges that are facing the industry at the moment."

The following appeared in the Gold Coast Bulletin—

"Gary Smith, president of peak industry body Tourism Council Australia, said yesterday the overall allocation to Tourism Queensland has been reduced and this was disappointing."

Too right it is disappointing! Those people know the facts and figures. They know that this smoke and mirrors Budget is doing nothing in regard to increased activity in tourism promotion in this State. That is a real shame because, after listening to the Premier and acting Treasurer for so long in the lead-up to this Budget, I expected to see massive increases in tourism funding. What did we see? We saw hardly anything at all. After 14 months, and in the face of inflation and declining tourist numbers, the Government has refused to increase spending on tourism promotion in real dollar terms. This is not a sign of a Government which claims to be committed to jobs in the tourism sector.

In the time I have left I want to comment on how the Budget will affect my own electorate. I want to make a few points perfectly clear. One of those points is that 99% of the funding allocated to Toowoomba for capital works in this Budget is for projects that were either started or were about to be started by the coalition Government.

Government members interjected.

Mr HEALY: Well, let us go through them. Let us have a look at what we received in this Budget, namely: \$2.4m out of \$60.3m for the Toowoomba Hospital redevelopment, which was an initiative of the coalition Government; \$1m out of \$5.7m for the acute mental health unit, an initiative of the previous coalition Government; and \$3.3m out of \$15m for the Baillie Henderson Hospital, a previous coalition Government initiative. We then come to the Toowoomba horticultural facility. This was a beauty. The facility had to be removed from old Education Department land to the present TAFE site after the Wilsonton campus of the Toowoomba State High School was built. The facility has been granted some money under this Budget but the planning was all undertaken by the previous coalition Government. We find that \$1.2m out of a total of \$1.6m has been allocated to enable stage 2 of the Wilsonton campus to proceed. That

project was always going to proceed. It was an initiative of the previous coalition Government.

The other major initiative that we hope will take place in Toowoomba over the next few years is the construction of a new Toowoomba Police Station and replacement watch-house. This was an initiative of the former Police Minister, Russell Cooper. \$2m has been allocated in this Budget out of a total of \$10.5m. The previous coalition Government had planned and had started some \$95.8m worth of capital works for Toowoomba City. We find that \$10.6m of that money is made available in this year's Budget. I am pleased that that allocation is there. I say to the Government, "Thank you for continuing on with those projects because they are important for the City of Toowoomba." It was the good and sensible planning by the previous coalition Government which saw a real increase in capital works spending in Toowoomba. As a result, we now see either the finishing off process or initial funding for coalition-planned projects in the Labor capital works budget.

I want to raise the issue of the manual arts block at the Toowoomba State High School. Unfortunately, the Minister for Education has left the House, but I know that he will get to read this speech. I know that he religiously reads Hansard every day, even when the Parliament is not sitting.

This little saga about the manual arts block at the Toowoomba State High School has been going on for as long as I can remember. I think it was a legacy of the Goss Government days. We thought we were close to getting a replacement facility when the coalition was in Government, but now it seems that the project has gone off the priorities list. Quite simply, the existing manual arts facility is old, it is outdated, it is too small and, more importantly, it is downright dangerous. Quite frankly, I cannot see how it passes workplace health and safety standards. The school has been after a new manual arts block for a long time. For some reason it has fallen off the list every year. I ask the Minister for Education to have a look at this and see if some of his departmental officers can restore it to the priorities list.

This Budget is like Keating's recession: it is the Budget we had to have. For months, the departments that are starting to leak like a sieve have been telling us that there is nothing spectacular about this Budget and that it was going to be a tough Budget. They are deadset right. Under Labor, Queensland lost not only its prized position as the lowest taxed State in

the nation but also its competitive edge over our interstate rivals.

Of course, with the famous Beattie stealth tax—the BST—Queensland's fiscal outlook is indeed very gloomy. The BST could have myriad impacts right across this State, electorate by electorate. The Education Department will now be very shy about building any new schools, because that would expand their capital base and increase their exposure to the tax. So we may not see as many new schools being built. For exactly the same reason, the Health Department will be reluctant to build new hospitals or expand existing facilities. Because of the BST, there will be pressure on operating theatres, expensive electronic equipment and casualty departments. Hospitals may be forced to cut existing services to make savings that can enable crucial investments to be made elsewhere.

The same will apply to the Police Service and the new Department of Corrective Services. How many police patrols will be cancelled? How many small police stations, which are particularly crucial to rural and regional communities, will close as the police are forced to rationalise their capital base and/or cut services to minimise tax? Will the Department of Natural Resources be able to build dams? Some major projects would involve a massive capital cost. Will the department dare expose itself to increased tax?

The cost of water for new projects is already a major issue if construction proceeds. Of course, the tax will affect the generators of electricity or public distributors of electricity. Will this be the final nail in the coffin—if one were needed—for the Tarong Power Station expansion? Already, public generators pay massive dividends as well as income tax equivalents. Will this be the end of the hope in many isolated communities to have mains power? This is all because of the Beattie stealth tax—the BST—that will come back and bite the acting Treasurer in years to come.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (5.41 p.m.): I am very pleased to support the Appropriation Bills as they reflect a Budget for Queensland that is solid and progressive. So often politicians are accused of being concerned only about their chances at the next election and concerned only about pleasing the electorate in the short term rather than looking after the broader needs of the State for the longer term. This Budget has the courage to consider the future, particularly the future for young Queenslanders. It is also a Budget on

which we should congratulate David Hamill on his very hard work over this past year. We in Queensland now have an accrual-based Budget. I am sure that David Hamill and his staff spent many months working hard to bring the Budget to fruition.

It is a great Budget, because its emphasis is on regional development, capital works and jobs. As the media in my area has said exactly, that is good news for the north. I admit that, since the Premier and acting Treasurer announced the details of the Budget, I have been smiling and very pleased, because there is much in the Budget for not only Cairns but also the far-north Queensland region—in fact, for all of the regions throughout this State.

I recognise particularly the special funding that has been allocated to regional and rural communities for community infrastructure—\$50m—and the \$39m that will be released for the Heritage Trails Network. That will contribute to very important upgrading programs in the towns and cities around Queensland and allow each of those towns and cities to suit themselves—to put in the kind of infrastructure that is best suited to their needs at this time. I am pleased, too, to see that the regional community forums are to be increased with further funding this year of \$7.5m. Disaster mitigation—getting ahead of cyclones and floods and taking action to mitigate against disaster—is allocated in the Budget to the tune of \$4m. Certainly, that will be of benefit to the far north. Of course, there is also the continued funding through the Department of State Development for regional economic development corporations—\$250,000 annually. The Cairns Regional Economic Development Corporation, which is doing such great work, will be pleased to have that money confirmed.

I must say, too, that the Budget contains so much that is beneficial for the Cape York Peninsula. That the needs of that area are addressed in this Budget is undoubtedly in large part due to the good work of the local member, Steve Bredhauer, who is also our Minister for Transport. I pay tribute to him and also to the other Ministers who clearly, if members look at the Budget papers, have thought about those families who are in some hardship, those families who are in need, and the children who live in the Cape York communities. Certainly, that consideration is apparent in the portfolios of Employment, Education, Mines and Energy, Health, sport and recreation, Housing and, of course, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. Although I represent the Cairns electorate, the health and prosperity of Cairns is inevitably tied

to the health of the region. Therefore, we have a strong connection with the people of Cape York.

Capital works is important to the far north, and 54% of this Budget's capital works allocation is to be spent in areas outside Brisbane. That is indeed a fine figure for us to be able to talk about in the regions of Queensland because, very often, there has been the perspective that the south-east corner, the metropolitan area, gets the goodies. Certainly in this Budget a large proportion of this spending is distributed well around the State.

I notice, too, that the per capita spending by region is highest in western Queensland. So it should be. In those areas where the population is sparse, the infrastructure is more costly per capita. However, that is appropriate. Nonetheless, I looked in the Budget at the per capita spending for the far north. I was pleased to see that, appropriately also, it is slightly higher than the per capita spending average for Queensland.

Some major capital works for Cairns are allocated in the Budget. These facilities will not only certainly benefit the city area but also the broader urban region. An amount of \$9m has been allocated to contribute towards the council's esplanade project, which will see our world famous esplanade in Cairns more stylish and comfortable, and offering just that bit more in facilities over the next few years. An amount of \$8.2m has been allocated for the completion of the second stage of the Convention Centre, the basketball court for our national basketball team, the Taipans, which will also serve as an entertainment centre and will allow the world's artists to entertain us in the far north.

A very important \$9.2m has been allocated for the next stage of the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital. We have been particularly pleased with the opening of the new building at the Cairns Base Hospital, Block C, which now houses our theatres, intensive care, women's health, X-ray and radiology as well as medical records and emergency. With this allocation of \$9.2m will begin the refurbishment of the two main existing buildings on that site—buildings that are out of date. Although we now have the funds to devote to undertaking the refurbishment, it will nonetheless be difficult for the staff who will have to work and provide their typical high-quality service during the renovations.

I was pleased, too, that the Minister for Health has announced a further contribution of

\$7m towards the James Cook University medical school. This innovative medical school, which will take in students both at the beginning of a six-year course as well as at stages along the way, will be split across the James Cook University campuses of Townsville and Cairns and be based at the Townsville General Hospital as well as at the Cairns Base Hospital.

The Budget made important announcements in relation to infrastructure. I was, of course, so pleased to see the allocation for the Redlynch deviation—\$2.495m. The completion of the new Redlynch road—the bypass—will make it so much easier for the people from the north and the north-western parts of Cairns to get into town. However, it is a pity that we will not see the money for the upgrading of the southern approach to Cairns. The traffic problems in that area are severe, particularly in the mornings. The problem is not that our own Minister for Transport has not set aside that funding; the Federal funding that is required is not programmed for another two or three years. Despite clear observation, many complaints and reports to the member for Leichhardt, he has not succeeded in bringing his Government's attention to this cooperative project to relieve the southern transport problems for the people of the southern suburbs of Cairns. However, we will continue to pursue this matter loudly.

I am also pleased to see an allocation of \$30m to build the tilt trains, which will eventually come to Cairns. We have heard of the success of the tilt train service to Rockhampton. Also, \$40m has been announced to begin the line upgrades for those tilt trains. The line will be upgraded to Townsville. The combination of those allocations will bring the line upgrades and trains to Townsville. We look forward to allocations in further Budgets that will complete that project and, eventually, welcome the tilt trains, and the very many tourists who will travel on them, to Cairns.

I notice, too, in the small print of the Transport budget that \$5m has been allocated for transport customer service centres. Unfortunately, Cairns is one of those places where the service has sometimes not been at its best because the customer service centres have been so busy. These additional funds will relieve that congestion and provide a better service to our customers.

An amount of \$12.5m in capital works has been provided to the Cairns Port Authority and, in terms of energy, we are also well

looked after. Powerlink will reinforce Stage 2 of the transmission line project with the allocation of \$637,000, and that will be continued in the next Budget.

I am pleased to see the reintroduction of rebates for householders who install solar hot water systems. While we worry about the Statewide picture in the Budget, it is important to remember that we need to work at the individual householder level, not only in providing services but also in offering the infrastructure that is suited to our modern world. My compliments go to the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing for the provision of \$500,000 in his budget to research sustainable technologies and to provide employment in fields that are aimed at reducing greenhouse emissions.

One particular announcement of great importance to Cairns is the provision of \$300,000 by the Department of Torres Strait Islander Policy for a diversionary centre in Cairns. We have long had a problem with homeless people in the streets of Cairns and with public drunkenness. Sometimes those two problems have combined. Previous Governments have talked about action. My compliments go to the Minister because now we can go through the proper process of consulting with all of the stakeholders to find the right placement for the diversionary centre, acquire the land and begin the planning. We expect that in future years the capital works to build the centre will become available.

This is part of a whole-of-Government program in Cairns. I pay particular tribute to the Minister for Employment, whose staff involved in the Community Jobs Plan have assisted with the provision of fencing in some key areas. I also pay tribute to the police who have ensured the security of residents who have, on occasion, had their peace disrupted or threatened by people who are drunk and behaving badly. In each instance we have worked across Government to solve this problem in the short term as well as for the longer term.

The announcement by the Minister for Police of a new Police Beat in the Cairns central business district is also welcomed. Along with the provision of \$10m from the budget of the Minister for State Development for the revitalisation of the city centre for Cairns, this will provide a new face for the city as we approach the new century. Within that program particular moneys have been allocated to heritage, arts and culture and landscaping projects, which will also provide extra jobs in the city of Cairns.

I recognise that 40% of the operating expenditure in this Budget is for Health and Education, and so it should be. I particularly recognise the growth in Health programs and the initiation of new Health programs. The Budget provides \$9.2m for the redevelopment of the hospital, \$450,000 for the provision of two extra beds and nine staff in the ICU at the Cairns Base Hospital and an increase of \$3m in alcohol and drug funding. My compliments go to the Minister for Justice for the provision of \$1m for the drugs court. There will be an increase in funding of \$12m for home and community care for elderly and disabled people to assist them in their own homes and \$3.5m for the School Nurses program—a program that was initiated some years ago in the Cairns area. In general, the Health budget is up by 6%, which allows us to continue to provide more and more services in an area that is probably of greatest interest to the people of Queensland.

In working across Government, I give recognition to the importance of the appointment of a project officer from Health in the liquor licensing division. That officer will work on responsible serving practices for alcohol. Working across Government and linking with other departments is a feature of this Budget. The training of youth workers and youth peer leaders in the early identification of and intervention in drug and alcohol problems is of great importance.

Housing is another matter of great importance in the far north. The region has been given a budget of \$13.2m for public housing, which will provide 12 detached houses and 59 medium-density houses. Undoubtedly we will share in the \$22m being provided Statewide for the upgrading of kitchens, bathrooms and security in public housing. We will also share in the \$5m being provided for special upgrades of public housing for tenants who have a disability.

Of course, a very important program for Cairns is the Manoora community and urban renewal project. I am pleased that the Minister has announced that \$4.05m will be provided in next year's spending. A sum of \$3m will be provided for urban renewal, which includes the upgrade of 60 houses. A sum of \$1.05m will be provided for programs that are driven by the community and are focused particularly on the children of the Manoora community. I am pleased to say that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing has signalled that Cairns could hope to share in the \$10m that is available through the community sports

facilities programs, which will particularly benefit the children of the Manoora area and others in Cairns.

Along with other members of the House, I give particular recognition to the importance of the information technology budget to achieving the targets that this Government has been brave enough to set. In our public schools there are currently 10 children per computer, and we aim to reduce that figure to 7.5 children per computer in 2001 and, eventually, to five children per computer. Of course we first need to have in place networking and infrastructure, as well as software packages and training for teachers. On its own, the hardware is of no benefit. Much of the initial spending will go towards the provision of infrastructure, which is indeed appropriate.

I am pleased to hear that \$12.4m will be devoted to school maintenance. As many of our schools in the far north have older buildings we are conscious of the need for maintenance funding. A sum of \$5m will be provided for literacy and numeracy programs and \$5m for behaviour management. Funding will be provided also for university level studies in computing and research into biotechnology. A sum of \$55m will be provided for research into cancer. I am pleased to see that the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE will be given an extra \$500,000 to upgrade its courses in information technology.

The information technology industry in Cairns will be particularly pleased with this Budget. We have identified this as an area of competitive advantage in which we already have considerable local expertise. Many jobs will flow from the various Government IT projects such as schools projects, tertiary projects and the projects administered by the Minister for Communication and Information that upgrade Government infrastructure. I compliment the Minister for his continuing emphasis on providing access to information technology for the broader public across Queensland. I applaud the intention of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations to devote 200 traineeships in the public sector to information technology.

I am pleased that an extra \$3m will be provided over the next year to market tourism for Queensland, which will help to mitigate the potential effects of the GST. A considerable number of jobs will come to Cairns as a result.

Debate, on motion of Ms Boyle, adjourned.

MEMBERS' ETHICS AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Report No. 35; Tabling of Evidence

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (5.59 p.m.): I refer to Report No. 35 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and the notice of motion given by the Leader of the House earlier today. Following a request from the member for Ipswich West today, the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, in view of all of the circumstances, resolved that I table all of the evidence obtained by the committee during its inquiry. The tabling of the evidence in this particular instance should not be taken as establishing a precedent. I seek leave to table the evidence gathered by the committee.

Leave granted.

WATER RESOURCES, RURAL QUEENSLAND

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That this House condemns this can't do Beattie Labor Government for failing to deliver dams, weirs, channels and pipelines for the secure economic development of rural Queensland."

Rural and regional Queensland is in the grip of the most anti-development paralysis that this State has ever seen. In only 15 months of Beattie Labor Government we have seen the brakes put on the development of water resources in this State. This is a can't do, go-slow Government that has no vision. This is a Government that does not support rural and regional Queensland. This is an anti-development and anti-jobs Labor Government.

The Beattie Government inherited the most exciting water infrastructure development program that this country and probably most parts of the world have ever seen. In only two years, the former Borbidge Government amassed information on every single significant water development proposal and then studied those proposals and prioritised them. After prioritising those proposals, the former coalition Government put its money where its mouth was and committed funding to them—more than \$1 billion over 10 years. In addition, we were able to secure commitments from the private sector for over \$1.5 billion in funding to deliver those much-needed water projects.

We put in the hard yards and then we committed the funding. When the Beattie Government came to office, all it had to do was start pouring the concrete. We had set in

place the foundations. Mr Speaker, you would think that any Government would have liked to inherit that situation. You would think that the Beattie Government would have realised the chance to get in and drive some regional development. Unfortunately, Labor Governments do not seem to understand this part of our great State. We hear so much from this Government about developing industries and creating jobs to try to meet its 5% unemployment target. But what was the reaction from this can't do Beattie Government? It put an immediate freeze on all water development. In 15 months not one significant dam project has proceeded. It was a freeze of absolutely ice age proportions. By freezing water development in this State it has frozen investment, development, diversification, value adding and jobs. The Government's water freeze makes a mockery of its jobs, jobs, jobs claim.

Let us run through a quick checklist of some of the water projects that this can't do Beattie Government has killed or stalled. The Nathan dam in central Queensland involved a \$150m proposal to build a 1.1 million megalitre dam. It has been stalled. It was a proposal which even the Premier's Labor predecessor Wayne Goss predicted would create 10,000 jobs. Because of the incessant delays, there is now concern that the private investor, SUDAW, may lose interest. In the Morning Bulletin of 4 September, Dawson Valley Development Association President Ray Becker stated—

"It's incredible, we're sick of it to be quite honest. The Beattie Government has done nothing to create job opportunities in this area."

Let us go down the list, starting with the St Helens Creek dam at Mackay, which was a \$123m proposal to build a 200,000 megalitre water storage. It was cancelled even though no feasibility study had been completed and the WAMP process had not even commenced. The Finch Hatton Creek dam at Mackay was a \$42m proposal to build a 36,000 megalitre dam. Gone! It was described by the Government as environmentally unsustainable in spite of no feasibility studies being completed. The Paradise dam in the Burnett area involved a \$247m proposal for a dam of up to one million megalitres. It has been stalled in spite of the Premier's pre-election promises to build it in five years and in spite of the pre-election promise of the member for Bundaberg to the people of Bundaberg.

In relation to the Flinders dam at Richmond, the council first learnt of the

cancellation of that project on ABC Radio. That was a terrible thing to do. It was a \$35m proposal to build a 620,000 megalitre dam for diversification of this traditionally pastoral area into cropping. They were very excited about that, but now it has been axed.

We have heard much about the Balonne off-stream storage at St George, which involved a \$15m proposal to build a 55,000 megalitre off-stream storage to provide irrigation water in compensation for water allocation not honoured after the construction of the Beardmore dam. That has been stalled. The Walla, Bucca and Jones Weirs in the Burnett were to be raised under a \$12.4m project to develop an additional 21,660 megalitres for the citrus and dairy industries. That has been stalled. That is a great area of this State, and we do not like to see projects such as these stalled.

In common with these water projects, this Beattie Government has gone nowhere. This is a can't do Government. It is big on rhetoric, but it cannot deliver. The Beattie Government will go down in the history books as being a can't do Government. This is its legacy. Regional and rural Queenslanders are sick of the delays, the procrastination and the excuses. They want action. I cannot sum up the situation better than Warren Armstrong, the President of the Queensland Farmers Federation, who is reported in the Courier-Mail of 2 September as stating—

"Water infrastructure has gone completely off the agenda. Queensland is not getting on with essential water development. There is little talk, less action and certainly no vision."

Regardless of what members on the other side try to say tonight, this is the reality outside of George Street. Queenslanders are sick and tired of this empty talk. They want action and they want water for their areas. Honourable members should not take my word for it. They should leave their plush ministerial offices, go to the bush, talk to the people and read the regional newspapers.

These issues are terribly important. On 2 September the editorial of Queensland Country Life stated—

"By placing the same priorities on a series of vital rural-based projects as it does on vote-catching urban developments, the Government has a golden opportunity to cement the city and country segments of this great State into a united growth pattern that benefits all citizens.

The call to build bridges between the city and the country is a valid one. But it won't happen unless some real building is evident on long awaited schemes and dreams.

So the next time Mr Beattie dons his broad brimmed hat, he might also care to tuck some starting dates for rural projects into his bush shirt and solve the mystery of promised rural projects that just don't seem to be happening."

Water development is crucial to that development. The Premier should take my advice: lift the water freeze and get cracking on these much-needed projects. We urge all members to support the development of this great State. We want the Government to get on with developing—

Time expired.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.10 p.m.):

It is my pleasure to second this motion before the House tonight. In 1996 I was given the privilege of introducing a blueprint for Queensland's largest ever sustainable water development program. That scheme, which equated to two Snowy Mountain schemes, was sustainable and achievable and the finance was available to build it. To make sure those developments were sustainable, I put enormous financial and departmental resources into water allocation management plans and catchment assessment in seven catchments and water management plans in a further four river basins in Queensland.

In the 1996-97 year, \$9m was allocated to research and development on land and water issues, including downstream impacts of agriculture practices, salinity, compaction, fertility, erosion and acidity, ground and water resource management, blue-green algae management, chemical contamination, irrigation efficiency methods and hydrology modelling to test water use scenarios. We were sensitive to environmental and sustainability requirements. We would not have sanctioned any proposal that was outside of those parameters and we proved our credentials by not proceeding with the Comet dam.

The Water Infrastructure Task Force prioritised the projects and timetables for implementation. We put in place the process for water development in Queensland. All the Government had to do was follow it through. All the hard work had been done. We started pouring concrete on the smaller projects while the studies were under way on the bigger ones. The Government has even stopped development on the small projects, such as

the Namgram weir and the weirs on the Condamine River. These weirs were pre-Murray-Darling Basin cap arrangements and all approvals were finalised, but they have been stopped.

When I went to a ministerial council meeting, it was quite clear that there were a few jobs to be done first before we agreed to the cap and the Murray-Darling Basin commission agreed with that. The New South Wales Government agreed as well. All those weirs did not need to have any further approvals to be built.

Mr Welford: The impact assessments.

Mr HOBBS: The impact assessments were done individually and they could not have taken so long. They just could not possibly have taken that long.

What about the extension to the Elliott main channel? That study was brought forward to progress development with the irrigation of up to 20,000 hectares in the Inkerman and Bowen areas. It has all ground to a halt. There were plans to build a 1.5 million megalitre Urannah dam near Collinsville on the Broken River, a similar sized dam at Hells Gate or the raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam to a total capacity of 8.5 million megalitres, also providing hydroelectric power to that particular region. That seems to have all just disappeared into a great hole. Nothing has happened. Nothing has been spoken about. The Government has not been able to progress the St George off-stream storage, and I fully appreciate the difficulties with the different parties involved with the scheme. However, that is still not an excuse for not building it.

Mr Welford: What would you do?

Mr HOBBS: The process is already there.

The Government has everything right, yet the Premier came out the other day and said that he could not build it because of NCP, but that is not correct. He made statements to the effect that the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, should step in and help. He said he cannot build the St George off-stream storage because the NCP was going to hold the \$15m, which is the approximate cost of the project. Is the member opposite nodding? Once again, the Premier was loose with the truth. The National Competition Council report did not withhold the funding for the St George off-stream storage alone. It held back 25% of the compensation payments to the State until December 1999 until matters in relation to a number of water developments around Queensland were resolved.

Mr Welford: St George was the main one.

Mr HOBBS: St George was one of the bigger ones, but there were other ones, such as the Moura off-stream storage, the Walla Weir, the Dumbleton Weir Stage 3, the Bedford Weir Stage 2, the Bingegang Weir Stage 2, the Warrill Creek diversion weir, the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area and, to a lesser extent, the Teemburra Creek and the Borumba dam storages.

So they were all in it. The Premier came out and said that he could not build an off-stream storage at St George because NCP took the \$15m. What he was saying is not correct. The matters of concern to the NCC in relation to these water developments are principally administrative and I do not see any great problem in resolving the outstanding issues. All he has to do is go through the report and find out what they are saying. They are talking about generally administrative issues that can be resolved.

I do not agree with the way the NCC operates in relation to water development, but it is a matter for the Federal Government to resolve. Measures have been put in place for a review of NCP and its impact, particularly on rural Australia. Hopefully some changes may take place in the future.

Time expired.

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (6.15 p.m.): I move—

"Delete all words after 'That this House' and insert—

'recognises the need for proper planning for future water infrastructure to ensure the State's long-term water needs are met in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner for the benefit of all Queenslanders.'"

This debate is about the fundamental difference between the coalition's approach and the approach of the Beattie Labor Government. This Government is a visionary Government that looks beyond doing favours for its mates and aims for long-term solutions to benefit present and future generations.

Let us look at the record of the can't do Opposition when it was in Government. It made one decision about water infrastructure when it was in Government. That was to stop the Comet dam. That was the only significant decision the previous Government made in relation to any water infrastructure in Queensland. It purported to make a decision

about the Nathan dam even before the studies had been done. This is the point: Opposition members run around, pretending to the community that all the decisions have been made for all this infrastructure that is on the list in the Water Infrastructure Task Force report even before the studies have been done. They might claim to have delivered on Walla Weir, but who was it who started that project? It was the Goss Government! The Opposition needs to drag itself into the new millennium and understand the expectations of the modern community.

A couple of months ago we saw the member for Keppel and his mate the member for Burnett go for a plane ride over the Burnett to check out dam sites. That is the way they think it should be done: get up in a plane, go for a joy ride, have a quick look around and bingo, decide that is where a dam could be. That is about the level of assessment they believe in.

Mr Mulherin: It is like pinning a tail on a donkey.

Mr WELFORD: As the honourable member says, it is like pinning a tail on a donkey. That is about the level of sophistication members opposite bring to deciding where dams should go before they announce them.

They go out there in a blaze of glory to tell the community, "We are going to pour concrete tomorrow", and, "On we go and build dams", and, "We have this billion dollar infrastructure project." But they did not do anything except announce them. They announced them and pretended that they were going to build them even before the studies were done. What were they doing? Were they looking for a dam or just looking for a spot for a picnic? Who knows? Perhaps that is how they decided to build the Fred Haigh Dam a few years ago—the dam that never has any water. Is that what they intend to do with the other dams that they propose?

If the coalition had its way, it would be throwing up water infrastructure and other developments without any consideration of their impacts on the environment or on local communities. This Government has a sensible, proactive approach to planning the State's catchments. It is this Government that is accelerating the water allocation and management plans now under way in many catchments, including the Fitzroy, Burnett, Pioneer, Condamine and Mary Rivers. It is this Government that is listening to and talking with communities, rural industry and stakeholders about the best solutions for the future.

The former Minister never once addressed any of the WAMP community advisory panels. I was the first Minister to address each of them, including the Pioneer WAMP community advisory panel, the Fitzroy WAMP community advisory panel, the Condamine WAMP community advisory panel—

Mr HOBBS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that I did talk with the WAMP community groups and a lot of other groups as well.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr WELFORD: The members knows as much about water planning as he does about Standing Orders.

The solutions to deliver economic certainty and long-term sustainable jobs do not come by flying around in a plane on a sunny day. Those solutions come from the hard work and disciplined scientific analysis that the WAMP process involves. I acknowledge that the previous Government started it. It ought to have the good sense and the courtesy to acknowledge that I have carried it on. The Opposition spokesman said that he allocated \$9m. We have allocated \$14m.

Time expired.

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the member for Everton. Let us make sure that the House understands what this debate is really about. It is about the Opposition trying to build a smokescreen to hide its own failures in relation to water.

Between February 1996 and June 1998, what water infrastructure did the Borbidge Government provide for Queenslanders?

Mr HOBBS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Nothing was built under the Goss Government for six years. We started the whole program.

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

Mr MUSGROVE: The honourable member continues with the smokescreen.

The answer, of course, is the Walla Weir, and we all know who initiated that project—the Goss Labor Government. In almost two and a half years, the Borbidge Government failed to deliver for Queenslanders and now, with this motion, it is trying to cover up for those failures. Not only is the Government aware of those failures but so too are Queenslanders.

When I was out at St George with the Public Works Committee only a few weeks

ago, I found that the people there did not have many nice things to say about the former Minister. They were very dissatisfied with his non-delivery in terms of their water catchment needs.

Of course, communities expect more from Governments in terms of responsible planning than just joy flights by politicians to pick out dam sites. In fact, I think one of the terms that was applied to the former Minister when I was out at St George was "Biggles". They called him Biggles because he flew in and flew out. He offered no solutions and nothing ever happened.

These communities are very responsible. They expect ecologically sustainable development and developments that provide long-term, sustainable jobs. So devoid are those on the other side of the House of an understanding of the need for proper planning that they came up with a \$1 billion wish list for water infrastructure. It was not based on any proper planning, of course. It was not even based on proper funding. It was just a gimmick to try to catch a few votes.

How did the Borbidge Government come up with a water infrastructure plan to meet the future needs of Queensland? It took out newspaper ads and asked people for ideas. That is how little it knew about strategic planning for Queensland's water needs. The Borbidge Government went into an election trumpeting this great scheme, but the people of Queensland are a lot smarter than that. They saw this great plan for what it was: a pathetic gimmick without plan and without funding.

Of course, the can-do Beattie Labor Government is getting on with the job, not only by accelerating the WAMP process in Queensland's catchments but also by running other studies in parallel. Whilst this planning for sustainable development is under way, we are announcing projects.

Last month the Government announced a \$39m project to increase the capacity of the Awoonga-Callide pipeline near Gladstone. This project will upgrade existing pumping stations to enable the pipeline to carry additional water from Awoonga Dam for the Callide C Power Station. Thirty-four kilometres of the pipeline is being duplicated to meet the extra demand for water. When it is completed, this pipeline will have a capacity to deliver up to 27,500 megalitres per annum—approximately double its existing capacity. This project will create local job opportunities and will lay the foundations for a more secure power supply for Queensland.

The productivity of Queensland's irrigation areas is being boosted through a series of improvements to major water infrastructure. Refurbishment works are being carried out in the Burdekin, in the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area and in the St George irrigation area.

In June the Government gave the go-ahead for a \$4.2m refurbishment of the Moura Weir on the Dawson River. This weir is vital for the Moura town and mine site, local irrigators and the new ammonium nitrate plant located there. The Moura Weir forms an important part of the water supply in the Dawson Valley and refurbishment will provide certainty to people in the region. This project should be complete by the end of the year. As well as these infrastructure projects, this Government has been supporting rural and regional communities through water efficiency and waste water schemes.

This is a can-do Government and we have a can-do Minister leading the charge. What a comparison! In two and a half years the Borbidge Government failed on water infrastructure for Queensland. This Government is not only conducting the proper planning to secure environmental and economic certainty—

Time expired.

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (6.25 p.m.): We do not get any joy out of condemning the Government for its lack of commitment to water conservation and we do not treat it as a joke, as does the Minister, because it is terribly important to our farmers and our industry and it is terribly important to us. We recognise that we desperately need water. That is particularly so in an area such as the Bundaberg/Burnett region, which currently has a 20% allocation on the Burnett River and a 40% allocation on the Kolan River. That situation has existed for years. We are also experiencing a major salt intrusion into our underground supplies. This matter is serious. It is not the joke that the Minister treats it as.

I do not need to remind the House that this issue is having a big impact on the production of the area and on the security of people's incomes—particularly those on farms and in industry. This in turn affects the economy of the whole area. It restricts growth and prosperity and does not promote jobs, which this Government claims to aim to encourage.

The coalition in power was addressing this. We had approved the raising of the Bucca, Jones and Walla Weirs. The Minister cannot deny that. We had initiated ground

water studies and modelling to address problems associated with ground water salt intrusion. The area was classified as priority 1 by the coalition. Prior to the election—

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr SLACK: Yes, that was identified by the task force, which was established by the coalition, and accepted by the coalition.

Prior to the election, then Premier Rob Borbidge promised a major dam within five years, provided the necessary studies were favourable—and we were fast-tracking those studies. In other words, we were addressing the problems. But what has happened under this Government? There has been plenty of rhetoric, talk and side-stepping, but to date we do not have a commitment to provide for the raising of the Bucca Weir. This is from a Government that claims to be a can-do Government. In the Bundaberg/Burnett region, this Government is seen as a can't do Government. The reality is that the really urgent ground water studies appear to be on hold. In other words, there is little but talk, and in the meantime farmers are scared stiff, to quote an industry leader, that they will lose what little they have, because further salt intrusion would be absolutely disastrous.

Will the Minister answer some serious questions as to the situation with those studies and the raising of the Bucca Weir? The Minister should give straight answers, as they do not depend on WAMP or environmental studies. He needs to do this quickly, as the area is losing patience and the Minister's credibility is approaching zero.

During the last debate on this issue I claimed that prior to the last election the current Premier gave a commitment to match Rob Borbidge's commitment for a major storage within five years—again, provided that the studies were favourable. This has been disputed by the Government. Following that debate I asked members of the media and industry leaders whether I may have been mistaken. I was emphatically assured that what I said was correct. We are still waiting on this Government to acknowledge the commitment and to give an indication that it is serious about water conservation. To date, all the signs have been negative.

I can assure the Government that the patience of the people of my area is quickly running out. They need a clear indication of when the WAMP will be completed and the timetable for the impact assessment studies. The reality is that the area is desperately short of water. People in the area feel that they have been let down by this Government and

they are looking for urgent action to overcome their problems—not rhetoric. If we look at the Government's commitment to date we see that it is more rhetoric and less action. I repeat that the raising of the Bucca and Walla Weirs is urgent, as is the completion of the studies on ground water. And it was not unreasonable to have expected something more definite from the Minister than we have received so far.

At the beginning of the Minister's submission to this Parliament, he made reference to a visit that the shadow Minister made to the area, an inspection that we conducted of the river system and the proposals that were being put forward for storage on that particular river. I particularly raise this issue because prior to that inspection I asked for assistance, a briefing and for an officer from the department to accompany us to give us an overview of where the department was at at that particular time. I rang the Minister's office and spoke to the Minister's policy adviser. The Minister's policy adviser went to the Minister, and the Minister denied that assistance to a member of this Parliament.

Time expired.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (6.30 p.m.): I rise to support the Minister's amendment. I can understand the concerns about water infrastructure because, in common with other areas of Queensland, the need for extra water storage is paramount to the future of my electorate of Bundaberg. The urgency of our problem is well known by the Minister and the Government, and planning to meet those needs is being afforded a very high priority. But this motion tonight is from the same old Opposition crying doom and gloom—cheap political point scoring made under privilege in this House in a deliberate attempt to again mislead the people of Bundaberg and Queensland and to undermine the confidence of industry, farmers, our regional communities and those who are most vulnerable.

I say again that the Opposition has an appalling record in the provision of water infrastructure in the Bundaberg district. The Bundaberg irrigation scheme was bungled for more than 25 years. Farmers chopped and changed on whether or not they wanted surface water. Some were allowed to stay off. And now we have saltwater intrusion in those areas. Plans, plant and equipment were changed and changed again. Only one dam was built instead of two. So what we ended up with in Bundaberg was a dam that does not fill and a scheme that is struggling. It was only

when the Goss Government was elected that it was finished at all, at the instigation of the then Minister, Ed Casey. And it was Ed Casey who committed the Government to also building the Walla Weir. The people of Bundaberg and the whole Burnett catchment can be assured that it will be Labor again that listens to their needs—as it does throughout Queensland—and it will be Labor that will deliver on those water needs in the best environmentally sustainable and most economically viable way.

But it would be irresponsible of any Government to promise to build anything without sound planning first. The days have gone when one could fly over a river—like the members for Burnett and Keppel did—and say, "Hey, that looks like an okay site to me." Too much has gone wrong in the past, too many rivers have been ruined, and too much of our future is at stake. WAMP processes now have to be done on every water system before further infrastructure is built. They must ascertain how much water can be collected from the entire catchment, how much can be retained to keep a flow in the river, how much is needed for irrigation and industry and how that can be fairly allocated.

Other necessary planning processes for another major storage on the Burnett include identifying the preferred site, engineering studies and design, water demand and capacity to pay, economics, finance and policies issues. These are all progressing as quickly as possible. But the provision of more available water and a more secure system is imperative to our future growth in Bundaberg, and I will continue to work with the Government, the Ministers, departments and the water users not just to get a dam but to get a guaranteed supply—a sustainable supply—and long-term water security for our future and for future generations.

However, in Bundaberg, most user groups are aware that this will be the last major storage ever built on the Burnett. And if we do not follow the necessary and responsible planning procedures this time, if we make irrational promises just to gain political points, and if we end up with another dam that will not fill, then our region will have no future at all. And anyone who can grasp the seriousness of this situation will agree that if it takes another 12 months to make the decision and get it right, then that time will be well spent and responsibly spent.

If the Opposition, and the member for Burnett in particular, had put as much effort into building this dam while it was in office as it

has put into knocking it from the Opposition benches, then we might have it today. But the coalition made no meaningful decision to proceed with a major storage on the Burnett while it was in Government. In fact, it made no positive decisions on water infrastructure at all. And while members opposite carry on about a newspaper's opinion of what the Premier promised, their own commonsense should tell them that if it took five and a half years to build Walla Weir, which holds 29,500 megalitres, how can a 700,000-megalitre dam be built in five years? I know it was a wild Opposition claim before the election, but I have never seen where the member for Bundaberg ever made such an irresponsible promise. The member for Burnett has been in this Parliament for more than 13 years, with two and a half years as a senior Minister, when he could have made a very positive contribution to this very serious problem, and he failed. It is a bit late in the day now for him to start crying wolf.

Through the Community Cabinet process, the extensive visits to regional areas by Ministers and feedback by members, this Government is in touch with Queenslanders. It has accelerated planning work in Queensland catchments and has implemented water efficiency programs that have the support of the Queensland Farmers Federation, Queensland Canegrowers, Cotton Australia and Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers. It has directed substantial resources to priority studies, and it will provide long-term solutions for present and future generations.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): I am pleased to lend my support to this motion, moved by the member for Keppel, condemning the can't do Beattie Labor Government for its total failure to deliver anything in the way of irrigation infrastructure. This is one area of this Government's performance where no amount of political doublespeak can hide the facts.

When this Government was elected 15 months ago, Queensland was on the threshold of a massive water infrastructure building program which would have established the economic base for many rural communities and many industries throughout the State. There had been already a properly planned and exhaustively researched program to identify the priority projects from all the possibilities that were available in regional Queensland.

In the 15 months since last June, all of those projects have effectively been either stopped or delayed interminably. Many of

those water infrastructure projects are in my electorate, and I know well the opportunity and the hope that they offer to so many communities. I know the optimism that they engendered. I know the hope that those projects offered to so many people—people and communities that are doing it tough in the face of the changing terms of trade of agriculture worldwide; people and communities that quite rightly saw that irrigation as an effective answer to the declining economic conditions and a necessary prerequisite to move into new, intensive, high-value industries. Irrigation water was their hope for a better future. Where there is water now there is prosperity. Where there is water there is growth and jobs and hopes for the future. The tragedy of the performance of this do-nothing Government is that it has destroyed that hope. It has destroyed the hope that so many people had for a better future. It has taken away the opportunity that a whole range of regional and small communities had for a future. The future of those people has been denied to placate an anti-everything ideology that uses emotive fear campaigns and misinformation to promote its narrow and negative agenda.

I have said many times in this House that we all acknowledge the need for environmental care in the construction of water infrastructure. We all acknowledge that. We must ensure that the environmental impact is minimised, but we must also accept that this infrastructure needs to be built to provide a future for our agricultural industries and a future for our regional communities. There are plenty of examples of tremendously successful irrigation areas across the State which make an enormous contribution to the State's economy, but they hardly ever get mentioned when the debate turns to new infrastructure.

The member for Bundaberg talks about rivers that have been ruined. I challenge her to find some rivers in Queensland that have been ruined by irrigation infrastructure. We never hear the good stories. We just hear inflated versions of examples of things that have gone wrong in other places. The anti-everything brigade are all too quick to repeatedly point to the mistakes of the Murray-Darling scheme. There were some regrettable mistakes made there in the early years of development. But we in Queensland need to learn from that history, to develop much better irrigation schemes and to manage those schemes to ensure that there is no repetition of those mistakes—not use those mistakes as a convenient excuse never to do anything again.

This Government stands condemned for not continuing with the water infrastructure scheme planned so comprehensively by the coalition in Government. This State could have been well on its way to seeing more success stories like Emerald in central Queensland, the Burdekin in north Queensland, St George or Dirranbandi in the south-west or Mundubbera in the central Burnett. Instead, nothing has happened. The Nathan dam project is apparently permanently stalled. The Fitzroy River WAMP was due for finalisation last November, but now no-one will say when it is likely to be released. It is noticeable that, tonight, the Minister did not give us any indication of when it will be released.

No-one will give us any idea when the study is going to be released. The Burnett River WAMP has only just begun and it will effectively delay any project on the river system for many years to come. These studies have become convenient excuses for the Minister to do nothing. The repeated extension of these studies has become a convenient excuse for a do-nothing Government to do nothing.

Rural Queensland needs a fair dinkum commitment from this State Government in relation to the development of this infrastructure. We want some realistic starting dates for some of these projects. There is a growing level of frustration at the deliberate delay and the ongoing procrastination. Rural Queensland has had enough of the political doublespeak and the cynical manipulation of this Labor Government. It is time for the Beattie Labor Government to get real and to make some decisions to proceed forthwith with a program to provide some water infrastructure for rural and regional Queensland.

This House should join with the people of regional Queensland and condemn in no uncertain terms the total inaction of this Government to date. This House should join with the people of regional Queensland and condemn the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources.

Time expired.

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP)
(6.41 p.m.): Talk about political doublespeak: those opposite are past masters at it. It is a bit rich having the coalition talking about this Government's efforts on water infrastructure when those opposite failed dismally during two and a half years in Government. They had their chance to get on with it and they failed. They trumpeted the water infrastructure task force around the State with evangelical zeal. However, the problem with this report was that

it was flawed. It was never based on any scientific fact and never had funding allocation. It was a wish list where everyone received a prize. It was like the Fred Haigh Dam—there was nothing in it—no planning, no funding, just wishing and hoping. It was a bit like whistling in the wind to console oneself.

Let us face it, when it had the chance the Opposition failed to take on the real challenges of regional and rural Queensland. It failed to go the hard yards. It failed on water infrastructure and it failed on the RFA. It took this Government to deliver an historic RFA that protects jobs, regional communities and our native forests. As with water infrastructure, the coalition found the RFA too hard. It could not deliver on that one, either.

This can-do Government is facing up to those challenges, working with regional and rural communities to provide a prosperous future for mums and dads and their children. We do not need joy flights to pick dam sites. We are doing the hard work and the proper planning studies to set up Queensland for the long term for when our kids grow up. Not only are we delivering the infrastructure, but we are working with rural industry and regional communities on other water solutions.

It was this can-do Government that introduced the Rural Water Use Efficiency initiative, providing \$41m to our primary producers over four years to help them become more profitable. This visionary initiative was introduced by a Labor Government—a Government looking to the future for all Queenslanders and not just a few mates. This initiative has the potential to increase agricultural production by \$280m annually over the next four years and create another 1,600 jobs in regional Queensland. We are working with primary producers to improve the way in which irrigation water is used.

In my region of Mackay, we are working with the sugar industry. In fact, next week the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources will be handing over a cheque to the local Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations to kick off its adoption programs. Last week, I handed over a cheque to the Mayor of Mackay, Councillor Julie Boyd, on behalf of the Beattie Government to fund a study into the re-use of wastewater from two Mackay sewerage treatment plants to irrigate local sugarcane crops. This involves Mackay City Council and Mackay Canegrowers and offers great potential for both communities and the environment.

The volume of wastewater available from these treatment plants at Mount Bassett and Bucasia treatment plants is the equivalent of a small weir on the Pioneer River, making it an extremely valuable resource. If this recycling initiative project proves to be feasible, there could be benefits for the entire Mackay community. There is no doubt that local canegrowers would benefit from this additional supply of water for irrigation. This particularly applies in the Sandy Creek area where there is salt water intrusion. This project would go a long way towards solving those problems.

Queensland currently recycles only about 10% of the 305,000 megalitres of wastewater produced each year. This is a resource that offers great opportunities to benefit Queensland, its people and our environment. The water efficiency initiative and our studies into re-use of wastewater are smart ways to go. They are initiatives of the Beattie Government.

We are also working with canegrowers in Mackay on the feasibility of raising the Kinchant Dam. I have taken the Minister to the dam and he has taken a personal interest in this project. He will be speeding up existing studies. Water is one of our most valuable and scarce resources and I strongly support this initiative by council to make efficient use of wastewater.

This Government is taking a responsible approach to water resources—an approach for future generations. The Opposition has spent the past 12 months misinforming regional Queensland communities, and this debate is yet another attempt to play politics. This Government will meet the challenge of supporting regional water needs in an environmentally and economically sustainable way. In partnership with our rural industries, we will continue to take on challenges in resource management—challenges which the previous Borbidge Government could not meet.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (6.46 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by my colleague, the member for Keppel. As the member for Callide said, those opposite can hide behind their rhetoric and they can use all the smoke and mirrors they want, but the bottom line is that what has happened in this State is that since the change of Government in 1989 we have gone through a period in Queensland where all the people who were interested in irrigation have just about died of despair. They have been devastated by the lack of action and by the reports that were either never brought down or were never finalised.

When, finally, a coalition Government returned to power, the Water Infrastructure Task Force was set up. The task force utilised the services of some of the most practical people in this State. Honourable members do not have to take my word for this. I invite them to look at *Country Life* and various other rural newspapers in this State. Those newspapers reported on the potential of finally reversing this absolutely unbelievable attitude that developed during the term of the Goss Government where nothing was done. Perhaps a minuscule amount of work was started in respect of water.

We live in the driest continent on earth. There is a great need for foresight and vision. We need to pull together and work for the common good of this State. That is preferable to having these ridiculous political discussions and arguments about what should and should not be done.

The task force went to a tremendous amount of trouble. We were on the verge of seeing the establishment of dams in this State. Surely to goodness not one member in this House would suggest that further water projects would not bring further prosperity to this State. As my colleague the member for Callide so correctly said, look at the St Georges and the Emeralds of Queensland.

I can remember that when I was a young person there was nothing much in St George. About the only thing that kept St George alive was a few people who worked on the railway.

Mr Johnson: You could get a fight there.

Mr ELLIOTT: You could get a fight there fairly easily; you are right about that. There were plenty of shearers in the town. When there was no shearing, there were plenty of them in the pub and it was easy to get a fight there, too. All jokes aside, this is a serious subject. St George has developed into a magnificent, prosperous centre where there are real jobs for young people in their own district. The same thing has occurred at Emerald and in other centres right across the State.

In my own area, Goondiwindi has been a great success story. The town has survived endless droughts, floods and other disasters. One would think, "This place is going to fall apart." However, the moment we have a reasonable season, everything comes back again. Irrigation is bringing huge amounts of money into the area. Those opposite have to stop looking at irrigation and saying, "Someone wealthy might benefit out of this." The real problem with those opposite is that they have this nasty mentality that someone

might do some good out of some Government measure.

It is a mentality of greed and envy: just because a person does not have an irrigation farm, no-one else can have one. The Government hates to think that someone might benefit from something that is done by the public. When we all sit down and analyse these things and look at what can be achieved in a community through the allocation of water, we realise that there is so much more that can be done than just enabling people to grow a crop and actually making some money out of it. The multiplier effect of irrigation is massive. I refer to the agricultural engineering services, such as the Janke brothers, the Gessners, the Simplicity air seeders of Dalby, Connor Shea Napier. There are endless examples where—

Time expired.

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (6.50 p.m.): When the member for Keppel started this debate—and I jotted down a few of his actual words—he talked about an anti-development paralysis, that we have had the brakes put on, that there is no vision and that there is no support for rural communities. The member certainly was not talking about the part of Queensland that I come from, because I can tell him that in far-north Queensland we have a vision and very positive things are happening.

I want to tell this House why that is so. It has nothing to do with this Water Infrastructure Task Force that went around the State. As other members have said, that group did travel throughout the State. They came up with priorities and wish lists. However, the reality is that in far-north Queensland, under a Goss Government, we had started the planning that was necessary to bring to fruition a whole lot of things to meet the needs of our community, both our rural community and our urban community, in terms of a future water supply, and that was the FNQ 2010 process. It was a long process and it has come to an end.

In terms of actual planning, we know the direction in which we are going. As part of that, we had begun the work to know what we need to look at for the Barron River. We have those studies coming to fruition now, because they started under the Goss Labor Government. It was nothing to do with the coalition. In fact, they almost derailed the process that we had started. They were an irrelevance to what we were doing in the Barron catchment and in other areas in far-north Queensland to deal with our water issues. We now have a process that is very well established and coming to fruition. So we will know where the best place

will be for future infrastructure on the Barron River. We will have our WAMP finished in reasonable time.

However, more importantly, we are tackling the issues that no members opposite seem to really understand, and that is that if we manage our water supplies wisely, we should not just go out and build dams. Instead, we should talk about how to conserve water and how to use it more efficiently. In far-north Queensland, the Cairns City Council has made the hard decision, and through user-pay charges for water we have reduced the amount of water that people are using. That council is going to be saving money, because it does not actually have to bring forward its plans for upgrading infrastructure. It is saving money.

This Government has allocated \$41m over four years to help rural producers use their water more efficiently. We have put money into the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area—a \$20m project. It is now in its second year. That will assist those growers to use that irrigation system more effectively, to upgrade it and to raise the level of the Tinaroo Falls Dam—we are doing a whole range of things there. So we are on track towards solving these problems in a planned way. However, that has taken time. It has taken more than just flying around and coming up with a priority list. The planning has to be done.

So many members opposite are hypocrites, because they know that planning has to be done. The excellent officers who work in the Department of Natural Resources also know that that planning has to be done. These things cannot be done overnight.

This motion is really a con job. The members opposite are just trying to persuade the rural community that they have the answers and that they are going to get out there and solve all of their problems. However, these days the members opposite know that the community will simply not accept the building of dams without the work being done. These days, the community wants to be involved. They want to have a say. They want sustainable development and good planning, which ensures that the infrastructure is built in the right place, in the right time sequence and with the right range of measures—the demand side measures, the water conservation methods as well as the dams.

That is the kind of commitment that this Government has. If the members opposite were honest, they would be telling people that that is what needs to be done, instead of making promises to people in those areas and

berating us for not building dams here, there and everywhere. They really need to put in the hard work and be honest with people about the amount of planning that needs to go into these things.

Time expired.

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, E. Cunningham, Edmond, Elder, Fenlon, Foley, Fouras, Gibbs, Hamill, Hayward, Lavarch, Lucas, Mackenroth, McGrady, Mickel, Mulherin, Musgrove, Nelson-Carr, Nuttall, Palaszcuk, Reeves, Reynolds, Roberts, Rose, Schwarten, Spence, Struthers, Welford, Wellington, Wells, Wilson. Tellers: Purcell, Pitt

NOES, 38—Beanland, Black, Borbidge, Connor, Cooper, Dalgleish, Davidson, Elliott, Feldman, Gamin, Grice, Healy, Hobbs, Johnson, Kingston, Laming, Lester, Lingard, Littleproud, Malone, Mitchell, Nelson, Paff, Pratt, Quinn, Rowell, Santoro, Seeney, Sheldon, Simpson, Slack, Springborg, Stephan, Turner, Veivers, Watson. Tellers: Baumann, Hegarty

Resolved in the **affirmative**.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 7.02 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Resumed from p. 4023.

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (8.30 p.m.), continuing: The best thing about this Budget is jobs, jobs, jobs for teachers, police, nurses, health professionals, emergency service workers, child protection workers, construction industry workers, small businesspeople and subcontractors. Statewide 2,400 new public sector traineeships will be created and allocation for 500 apprentice positions will be continued, and Cairns will have its share.

Special programs will also be provided for under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle's \$80.8m budget to assist those who have been unemployed for the long term. A sum of \$22.9m will be provided under the Community Jobs Plan and \$33.7m under the Community Employment Assistance program. Again, Cairns will have its share. The Budget also provides incentives to the private sector to create jobs in areas of skills shortages and these programs add up to \$5m. This means that there will be a lot happening in Cairns. Many people will be working and others will be in training. Cairns really will be moving a step ahead, thanks to this Budget.

Thanks also needs to go to our regional public servants who have worked very hard over the last year. For the benefit of the powers that be in Brisbane, they have summarised the present situation in Cairns and the far north. They have presented solid and factual information to show why the additional programs that have in fact been funded in this Budget are needed in Cairns. I give recognition to their silent but nonetheless very important work in the interests of the far north.

There is no doubt that this Budget is good for the north, not only for the present but also for the future. It lays the building blocks for future gain, particularly for the children in our fair State. In the end, it is a Budget about jobs, education and the future. My compliments go to the Treasurer.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (8.32 p.m.): I wish to make a few observations on how this Budget will affect the excellent electorate of Keppel. Then I shall make a few observations of a wider nature.

I recognise that the Budget provides \$500,000—this is not written in the Budget papers but it is provided—for an exhibit storage room at the Yeppoon Police Station. That is fine. However, we have a total of 17 officers, including water police, and we must think seriously about making the Yeppoon Police Station a 24-hour station. Keppel is part of the eighth fastest growing area in Australia. With that comes a lot of development and a lot of other jolly good things. Unfortunately, problems associated with drugs, break and enters, and other associated crimes also come with growth. Not for one moment am I saying that Yeppoon is deep in crime, but unfortunately, percentage wise, we have our share. We need additional police in Yeppoon.

I make this plea from the floor of this Parliament that between 20 and 24 additional police be stationed at Yeppoon so that we can have a properly run 24-hour police station. The officers in charge of the Yeppoon Police Station do an excellent job. Bearing in mind that officers take leave and so on, it is commendable that those officers put in as much time as they do.

When in Government, we had planned to either build a new police station or substantially extend the present one. The current working conditions of those officers is very poor indeed. They are huddled together. It is not a healthy environment and the working conditions are not really tolerable. I cannot state strongly enough that the Yeppoon Police Station has to be given very urgent priority.

I value the efforts of the Yeppoon State High School, but an additional high school has to be built. At present this does not appear to be on the plans, although it was at one time. For some reason or another, the project does not seem to be getting a nod even though, I repeat, Yeppoon is in the eighth fastest growing area in Australia. As good as it is, the Yeppoon State High School is situated on a very small area of land. I commend the efforts of Mr Evans, who takes agricultural classes and works hard to ensure that the school operates in an excellent environment. However, soon that school will have run its race and it is time for a new one to be built. When new facilities are needed at the school, such as facilities to look after people with a disability, the excuse for not building them is that such facilities would be incorporated into the plans for the new Taranganba State high school, as it would be called.

We do not want excuses. We want to be able to offer the people of the Capricorn Coast the very best that is available in education, with the widest possible range of subjects. This can only be done if a second high school is built. I make it very clear indeed: a new high school is absolutely essential and should not be put off any longer.

The Yeppoon Hospital it run excellently. The director of nursing who is in charge of that hospital has done an absolutely outstanding job, as have all who work with her. However, it is time that we start to look for a new site for the Yeppoon Hospital. Currently, the hospital faces the seashore, which results in a lot of maintenance problems. Maintenance work must and is being done continually, but it is difficult to keep up with it all. It would be a good idea to use the hospital, which is situated next door to the Gertrude Moore Nursing Home, to house elderly citizens who have paid their taxes and contributed greatly to the economy of our nation over time.

We need to be look for a new site for a modern hospital at Yeppoon. We do not want to see the Yeppoon Hospital become a suburban hospital to the Rockhampton Base Hospital. The population growth in Yeppoon is quickly outgrowing that in Rockhampton. We are not there yet, of course, but our population growth as a percentage is considerably higher than that of Rockhampton. We need to pursue this issue and ensure that our new hospital is relocated and built to the most modern standards available. In addition, some specialist-type services, for example, eye treatments, need to be provided at that hospital. I look forward to that.

Another relevant issue is the relocation of the ambulance and fire stations. At the moment the two stations are almost side by side in the main street, which is a 40 km/h zone. It is not desirable to have fire trucks and ambulances tearing up and down the main street. The main street is blocked off in the centre and ambulances and fire engines have to go down to the next corner, turn around and head either north or south. In this day and age, both of those buildings, which have served us well, are not of a sufficient standard. New locations are available.

Thanks to the combined efforts of the Goss Government, which initiated the project, and this Government, which got it going, the new ambulance and fire stations in north Rockhampton will be opened soon. We also await the opening of the Kinka Creek bridge, which is a much-needed development.

In relation to the allocation of money to provide 70 drug counsellors in the State, I wish to ensure that they are not provided only in the south-east corner. They are also needed on the Capricorn Coast. Unfortunately, in common with many other coastal areas, there are those in our area who are in a very sorry state. We need to do whatever we can to obtain help for these people.

Yeppoon has a community health centre. However, its health workers operate under enormous pressure. They have a lot of work to do, for example, with the elderly and people addicted to drugs. For various reasons people need their help.

We hope that the Government will assist the Livingstone Shire Council with reclamation work on the beach at Keppel Sands. Over time the people at Keppel Sands have done a lot of work to try to protect their homes. However, to some extent, they are fighting a losing battle, and some of the homes there are not too far away from the ocean. I ask that steps be taken to get that work going.

I note also that some assistance has to be provided when shire roads become so heavily trafficked as to be more like roads other than shire roads. I refer to the Coorooman Creek Road, which links the Emu Park-Rockhampton road with the Rockhampton-Yeppoon road. That through road is used by people taking a shortcut to get to the northern part of Rockhampton. It is a shire road. Therefore, the shire has to do all of the maintenance on that road and had to contribute its part when that road was built. Once a shire road becomes a busy road linking one town to another, dust problems and so on occur and those roads have to be

bituminised. During our term of Government that was an enormous problem, and I was able to secure an agreement that looked to the future. The road is now bituminised, but now everybody wants the Coorooman Creek bridge built. Unfortunately, given that the funding is not there to do this type of work, it will be only after a bad accident occurs—and I hope I am wrong—that some work will be done on those roads. There needs to be a greater contribution from all levels of government to see what we can do in that respect.

Emu Park will need assistance in building a community centre. At the moment, the Keppel Care Group is endeavouring to build such a centre. I would like further funds made available to that group so that this centre is built. The Emu Park State School also needs a new administration block, and we will be trying very hard to get that.

In relation to the road between Yeppoon and Rockhampton, we need to look at having a double-laned road in each direction. We are partly there, but it is nowhere near enough. We put in passing lanes when we were in Government. But the road's usage is continuing to increase. Main Roads tells me that the road does not yet carry sufficient traffic volumes. I suggest that the roadworks should be done now so that it is able to handle the additional traffic. One notices traffic build-up on the road between Yeppoon and Rockhampton, particularly on a Sunday or on a lovely summer's day and also during peak hour. That work is needed. During our time in Government we widened the complete length of the Emu Park-Rockhampton road, but a lot of that work involved shoulder widening. That has been acceptable; these days such work is of a better standard and lasts quite well. But given the very heavy traffic volumes on that road, we obviously have to undertake new roadworks and realign parts of that road. A lot of work has been done. Unfortunately, only a week after the last major widening there was a horrific head-on collision on that new road and a number of people were killed. That often happens when new roads are built. Perhaps we should be putting up warning signs. Very often, within the first week of the completion of a new, safe road a major traffic accident occurs. Shortly after the Emerald-Anakie road was built seven people lost their lives when a vehicle ran off the road. Perhaps motorists are driving too fast on a new road or are not used to it. I do not know why that happens. Wide, safe roads do not necessarily prevent horrific accidents. We should be addressing that in our strategy. However, I do not know that we can always do something to save people's

lives. Sometimes people have to save themselves.

I am disappointed with the Budget allocations for additional water infrastructure for this State, which appear to be nil. I will give honourable members an example of how great Government assistance in respect of water infrastructure can be. When Howard Hobbs was the Minister, in Yeppoon we worked very hard with him to get assistance for a storage compound to pipe water from Water Park Creek into a holding area. Because we had a natural valley, Stage 1 simply involved plugging up both ends of the valley and piping the surplus rainwater out of Water Park Creek—it was simply going over a waterfall and going nowhere—into this storage area. Yeppoon was starting to run out of water in the heavy usage periods around Christmas, when there are lots of tourists and not much rain. In addition, at that time of year the water dries up. We now have an enormous storage capacity. We simply pipe the surplus water from Water Park Creek to that storage. This initiative has the backing of all of the conservation groups. In addition, this is the first of three stages. To increase the storage capacity all we have to do is remove one of the existing walls after building a wall further out. In that way we could double our capacity. That process could be repeated so as to ensure our water supply for the next century.

That was a pretty good effort on the former Minister's part. Those are just some of the things that water can do. I really mean that. We do not have a problem with water now and we will not have one in the future in the Livingstone Shire, part of the eighth fastest growing area in all of Australia. There is not a lot of money—a few hundred thousand dollars—but it is money that is very well spent. It will mean that we are not salting up rivers because we are using too much water.

Of course, the Livingstone Shire Council, which is a very progressive council, is beautifying all of this area. It will be a lovely park area. Boats will not be allowed on it, I am afraid, but that will not matter. It is the result of a bit of commonsense and a little bit of cash—a contribution from Livingstone Shire and a contribution from the Government—and away we went. I was given the honour of opening that facility fairly recently and, of course, there is already a lot of water there. For the life of me, why we cannot do more of this and why we have to have this freeze on water projects that we appear to be having at the moment is beyond my comprehension.

I found out today that some very prominent people by the name of Wilson grow pawpaws and all sorts of wonderful fruit. In fact, they are one of the largest pawpaw growers in Australia. Their property, a great orchard, is next to a forestry area behind which is a national park. Honourable members can guess what has happened. Pigs are coming out of that national park, through the forest and getting into these pawpaws. Every time the Wilsons try to grow pawpaws, they lose thousands of trees. They went to the department, which told them that there was not a lot that it could do about it and that it is really their problem. It said, "We do not have money to control feral pigs", and that is true. I cannot believe it when I hear that this is the case.

I thought there was a good neighbour policy whereby we would always ensure that we would look after our neighbours. I bet that, if the feral animals were on the Wilson's property and were getting out and destroying some rare animal in the national park, there would be a problem. That is okay. We will not start calling each other feral. I can only say to the Minister for Environment: for goodness sake, please try to help the Wilsons; they employ a lot of people; they produce beautiful food, but they do not want the pawpaws eaten by the feral animals or to be told by the department that it does not want anything to do with the matter as it is really their problem. That is not fair. We have to have a policy of fairness for all concerned.

Time expired.

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (8.52 p.m.): Watching the tragic events in East Timor unfold over the past two weeks, I recalled a minor controversy which occurred in Australia early this year and which illustrates the stark contrast between Australia and many other countries. It involved the Federal Liberal Health Minister, Michael Wooldridge, and an elderly resident of his Victorian electorate. It seems that the resident is not too fond of Dr Wooldridge and has told him so in a number of letters. In response to the last letter, Michael Wooldridge lost his temper and rang the elderly citizen and was particularly rude and offensive to the old bloke. The exchange became public and, after a few days of criticism, Dr Wooldridge ended up apologising.

Honourable members might think that this is hardly an earth shattering story and wonder why I raise it in the context of the Queensland Budget. I think the story tells us why Australia is a wonderful nation and how the priorities of Governments should be centred on building

on our strengths. The exchange between the Federal Health Minister and the citizen tells us two things about Australia: firstly, that we live in a country where the citizen is able to tell their elected representatives exactly what they think of them; and, secondly, when there is a heated exchange between the senior decision maker and the senior citizen, it is the leader who apologises to the citizen.

Honourable members should think about these two simple facts in relation to Australia and then contrast them with the suffering of the people of East Timor at the hands of leaders who respond with violence and terror to the expression of will by citizens. Contrast this with the current debate about a proposal to change our Constitution to bring about a republic with an Australian head of State. There is not a machete in sight. We are blessed with a stability and fairness which comes from the good sense and decency of our people.

Against this backdrop, the role of a State Budget is to set down the public policy foundations which will buttress our important institutions and respond to the needs and aspirations of our citizens. This Budget scores well on both these counts. Firstly, it is an inclusive Budget which provides initiatives for all Queenslanders. It focuses on jobs, on education, on parents and families, on regional centres and supports business. It is a Budget which puts us in good stead for the new millennium and is aptly named "The Smart Budget".

The Smart State initiatives will underwrite significant investment and employment growth by investing in industries of the future, investing in infrastructures for those industries and training our people to take advantage of the opportunities of the jobs of tomorrow. The Budget provides for a strong Capital Works Program. \$5.2 billion will be spent this year of which \$1 billion is dedicated to the energy sector. The Queensland economy will continue to grow and prosper.

In the Kurwongbah electorate, the last 12 months have seen my efforts concentrate on the core community issues of community safety, employment growth and transport improvements.

Mr Reeves: Excellent local member.

Mrs LAVARCH: I thank the member for Mansfield.

Each of these issues is important to the residents of Pine Rivers as the district continues its gradual transition from the high growth, first home buyers Mecca of the 1970s

and 1980s to the more settled and mature era of the 1990s and beyond. Pine Rivers is an area which enjoys a sense of community and an identity which is distinct from Brisbane City.

Concerns about community safety are felt by many Australians wherever they live, and many Kurwongbah residents would place community safety near the top of their priorities for Government action. Happily, the past 12 months have seen positive Government responses and maybe the greater sense of confidence in economic conditions have improved the community's perception about this issue.

There have been several State initiatives in Kurwongbah to improve the effective operation of community policing. The most important has seen the location in Bray Park of a community Police Beat. Senior Constables Adam Willmott and Tim Brown are now well settled in their homes and have become familiar faces to Bray Park and Strathpine residents as they walk and ride the residential beat. Also, an initiative has been taken to improve railway safety with the establishment of a railway police office at the Petrie Railway Station. The railway police squad, which consists of sworn-in police officers, is now located locally and its members are available to ride the trains and check railway stations on the Brisbane-Caboolture line.

A major success has been the Police Beat shopfront within the Strathpine Westfield complex. The shopfront has been located in its permanent premises following the opening of the Westfield extensions shortly before Christmas last year. Under the management of Senior Constable Steve Christensen, the police work with shopkeepers at Westfield and the owners of businesses of the Strathpine central business district to maximise policing in public places to the benefit of retailers and the sense of wellbeing of shoppers and other residents.

In March of this year I attended a large public meeting held at Albany Creek to discuss the policing needs of Eatons Hill and surrounding areas. At present there is a police station at Albany Creek that is operated on a limited hours basis. Eatons Hill is the fastest growing part of the Kurwongbah electorate and it is appropriate that the Government should respond to that growth by improving services, including police services.

Last year a primary school opened at Eatons Hill and shortly I will mention the plan to establish a new ambulance centre there. The area has also recently witnessed a major upgrading of its principal arterial transport link,

namely South Pine Road. Most Eatons Hill residents understand that their suburb is not a high crime area and, while there are inevitable growing pains, it is a well planned suburb with good basic facilities and a promising future.

In policing terms, residents want to see a police presence commensurate with the area's population and needs. This means that what is important is the visibility of the police presence as a deterrent to crime and the response time to calls for assistance. On both of these counts it is clear that Eatons Hill is served on par with Brisbane and northern areas.

I will continue to work with the Police Service and the Minister for Police to improve the police presence in this area. In time, this will see a police station located on a suitable site at or near the suburb on a full-time basis. However, it is not bricks and mortar that count as much as resources, police numbers, patrol cars and response times. It is these key areas which this Budget addresses and which need to be improved in Eatons Hill as the population increases.

Like Eatons Hill, the township of Dayboro has also been concerned with police issues. Dayboro is served by two police officers: Sergeant Rob Munn and Senior Constable Steve Wakerley. During the year an issue emerged about Steve living away from Dayboro, which meant that when he was on call the police vehicle was away from the district for periods longer than was desirable. This could be overcome if accommodation could be found for Steve in town. As a result of representations to the Minister for Police and discussions with Assistant Commissioner Alan Honour, it was decided that the Police Service would find a house in Dayboro. At first it was thought that the vacant ambulance officer's house attached to the ambulance station might be the go, but this did not prove a viable option. The Police Service came to the party and bought a house. Steve is now settled and Dayboro is well served at all times by its officers.

The second core issue for Pine Rivers residents is job growth and job security. In general terms, many Pine Rivers residents work outside the shire, in the Brisbane City area. The shire also boasts a high level of self-employed trades people. Official statistics show Pine Rivers' unemployment rate to be around 7%—a few percentage points below the national and State averages, although this does vary from suburb to suburb.

The Government's highest priority is employment growth or, as the Premier puts it, jobs, jobs, jobs. This is a priority which Pine

Rivers residents would share, as nothing is more fundamental to a secure, functioning community than there being work for all those who seek it.

There have been several positive initiatives to create employment opportunities in Kurwongbah. The first was the opening of the Mills Tui special vehicle building operation at Brendale. With assistance from the Queensland Government, Mills Tui set up its Australian operation and brought with it 40 jobs initially and there is the potential to provide up to 70 jobs. Other initiatives have come through the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle Community Jobs Plan, which saw four local community projects being funded to provide over 60 jobs.

The net effect of these initiatives has been to increase the job and training prospects of Pine Rivers residents, particularly young people. I mention the outstanding work undertaken by job agencies such as East Coast Employment and Training, the Spectrum Organisation, BIGA Training and Career Solutions. Each of these community agencies is staffed by dedicated personnel such as John Hart, Alan Sparkes, Frank Turvey, Sandra Craven and Colin Webb, with whom I have a constructive working relationship. Pine Rivers is fortunate to be served by such committed people in the vital field of employment and training.

The third key issue for Pine Rivers is transport. In the electorate of Kurwongbah there are only four State-controlled roads. These are South Pine Road, Dayboro Road, Gympie Road at Strathpine and Mount Mee Road. The solution to our traffic flow problems in Pine Rivers lies in the State and the Pine Rivers Shire Council working together to improve the road system. This is why it is crucial that the Pine Rivers Shire Council's transportation study be finalised as soon as possible. Under this Budget, the South Pine Road upgrade and the Linkfield Road connection to the Bruce Highway are on schedule.

We are also blessed in our area to have the Citytrain rail line. I know that it is well patronised. In this Budget, \$55m has been allocated to the laying of the third track from Northgate to Petrie. This will increase the capacity of the inner city rail system from 25 to 45 trains hourly in each direction. Completion of all work is scheduled for late next year. In addition to the third track, Queensland Rail will be replacing the footbridge at Stanley Street with a new concrete construction which will be much more user friendly.

As the parent of two school-age children, I am delighted with the initiatives in this Budget for education. In terms of capital works, the Bray Park State High School will have constructed for the start of the 2000 school year a \$700,000 six-room general learning block. The increased funding in literacy and numeracy, together with the commitment that there will be more computers in schools, is most welcome.

Another exciting announcement in the Budget is the \$12.8m allocation to North Point Institute of TAFE to ensure that this excellent facility continues to deliver improved training and job skills to our local community. Of particular interest is that North Point TAFE will receive a further \$200,000 to provide additional training in biotechnology, which is one of the State's key growth industries.

Queensland's future prosperity lies in the development of a confident and flexible work force that has the knowledge, skills and initiative to exploit the opportunities of the new information age. The key to future jobs growth lies in skilling Queensland to become a Smart State. This Budget delivers record expenditure on education and training programs that provide the skills, knowledge and attitudes for the information economy.

By May next year Eatons Hill will see a new ambulance station located next to the fire station on South Pine Road. This Budget commits \$450,000 to the construction of the new ambulance station. At present there are 13 ambulance officers located at the Brendale fleet centre and these officers will be relocated to the new Eatons Hill station. I will be working with Norm Veale, the officer in charge, to establish a local ambulance committee for Eatons Hill. As I said earlier, Eatons Hill is a fast growing area and we are delivering services to the area in line with the population growth.

A further capital expenditure commitment has been made in relation to the North Pine Dam. This will see over \$1m being spent on an upgrade of the structure of the North Pine Dam and also provides for further land purchases around the dam. The North Pine Dam is not only a great recreation spot for locals; it is also a major water supply for the Pine Rivers and Brisbane areas. Therefore it is essential that the dam is at peak performance at all times.

With the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to improving social services, the Health budget has received a major boost. For our area this means expanded health services at the Caboolture and Redcliffe Hospitals as

well as improved community health services. In the mental health area, \$2.1m has been allocated to construct a rehab unit in Pine Rivers.

As part of the positive justice reforms, the Petrie Community Legal Centre will receive a boost to its funding. This will enable the centre to continue to deliver the quality legal advice and referral service that Pine Rivers residents have received for over 15 years. I take this opportunity to commend the coordinator, Gail Leake, and her army of volunteers who run the service. I also congratulate all the local solicitors who support this service by donating their time on Thursday nights to give free legal advice for those in our community who seek it.

In conclusion, I can proudly say that this Budget has a strong social capital base. Child protection will receive much-needed additional funding. I know that many in the community are waiting to hear whether the proposed Lions Youth Emergency Centre for homeless youths has been funded. The funding required to staff this centre is not State Government funding but Commonwealth funding that is only administered through the State. The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, the Honourable Anna Bligh, is currently negotiating with the Federal Minister for increased funding in this area, but we will not know until the end of this year or early next year whether any additional allocations will be made.

This is a smart Budget for a Smart State. It sets down the public policy foundations for a strong and prosperous Queensland and I believe it meets the needs and aspirations of Queenslanders. I congratulate the Premier on delivering such a strong and sound Budget.

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (9.08 p.m.): It is certainly a pleasure to speak in the debate on the Appropriation Bills. Queensland is the economic powerhouse of Australia, with gross State product increasing by 4.75% last financial year. That strength cannot be understated, because our traditional Asian trading partners have been in a very severe recession over that period. We all remember when those Asian trading partners were known as the tiger economies. With gross State product increasing by 4.75%, Queensland can now rightfully make the claim that we have a tiger economy.

Let us look at the Budget papers. The gross State product is boosted by local demand for goods and services and, of course, a declining rate of unemployment during this year to 8.3%. Imagine if our Asian trading partners were not in recession. The

Budget papers say that net exports took 2.5% from growth figures during this year. So if—and it is only if—the recession in Asia had not occurred, we would have been talking about a gross State product of over 7%, which would have been an amazing situation. As I said, the Budget papers state that net exports took 2.5% from growth figures. What is important is that, despite that massive growth, all of this occurred in an inflation environment of 1%.

In 1999-2000 we are going to have more of the same, with the growth rate slightly down—but still substantially high—at 3.75%. Net exports are expected to add 0.25% as our trading partners, particularly in Asia, recover. It is said that this figure will be slightly down because there will be an easing in the growth of domestic demand and, very importantly, unemployment will trend further down to 7.75%. This situation is interesting, because it is estimated that, during the next year, inflation will rise by 1.75%.

So the challenge that is always there for policy makers is to reduce unemployment further while keeping inflation under control. It seems logical that, as the rate of employment drops, the rate of inflation increases. This is a challenge not just for the Queensland Government but for all Governments right around the world and, particularly in the context of the Queensland Budget, for the Australian Government.

The key, of course, is to increase the skills level of the current work force and increase the skills level of underemployed and unemployed people. Through that, we develop a work force that has the skills and the willingness to exploit employment opportunities. We need to focus on improving the quality and the relevance of education and training. By focusing on improving the quality and the relevance of education and training, we can ensure that a skilled work force is available in this State.

What does that mean we have to do? I believe that we need to develop within the State of Queensland a culture of skills improvement—a culture of opportunity—so that people know that when they obtain more work skills they will be able to use those skills and, therefore, seek employment and improve their position within the workplace. I believe that Queensland is well on the way towards achieving that culture. I do not believe that it is as difficult as it sounds to develop that culture. As members of Parliament, as we mix in our electorates and we see people, we know that Queensland as a State and individual Queenslanders have a "give it a go" attitude. They want to have a go at doing things, and

that is what they do. I believe that this is particularly reflected in Queensland's small-business environment. We have an enormous number of small businesses in this State and people who want to work hard and work on their own.

The opportunity exists for the Government to harness that attitude towards skilling and getting people reskilled for employment so that we can improve employment prospects; so that we can develop that attitude of what people want to do. That is the focus of this Budget. It is about skilling Queensland to create the Smart State. It is about improving the quality of education and training through vocational training. It is about the provision of assistance to industry and Government to take advantage of the information age.

Budget Paper No. 2, titled the Budget Overview, contains references to some of the highlights, including funding of \$39.6m provided over five years for the Education for All program; funding of \$24m provided over four years, including \$6m next year, for the Safeguarding TAFE initiative; funding of \$40m provided over four years, including \$5m next year, to the Networked Learning Community initiative; funding of \$22.5m over four years, including \$5m next year, to continue the Government's commitment to provide additional behaviour management support services at schools; and funding of \$24.5m over four years, including \$5m next year, to continue improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes in primary schools. So basically, the focus of this Budget is about skilling Queensland or creating a culture in Queensland whereby people seek skills improvement. I congratulate the Premier on his determination to do that through this Budget.

There are many problems and challenges to be faced as Queensland moves towards the new millennium. The first is the development of that culture of skills improvement and creating an atmosphere in which that circumstance—the circumstance of improving skills—becomes the right thing to do and the thing that people want to do. The next problem is developing that relationship, which I talked about before—the relationship between unemployment and inflation—in the context of a growing economy. Historically, as everybody knows, as unemployment goes down inflation goes up. So we need to concentrate on and address that as an issue, because the task that then faces the Government is to reduce unemployment, maintain a low level of inflation and continue that growth.

So how can the rate of unemployment be dramatically reduced below the 5% level—which I would regard as a serious reduction of unemployment—despite the best efforts of a caring, sincere Beattie State Government, when people are trapped in unemployment? As the situation now stands, there are positive disincentives to gaining employment. The first and obvious one is the loss of the unemployment benefit. There are other things that flow from that: the loss of a health benefit card and the loss of various concessional benefits that flow directly through being unemployed, for instance, public transport concessions and so on.

Unemployed and underemployed people are then placed in a poverty trap. Many are faced with a low-paid job even if they gain employment. So if they move into a low-paid job, they wonder why they did it, because the benefits that they were receiving while they were unemployed are lost. What is so good or right about a system that condemns a proportion of the population to permanent poverty, when the logical option is to remain unemployed and not to seek work and not to learn or gain new skills? This is a serious problem that all Governments must address. The problem, of course, is that gaining new skills may not necessarily reflect immediately in an increase in income or other benefits. So even if a person does work to gain those new skills, they may not get an immediate or direct benefit as an increase in income. So the pressure is there to ask why they would do that in the first place. I believe that the system needs to change to provide a positive benefit to individuals for increasing their skills level. That is the issue that Governments and legislators must address. How that needs to be done involves all levels of government, but especially the Commonwealth Government because, in the end, it has the major levers and it is in a position to use those major levers.

Perhaps it is time to link direct income tax incentives to increasing skill levels; in other words, to link a rise in the income tax exemption level to an increase in work skills. I have not thought through how one would do that, but we must do something like that if one cannot see an immediate gain from improving one's level of skills. I am suggesting that we shift the emphasis so that the direct benefit goes to a currently unemployed person when that individual finds work. At the moment, there is a positive disincentive to commence work because of income tax payments. Once a person starts work, he is immediately paying income tax and his income is reduced. A person usually starts work in a job on a low

rate of income. By starting that job the person loses his supplementary benefits.

We need to shift the emphasis so that the benefit accrues when the individual finds work. We need to look at changing the system. We need to reward a person for obtaining new work skills. It is important that the person is rewarded immediately. He is rewarded by receiving a reduced rate of income tax, even though the increased skills may not be reflected in his wage.

As we approach the new millennium we are presented with a unique opportunity because that window is available. The tax debate is currently occurring at the Commonwealth level. We can talk about these issues now because economic activity in Queensland and Australia is strong. If we do not address the issue of increasing skill levels at a time when economic activity is increasing and the rate of unemployment is marginally improving, we will end up with an increase in inflation. This Budget addresses that issue by focusing on the culture of Queensland as a Smart State.

I now wish to turn my attention to the electorate of Kallangur, an electorate which includes some of the fastest growing areas of Caboolture Shire and Pine Rivers Shire. The Budget provides specific initiatives which impact on the people of the Kallangur electorate. These initiatives are aimed at improving the lifestyle and the level of services in the area.

The Budget allocates an amount of \$200,000 for the purchase of land by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority at Pitt Road, Burpengary. The purpose of the purchase is to develop a fire station which will be able to service the fast-growing areas of Narangba and Burpengary. Currently the fire service is provided from Deception Bay, which is land-locked by the ocean on one side. The new station will provide a service to most parts of this growing area.

The Budget allocates \$6.295m to allow Energex to boost the supply of power to Morayfield. One of the challenges that I have faced as a local member over the last few years has been in relation to improving the reliability of power supply to the area. This allocation provides us with the opportunity to do that. As the area continues to grow, people will have a reliable power supply.

The Budget provides funds for the new Narangba Valley State High School. Construction of the school has already commenced and it will open with Year 8 students at the beginning of school year 2000.

The principal has already been appointed. Construction will continue until the school opens next year.

The Budget allocates an amount of \$8.799m for the completion of the Caboolture Hospital development. Moneys have all been allocated for mental health services within the Caboolture area. An amount of \$372,000 has been set aside for the Redcliffe/Caboolture psychogeriatric unit. An amount of \$391,000 has been allocated for a rehabilitation/diagnostic unit. The total cost of that unit will be some \$3m.

The Government has announced its involvement in a joint project with the Caboolture Shire Council in the development of an aquatic centre at Morayfield. An important aspect of this development is that it demonstrates a degree of cooperation between two levels of Government. Progress is continuing on construction of the aquatic centre. I have had discussions with representatives of the Department of Main Roads. Morayfield Road will be altered to some extent to ensure that we have safe access to the aquatic centre.

As the member for Kurwongbah said, a matter of extreme importance is the installation of a third track on the Northgate-Petrie line. The sum of \$55m has been allocated in this year's Budget for that upgrade. The purpose of the upgrade is to provide greater rail services to the outlying areas of Pine Rivers Shire and Caboolture Shire. We have another \$7m allocated in the Budget to improve signalling on the railway line between Petrie and Caboolture. The total cost of that project is \$13m.

This is a great Budget because it delivers capital works initiatives which directly affect the Kallangur electorate. Importantly, the Budget focuses on the future of Queensland as a growth State through the development of the culture of the Smart State. This Budget delivers for the present through strong employment growth and economic growth in a low inflation environment.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (9.27 p.m.): I was interested to hear the member for Kallangur say that the Budget delivered some great things for the Caboolture and Pine Rivers areas. The member is very fortunate because it appears that that is one of the few areas of the State which has benefited from this Budget. I do not want to be negative about this—

Mr Wilson: Having said that—

Mr HOBBS: Having said that—that's right. I entered this Parliament in 1986. I guess the Budget has always been a highlight of the year. It is a time when one can look at what is happening throughout the State. One can see where roadworks are going and where schools are being built. One has an opportunity to see what is being generated in the State during the next 12 months.

A perusal of the Budget indicates that nothing is happening in the western parts of the State during 1999. Everything must be happening elsewhere in the State. The amount of money being spent in the western areas is reducing whilst it is increasing in the south-east corner of the State. At one stage we had 54% of available funds being spent outside the Brisbane area, but that figure has now reduced to 52%. That is quite a substantial amount in terms of the Budget.

This is the first time for many years that we have had a deficit Budget in real terms. Whilst those opposite might put the best spin possible on it—and it has been tried—the reality is that the Budget is about \$375m in deficit, blowing out to \$1.2 billion by July 2000.

Standard and Poor's have made that quite clear and I do not think that we can really argue against that, because the figures seem to add up, whatever the accounting procedure. Although the Government can put the best spin on it that it possibly can, it cannot say that accrual accounting is really going to make things different. I think that the cartoon in today's Courier-Mail summed up things fairly. It depicts a guy sitting in front his bank manager saying, "Peter Beattie has a \$350m deficit yet, through accrual accounting methods, he has a \$50m credit. What works for him works for me." The bank manager is depicted as sitting there twiddling his thumbs and looking very unimpressed. I would say that that is how the average person in Queensland feels about this Budget.

The reality is that, in Queensland, per capita tax collections are going up. Per capita tax collections in the other States of Australia are also going up, but not at the rate at which they are increasing in Queensland. For instance, per capita tax collections in Queensland have risen from \$1,330 in 1997-98—which was during the term of the coalition Government—to \$1,406 in 1998-99, which is an increase of \$76, and then to \$1,599 in this Budget, an increase of \$193. The last leap in per capita spending in the other States was \$41. So we are catching up to the rate of per capita taxes in the other States. That will reduce our competitiveness and the average

mum and dad will be paying more in taxes and charges.

Tax revenue is up from 26% in 1998 to 29% under this Budget. So I see that there are some problems there. I also think that we need to look at what we call the BST—the Beattie stealth tax—in relation to the way in which it is going to work. As I understand it, the assets of each department will be assessed. They will be put into what will be called strategic and surplus assets. Those assets that are deemed strategic will receive a full refund. So at this stage we do not have to worry about those. However, for the assets that are deemed by somebody—maybe Treasury—as being surplus and not really needed, the department will be charged 6%. That department has to either find the money for that charge or sell off the asset.

Previous speakers have given examples of what could happen because of this charge. In relation to small schools, the department could say that it would be cheaper to buy a bus and bus the kids to the next available school rather than pay a 6% levy on a \$300,000 school when, in reality, the building is worth only \$500 at best. The school could be given to the local football club or whatever the case may be.

The same charge applies to the Department of Natural Resources in respect of dams and NCP principles. I want to give a few examples. However, before I do that, I will go back one step and remind members that recently in this House the Premier stated that he could not build the off-stream storage at St George because the National Competition Policy had refused to support it. Therefore, the \$15m would not be available to build that dam. That was not quite exactly the story. The Premier should have said that there was a 25% holding back by the NCC of the total funds that were available to the State because of a number of water issues, which included the off-stream storage at St George.

I refer to the Walla Weir. The NCC people say that a fundamental flaw is in the analysis of the economic viability of the scheme. As someone who has been closely involved with that weir, I can say that one does not have to be Einstein to work out that, year in, year out, probably 120% of the water capacity is being used. It is one of those weirs that fills up all the time. In fact, its output could even be more than that. So in anyone's language, the weir's economic viability is very good. However, it is the process that has been undertaken.

I refer also to the Moura off-stream storage. The NCP assessment council claimed

that the environmental assessment was not done by an independent group and, therefore, there was no independent appraisal carried out. The NCP assessment council referred also to Stage 3 of the Dumbleton Weir and Stage 2 of the Bedford Weir and stated that the department did not carry out a robust analysis of those weirs and that some independent assessment was need. The criticisms are just in terms of the administrative arrangements.

So does a Treasury official look at those assets and say, "Yes, these are what we call a surplus requirement. Let us try to flog them off, pull them down, or whatever."? I will take this issue a step further and refer to another matter, and this is a beauty. The council had not received information concerning Stage 2 of the Bingegang Weir, the Warrill Creek Diversion Weir and the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area and will review the information prior to finalising the supplementary assessment. Although someone may say that certain assets may not be entirely viable, one has to question their ability to understand the real situation.

I turn to other issues in the Budget that concern me. For quite some time, work to the Charleville Police Station was on the books. It seems to have been pushed down and down and down the agenda. When the coalition was in Government, work to the Roma Police Station was announced. That work also seems to have slipped off the books. We need to make sure that, when such commitments are made, there is some understanding on both political sides that we will build on the resources that are there. Obviously, the need for them has been assessed and so it is important to deliver those assets to the communities no matter who is in Government.

Another point that just crossed my mind in relation to these police stations is that often people have come out and assessed some of those smaller stations, such as Eulo, Cooladdi, Thargomindah, Boulia and Bollon. Those people could say that those areas could be serviced by police stations in larger towns, such as St George, Cunnamulla, Charleville and others, and that those smaller police stations are not needed. Therefore, those small police stations could be regarded as surplus assets as well. That scenario in itself is quite frightening.

Another issue that is pretty important to people in my electorate is airconditioning in schools. At present, schools in the northern areas are being airconditioned under the Cool Schools Program. However, no assistance is provided for those schools in the south-west.

All they really need is evaporative airconditioners; they do not want the reverse cycle airconditioners. That would do for a lot of schools in my electorate. I think that it is pretty unfair that, although a lot of those schools are located in the hottest and driest regions in the State, they do not happen to be located in the area extending from the north of the State that is covered by the Cooler Schools program and, therefore, are not eligible to receive airconditioning.

Recently, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing announced the allocation of \$4.5m to aircondition Housing Commission homes in the west. I have no problem with airconditioning people's homes. Everyone who lives in the west should have airconditioned homes. However, I really think that the kids need to be considered first. I think that most of those people in that area would agree. I would be happy to talk to any one of them about it. Everyone should have airconditioning and all Public Service houses should be airconditioned. However, it is not really fair if groups are jumping the queue, especially when we are talking about the future of the kids. They have to be able to learn in a healthy environment. It is worth considering. I hope the Minister might be able to do some work on this issue.

Mr Pearce: Why didn't you support central Queensland when we were pushing for it when you were in Government?

Mr Mickel: We couldn't get our schools painted in Inala in the 70s and 80s.

Mr HOBBS: The electorate of the member for Logan is not in that hot zone.

Mr Mickel: So the kids in Inala didn't matter?

Mr HOBBS: That is not true. Just as this Government has done, we drew the hot zone on a map of Queensland. The area of the member for Fitzroy is included in the hot zone, as it should be; he is quite right. However, at this stage the area of the member for Logan is not in it.

Mr Mickel: It certainly wasn't in it when you colour-coded it.

Mr HOBBS: It is not in it now under the member's Government.

Mr Mickel: I'm talking about basic maintenance wasn't in it.

Mr HOBBS: No, I am talking about airconditioning. We need to have a system in place—

Mr Fenlon: Airconditioning was a luxury.

Mr HOBBS: Absolutely. It was in some areas, but it is essential now. In this day and age, the kids hop on buses that are airconditioned and sometimes their homes are airconditioned, but the schools are not. The kids need a fair go. This is not a social issue; this is about trying to help kids in the future.

One good feature of the Budget is the incentives that are provided for IT. The incubator plan to try to develop and expand information technology in Queensland is good. The aim is to have one computer for every seven school kids, and that figure will be reduced to five in due course. We need to do that.

The Premier made a statement that I was going to take issue with, but I think he was quite genuine in making it. He said, "We do not want to be a farm or a quarry anymore; we want to be a part of the move to new technology." However, one cannot just drop one activity and take up another. One has to keep them all going, while perhaps giving a bit more help to one field. While we are helping the IT area, we must not forget about the farm and the quarry.

Mr Pearce: You speak with some authority on that.

Mr HOBBS: The member would know about the quarry and I know a bit about the farm.

Mr Pearce: I'm talking about IT. You're speaking with a bit of authority.

Mr HOBBS: That is right; I am speaking with a bit of authority. A lot of issues involving local government need to be talked about. Unfortunately, this Budget does not progress local government issues. I do not believe that councils will be able to meet the challenges of the new millennium as things stand.

Essential services such as water, sewerage and waste, which are so important to a growing Queensland, have been ignored. The waste landfill remediation area has been capped at \$7.5m for two years. Councils in Queensland need \$500m. I know that they have not taken it all up at this stage but they will need it to develop those services, and that will happen. At least \$200m needs to be provided over a number of years for councils to really get a handle on Queensland's waste problem.

The Regional Centres program, with its provision of \$50m over four years, is welcomed. Of course, there are a few smoke and mirror tricks in there as well, as no doubt the Minister would know. It does not really start until later on.

Mr Mackenroth: This is not smoke and mirrors. The reality is that we will set the guidelines out for councils. By the time they make their allocation, no moneys will be budgeted until the next financial year. That's the way that any new scheme operates. There's no smoke and mirrors.

Mr HOBBS: That is July 2000. They should be able to start now. That is 12 months. They should be able to apply for it now.

Mr Mackenroth: It's just how the system works.

Mr HOBBS: But they will not be able to get money until next year.

Mr Mackenroth: They will be able to. From the time they apply and get something into their own budget, they won't do the work until the next financial year.

Mr HOBBS: That is the point that I was making.

Mr Mackenroth: That's the way councils work. There is no sense trying to use smoke and mirrors.

Mr HOBBS: The reality is that it does not have to be funded this year.

Mr Mackenroth: But we haven't said we are going to.

Mr HOBBS: It is in the Budget. It is announced.

Mr Mackenroth: We put in place a new system.

Mr HOBBS: Yes, but the reality is that the Government is really legitimising the Cairns foreshore, the Townsville Esplanade and the Bowen project, because those programs need somewhere to sit.

Mr Elder: There's a budget for that now.

Mr HOBBS: How can the Government justify the allocation of funds to Bowen? While I think it is great that money has gone to that area, other councils would love to have a bit of a crack at the \$10.8m that has gone to Bowen. Other shires would love to receive funding along those lines. For example, the Murgon meatworks received \$300,000. I know that Murgon does not have the same population, but as a district it would probably be close.

Mr Mackenroth: Are you suggesting that we move the money from a One Nation electorate to a National Party electorate? Is that what you're suggesting?

Mr HOBBS: I am suggesting that Whitsunday is closer to the seats that the Government wants to win. The Government

promised to put big money into Bowen before the last election. Government members know that as well as I do.

Mr Elder: But the point was in relation to that project that all the planning work had been done and the council had locked in their contribution to this year's Budget. That's what they have to do with this here.

Mr HOBBS: That is fine. Any council could have done that. However, the meatworks closed down. The council has done well, and good luck to it. It has done extremely well.

Mr Mackenroth: I might do a press release that says that the council's got nothing new but there is a new \$50m program.

Mr HOBBS: The program is welcomed, but all the Government has done is to legitimise its program.

Funding for the RLIP program is continuing and the small communities assistance package is fine, although it would have been good to boost it a little. The Security Improvement program is also quite welcome.

Concerns about road funding need to be taken into consideration. The five-year Roads Implementation Plan has received a bit of a dint recently. We have asked the Minister to clarify the position in regard to that plan and he has done so. We are told that there is a cutback in relation to some road funding. We need to watch that very carefully to make sure that that funding does in fact get through to all the local authorities as well as to the RTCS group. Apparently, the RTCS group is running out of money and it seems to be sucking up a bit of the Main Roads funding that has been made available.

Time expired.

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (9.48 p.m.): The driving force behind my desire to be a member of Parliament is to have a say on the priorities of Government. I want to continue to push for a better balance between economic and social priorities. I want to make sure that Governments provide incentives for investment and economic growth, and that they invest equally in people directly. I want to make sure that the people I represent have ready access to high-quality schools, hospitals, respite care and other social needs and that they benefit from our fight against crime and drugs. It is also critical that people in my area have job security.

I wish to acknowledge some of the local residents from my area who are in the gallery tonight. Ross Tapsall and his wife Kathy are keen to make sure that they have job security

in the future. They are keen to make sure that their kids have a decent education. Tony and others in the gallery feel the same way.

In the Smart State vision in this Budget, our sights are firmly set on continuing jobs growth, skilling people for our rapidly changing work force and developing the regional centres of Queensland. A centrepiece of the Budget is the forecast that 41,000 new jobs will be created this year. One of the most heartening features of this growth is that many more work and career opportunities will be open to young people. As I travel around my electorate, I meet heaps of disillusioned young people. It is the Labor Government that has provided some hope for those young people.

In Algester, Acacia Ridge and other parts of my electorate youth unemployment has been hovering at around 20%. We must improve on this. The massive boost in apprenticeships and traineeships is a big leap forward. Q-Build alone will be taking on 344 new apprentices this year. The Tory Government wanted to privatise Q-Build. That would have wrecked any opportunity for apprenticeships because of the lack of continuity that would have occurred if it was privatised. We are hanging onto it as a public enterprise. Good on Robert Schwarten for maintaining this stand. There will be 885 new apprenticeships and traineeships. They will be created through the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund. With hundreds of new homes being built in Forest Lake and Calamvale, this is good news for young people in these communities seeking trades.

Mature-age workers in my area who have been retrenched and are struggling to regain secure work have not been forgotten in this Budget. Many employers undervalue the experience and wisdom of mature-age workers. Government funding cannot overcome this view, but this Budget provides funding for retraining and labour market support for mature-age workers.

There will be record expenditure on education and training, including the ongoing development of Bremer TAFE. Schools also feature strongly in this Smart State vision. Our Government's plan is to have a ratio of one computer per five students within the next few years. I am sure that this news will be welcomed warmly at Watson Road State School, Calamvale State School and the others in my area that have been struggling to meet the high costs associated with the installation and maintenance of computers. Some schools have been reliant on P & C fundraising efforts to top up their computer

stocks. They have had to sell a lot of chocolates and raffle tickets in order to get those computers so this will be good news for them.

In Education we are also covering the basics, with the employment of several hundred more teachers. We are tackling the literacy and numeracy problem with more programs and staff. The Reading Recovery program in schools in my electorate is producing excellent results. I am rapt in the boost to these sorts of programs, because they assist kids and help them get on with their lives.

Residents on the south side of Brisbane will also benefit from the Mater Children's Hospital \$20.5m redevelopment and the allocation of more police to the Metro South region. Police often cop a lot of flak for being late to break and enters or other jobs. I can say with confidence that the police at Acacia Ridge and other stations servicing my area do their best and cooperate well with schools and community groups. They need more officers to give them an even better capacity to combat crime.

I will be knocking on the Police Minister's door to get a fair share of this allocation to Metro South. I will be doing the ministerial rounds to go into bat for facilities and projects that we missed out on in this Budget. We need increased road funding to ease congestion along Granard Road at Rocklea and Johnson Road alongside Hillcrest and Forestdale. We also need some very creative strategies to get more heavy vehicles using the southern bypass road rather than local roads.

I will also continue to lobby for a bigger injection of funds into our State anti-drug and crime prevention strategies. The two issues are intrinsically linked. We cannot deal with drugs and crime separately; we have to deal with them together. We need to be tough on the causes of crime as well as crime itself. It is heartening to see a greater focus on crime prevention in this Budget.

The other problem that parents have raised with me is that something has to be done to help the 12 to 16 year old age group who are at risk—the kids who are living on the streets, who leave home and wag school, many of whom get into drugs. I have spoken to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care about this problem. She is also keen to protect these kids from harm. I will be snapping at her heels throughout the year to make sure that these young people and

their families get adequate support early on, not when it is too late.

I will be putting in a big effort to make sure that the concerns of residents, many of which require Federal funding, are addressed. People complain to me about the long waiting lists at the QE II Hospital for dental support. We have to do better in that regard. It is a shame that the Federal Government pulled out of the dental assistance scheme. We are having to fill the gaps—put in the fillings—and we cannot do it alone. We need Federal support.

In my area we also need sound barriers along Riawena Road. Again, that is part of the national highway network, but the Federal Government is not coming to the party. I will also be putting in a big effort to make sure that our Smart State vision is successful and to make sure that we maintain smart suburbs in the Archerfield electorate.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (9.54 p.m.): I wish to pay tribute to the honourable member for Kallangur for his contribution earlier in this debate. He highlighted the serious problem for the residents who live in the outer metropolitan areas, some of whom have become marginalised, especially because of the skills level they have attained. This is disturbing, as Australia's economic growth record in the nineties is amongst the best in the OECD.

Over the six years of the current economic upswing, output growth has averaged about 3.5%. In the 1990s Australia's productivity growth has doubled the growth of the 1980s and beaten that of most other developed countries. The point is this: currently Australia is enjoying a sustained economic upturn. The growth figures for Queensland were remarkable. This year's Budget shows further growth but at a lesser pace. Nevertheless, there will be growth. With an inflation rate of only 1%, that is understandable. But reliable economists indicate that next year there may be an increase in interest rates to moderate the growth that has currently been experienced. Certainly, after the introduction of the GST and most assuredly after the Olympics there will be a downturn in economic activity.

With the unemployment rate at 7%, there are some people who will have been unemployed during the entire time of this economic upswing and who therefore face little or no prospect of being able to gain employment if the economy contracts. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Federal Government in particular to ensure that when it is doing its taxation review it considers

measures such that people are not caught in a social security trap whereby it is easier to stay on social security benefits than it is to join the work force. Regrettably, there are people on low incomes with large families who are unable to find work because of the economic disincentive to do so. It is critical that there is sufficient funding for training for unemployed people.

I commend the work of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, the Honourable Paul Braddy, and his dedicated officers for the work they undertook to identify the real problems that people had in accessing training opportunities in the Logan West area—something that the previous Government would never have done. Within several months of my bringing the problem to the attention of the department, we had a flexi-learning centre at which students are encouraged to upgrade their computer skills so that they can find work within the retail and business sectors in the Logan West area.

More than 100 students have been able to avail themselves of that opportunity. People living in the Logan West area who faced a real danger of falling behind in the new technological age have now been given a real opportunity locally to ensure that they can participate in this period of transition we are going through.

The precise figures as at September 1999 for the Certificates 2 and 3 in Business, Office Administration, were as follows: 97 students enrolled, with about five new enrolments per week. Three recent graduates have obtained employment. In respect of Certificates 1 and 2 in Retail Operations, 21 students were enrolled, and there are about two new enrolments per week. Three current students have permanent jobs.

The Honourable Barry Jones identified this period of transition—post industrialism—as being the information age, and he did so about 15 years ago. The information age has created more wealth faster than ever—\$8 trillion since 1995. Professor Lester Thurow—and I am indebted to an article by Paul Sheehan for these figures—indicates that more American billionaires have been created in the past 15 years than in all America's previous history combined. Thurow compared the 1990s with the 1890s, when electricity was the new creation. It was the agent for change. He gives the following simple example. The lighting that is currently produced by a 33c light bulb would have cost \$1,445 in 1883. Unfortunately, what this information age is doing, as any economic transition does, is

producing winners and losers—the skilled and the unskilled, the city and the country, and between areas within cities. It is this Government's job to ensure that we are carrying those people left behind and looking after them; that we are reaching out and caring for them and making sure that they are carried along with us.

I also want to commend the work being done by the Greenbank Returned & Services League in my electorate in a partnership with TAFE Queensland to make sure that students and people wanting jobs in the hospitality sector are being given the opportunity to gain them. I recently had the opportunity of opening the new hospitality training facilities in the Logan West area. And why would they want to do that? Because this is not pitched at the big end of town; it is not pitched at the five-star hotel people; rather, it is pitched at services clubs, of which we have a major one employing over 270 people. We have a number of hotels and taverns in the area, a number of snack bars and small corner stores, all of which offer hospitality services.

There are skills shortages in the hospitality sector. The largest growth prediction in occupations where there are skills shortages are: in kitchen hands, which is 27%; cooks, 17%; bar attendants, 12%; and wait staff, 26%. There is an acute shortage of chefs, particularly with Asian cookery skills and in patisseries. Workforce 20/20 estimates that there will be a shortage of 8,500 chefs next year alone.

The services club, in partnership with TAFE Queensland, is doing its level best to provide the people who live in the Logan West area, north Beaudesert and the southern outskirts of Brisbane with every opportunity to participate in that process. Eighteen students are enrolled in Certificate 2 in Hospitality. One has already gained employment. There is a waiting list of 24 already for the next course in October.

What the Government has done in this Budget is most creative in fashioning and directing Queensland towards the Smart State, because information technology is also where the growth is. We have every prospect of being the Smart State and, when one looks at Australia's performance and intellectual capacity, it is truly remarkable. For example, if one looks at the number of Nobel prizes awarded to OECD countries, one finds that from the years 1901 to 1997, Australia has produced seven Nobel laureates. That might seem an unremarkable number, but when one looks at an industrial giant such as Japan, one

finds that Japan produced eight over the same period. So on a per capita basis, we are miles in front. One of those Nobel laureates was Queenslander Peter Doherty, who excelled in medical science.

According to an American journal published last year, Australia ranked eighth out of the 29 OECD member countries in terms of total production of scientific papers. When this figure was compared with the GDP in 1995, Australian ranked ninth out of the OECD countries—still a truly remarkable performance, but one that is not often appreciated.

People are often derided for their intellectual skills. In terms of the percentage of the total scientific and technical articles published, Australia is at 2.2%, well in front of Switzerland at 1.3%. Switzerland is regarded as one of those countries that is quite progressive, intellectually based and has fine products. Yet Australia simply outranks it in terms of the number of scientific papers that we publish. The Smart State understands this and seeks to take advantage of it.

We must avoid being consigned to being an importer of smart products and not an exporter. If we consign ourselves to that, we will be condemning ourselves to a lower standard of living. We cannot simply continue to buy dear and sell cheap. This has been our history up until we started to realise that we were slipping behind. I believe very firmly that in the past 15 or so years, we have developed a very strong export capability and export culture in this country.

The durability of our export culture was seen and graphically demonstrated in the waterfront dispute when the dispute's impact, according to the Minister for Trade, Tim Fischer, was minor. Mr Fischer was right because the bulk of the value in our exports, that is high value added goods and services, was unaffected by the waterfront dispute. Certainly bulk cargoes were affected; I will not walk away from that. But the high value added products are exported by air and continue to be so.

I can recall the then Premier, Mr Borbidge, and the then Industrial Relations Minister, Mr Santoro, saying how Queensland would grind to a halt. They simply missed the point that smart products are not exported by ship. It was taken for granted because the then Government was locked into the mind-set that all our high volume, high value added products went out by ship. It is this mind-set that this Budget seeks to redress. It does so in a very tangible and meaningful way. Let us examine that.

The Budget allocates \$20m for major new biotechnology research centres as part of a \$270m biotechnology strategy. There is record education funding, which is 3.6% higher. Within that funding there is a commitment of \$23.4m to provide computers in schools, a total of \$61m to be provided over four years to provide the technical infrastructure for the development of information technology skills. There is \$2.6m to equip Queensland's workforce with IT & T skills through TAFE. There is \$3m as part of the Government's \$10m investment in supercomputing technology for the University of Queensland. There is \$3.3m towards the Government's \$13.9m investment in Queensland cooperative research centres and \$8m towards a \$17m electronic service delivery strategy to provide more integrated and responsive services to the community. These, along with the other infrastructure packages, are so vital to my electorate of Logan, as well as to Logan City, the southern Brisbane outskirts and also, just as importantly, regional Queensland. In a State where most of the people live outside the capital city, regional centres must be well serviced by services and capital works infrastructure.

We must focus on the fact that the Government, through this Budget, has set about positioning Queensland well for the next century when information technology will continue to explode. What sorts of impacts can we confidently expect information technology will have on our lives? I instance these examples: research into information technology can be compared with the introduction of electricity, the internal combustion engine or the 1860s with the expansion of railways and the telegraph. All of these booms historically have produced surges in rates of productivity and declines in wholesale prices.

Economic activity at the moment is surging around the Internet sector, with an extra 30,000 jobs being generated for technology professionals over the coming year and companies engaged in multi-billion dollar investments in fibre optics, micro processors, lasers and other technology of the digital transformation of commerce, education, health care, communications and management. I will cite just one insight into how these things are going. According to Fortune Magazine, On-Line Auction House EA was founded in 1995 with a net 1998 revenue of \$47m. It is worth almost as much—that is, \$24 billion—as the banking powerhouse J. P. Morgan, which was founded in 1870, with a pre-tax 1998 income of \$1.4 billion. The companies leading the

Internet revolution are spending vast amounts of money buying their share of cyberspace.

Rather than criticise past Governments for their inability to pick these trends—I cannot criticise Governments; the private sector has produced its own clangers—I refer to the famous quote of IBM in 1943 when it confidently predicted that there would be a world market for only five home-based computers. It was the same story when Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs took their prototype PC to Hewlett Packard and they were told, "We don't need you. You haven't got through college yet." The PC they built changed the world and gave rise to Apple, Microsoft, Compaq and Dell.

To give an insight into what the Internet may mean for shopping, I cite the example of the Amazon company. In 1998, Amazon sold US\$610m worth of books, videos and CDs. It had 10 million customers and 60% repeat business. It is only four years old and has yet to spend a cent on a shop fitting. The great irony is this: Amazon has never coined a profit yet the stock market says that it is worth more than \$US20 billion and it has increased in value 45 times in two years.

The consultancy group Forresters estimates that Internet sales to consumers will total \$108 billion in 2003, yet that is dwarfed by the vast potential of business-to-business commerce. Forresters estimates that by 2003 business-to-business Internet sales will total \$1.3 trillion.

The Internet allows companies to do things better. Electronic tendering and payment make it vastly easier to source and pay for supplies. Instant data transfers simplify accounting and cash flow management. For example, this year IBM will sell \$15 billion worth of goods and services over the Internet. Last year that figure was \$3.3 billion. It expects 28 million customers to use its support web page, shaving \$600m off its costs. Buying \$12 billion worth of supplies via the web saves dealing with five million paper invoices. Last year IBM made more money from the web than all of the 25 specialist Internet companies combined.

This Budget sets the scene for Queenslanders to attain the skills that will be necessary for interacting in the new millennium. The examples I have given dispel the notion that globalisation is some sort of new force. In fact, it has been with us ever since Captain Cook set sail. It is just that in the past 20 years it has gathered pace.

This is a good Budget because it has set the parameters for the State. It maintains

Queensland business advantage of being a low-tax State, providing services within the taxpayer's ability to pay, and at the same time gives Queensland a competitive edge over the other States. For that reason I support the Budget and commend it to the House.

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (10.12 p.m.): Before I say some nasty things about the Budget I will say a couple of pleasant things. As they say, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." I do not know that I can follow that advice, but there are a couple of things I want to say about the Budget.

I am interested to see an ongoing commitment to the Queensland Centre for Climate Applications, which was an initiative of the coalition Government. I think it is very important that that has bipartisan support, and it seems to have that. Both sides of politics acknowledge just how important it is.

Farmers, graziers and people all around the State—and around Australia as a whole, for that matter—are starting to understand better the service provided by this centre. I am not saying that the information produced is highly accurate, but it is certainly another tool for farmers to use. They can look at trends over the past 100 years, or whatever period has been able to be extrapolated.

A few years ago the Deputy Leader of the National Party and I went to a seminar conducted by then Minister, Howard Hobbs, relating to the area of climate applications. We looked at and went through the system. The member for Warwick has always been good with computers and we were let loose on them at lunchtime. We played around with the system instead of having lunch one day. We came to the conclusion that conditions at that time were similar in many respects to some of the worst years for farming on the Darling Downs and southern downs in particular.

As a result, I took the decision to not plant anything and not put any fertiliser in. I was not in a very good position to put it in at the time anyway. In the end I finished about \$25,000 better off. People might say that it would be better to go to the casino and have a bit of a punt because I might pull off a win down there, too. I think using climate applications systems in an educated way probably gives better odds. I believe that these systems do have a use. I believe that they will improve the understanding of climate and I think over time the percentage of correct predictions will increase. I think the Minister for Primary Industries does have his heart in the right

place. I think he is a reasonable person who is trying to do the right thing.

I have to admit that, with accrual accounting, I am having some difficulty coming to grips with the figures, as I am sure are a lot of other people. I have a bit of an understanding of it from my experience as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. There were a few accountants there who were able to give us some sort of an understanding of accrual accounting. I probably understand it better than some people, but I am certainly not finding it easy to look at portfolio areas and make comparisons with previous years and understand exactly what it all means.

I have gleaned that this is a negative Budget. I think organisations with the clout of Standard and Poor's are very clearly indicating to the people of Queensland that in the long term this Budget has a negative application and we are going to see deficit budgeting to the tune of probably \$1.2 billion. That is not a very happy state of affairs.

For a number of years, many of us on this side of the House fiercely resisted the imposition of a fuel tax in this State. A lot of us walked over hot coals in order to stop the very few people who saw a fuel tax as a good milking cow and who felt that it was a way to bring revenue into Treasury and thereby perhaps put some more money into education, health, police and so on. We resisted that because we believed that it would have a very negative impact in this State, particularly on those people who can least afford it. It is interesting to look at what the Federal Labor Government did in respect of leaded and unleaded petrol. It attacked its own supporters in the bush.

Those out there in the bush who use leaded petrol are mostly in the lower socioeconomic groups within society—whether it be property owners who are doing it pretty tough, shearers, contract workers or people who live in town and have to commute to other towns and so on. Honourable members would find that in the main these people are still driving vehicles that run on leaded petrol. There is a huge impost on them in respect of the cost of their fuel. That was brought about by a Labor Government. It was thought that that measure would reduce air pollution, but it seems that perhaps the dramas associated with unleaded fuel were underestimated. One wonders just what the outcome will be.

I believe that this Budget builds the empires of the Premier and acting Treasurer and the Deputy Premier. Their areas should be compared with other areas that are in

desperate need. The Forde inquiry recommended a massive injection of money to try to do something about child abuse. Those on the Labor side of politics always profess to be the champions of these causes. Here they have the opportunity to do something about the issue and what has happened? The Government has put the money into grandiose empire building in the portfolios of the Premier and the Deputy Premier and has almost completely neglected this issue. If my memory serves me correctly, the Forde inquiry report recommended expenditure of around \$105m. The provision is about \$10m, if they are lucky. That does not really say much for this Government's priorities and its so-called bleeding heart group, who are always saying how terrible things are.

That reminds me of the Attorney-General. We used to call him the old hypocrite, because he was always talking about civil libertarians and the dramas and the disasters. As Attorney-General, he presided over some of the most anti-democratic cover-ups of various problems in Government. I find it amazing how hypocritical some people can be. Before they come into this place they are full of wonderful ideologue attitudes; they are going to change the world. But when they get here, their true colours show through.

I also find it very interesting that the acting Treasurer is trying to take all the kudos, as though this so-called Smart State was his idea. Let me refer to history in Queensland and look at what really happened. The person who should take a lot of the credit for setting Queensland in a different direction was Mike Ahern as Technology Minister under then Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen. He did some really good work, particularly with satellites and that sort of thing. He was instrumental in bringing about the early stages of the use of satellites here in Queensland. We actually contributed our own money—State money—to subsidise that program, which was then continued by Premier Russell Cooper. Then we lost Government in 1989. Fortunately, the next Premier, the Honourable Wayne Goss, continued the program.

It really does get up my nose a bit that this Premier acts as though he is some sort of Messiah who has just discovered all of this and is basically inventing the wheel for the first time. The Honourable Wayne Goss was certainly responsible for continuing that program. He put a lot of work into it. And then it was continued by the coalition Government. So this is not something new. It was a well-thought-out strategy that was started by Mike Ahern and continued by Russell Cooper and

then the Honourable Wayne Goss. It really does no-one any credit to try to take the kudos for some of these programs. Do not get me wrong. I applaud what the Premier is doing. But we should all just get on with the job, instead of trying to score cheap political points. Anyone with any brains can see that this is the way to go.

If anyone wants a good example of what has been going on for years, they should visit the USQ, the University of Southern Queensland. It has been doing a lot of work on the use of the Internet. Through its program of bringing foreign students into this State, without a doubt it is the biggest provider of distance education in Australia. No other university in Australia can compare to it.

Mr Swarten: I think that's an overstatement.

Mr ELLIOTT: No, it is not.

Mr SCHWARTEN: CQU would be a good comparison. "There is no comparison", you said. I think that's an overstatement.

Mr ELLIOTT: If the Minister has a look at the statistics, he will find that the USQ is way ahead of every other university. It has been at it for longer than any other university.

Mr Swarten: You said, "There is no comparison." I think that's an overstatement.

Mr ELLIOTT: I am not saying that the CQU is not doing good work, but I am saying that the University of Southern Queensland is the leader. It has been at it the longest.

As I said, this is not something that has just been invented. This has been going on for a number of years. We should all support it. We should not play politics with it. We should all get behind it and work to ensure that it continues, because that is where our future lies. If we are going to continue to maintain our wages structures, our 17.5% loadings, our four weeks' annual leave, all the public holidays which people obviously want to take, and so on, members should not think for a minute that we can compete, in terms of wages costs and unit costs, with factories in Asia and some of those other developing countries. We have to be smarter in technology. The only way in which we can compete is by being smarter. Surely all members would understand that. But as I said, it gets up my nose that the Premier comes in here acting as though he were the Messiah who has just invented it all.

Mr Swarten interjected.

Mr ELLIOTT: What was that?

Mr Swarten: Those airconditioners—you didn't give me any credit for that.

Mr ELLIOTT: I have not got that far into my speech yet.

Mr Schwarten: I just wanted to remind you.

Mr ELLIOTT: I will touch on that now, if the Minister likes. He should sit there and listen for a second. As he well knows, I have been pushing for that for some time. We got a promise from the former Premier to do the very thing that is now about to be done. Unfortunately, we lost Government, so we were not in a position to be able to fulfil it. I do not care who puts it in there. Quite frankly, it is of no great relevance to me. All I am interested in is ensuring that kids are not disadvantaged. They are sitting in 104 or 105 degrees heat in summer—

Mr Schwarten: They are in Rocky, too, you know.

Mr ELLIOTT: Yes. They probably need airconditioning there as well. I have no argument with that. All we have to do is single out those areas that need it the most.

Mr Schwarten: There's not a place that doesn't need it, though.

Mr ELLIOTT: I would debate that. I do not believe that some of the schools in Toowoomba at the top of the range where the breeze is good—

Mr Schwarten: They need centralised heating, though.

Mr ELLIOTT: Maybe they do.

Mr Schwarten: That is their argument.

Mr ELLIOTT: Yes.

Mr Schwarten: It's dearer to heat than it is to cool.

Mr ELLIOTT: Their problems can be fixed probably for a lot less than the cost of airconditioning some of those other schools. But that is beside the point. I do not wish to waste my time debating this with the Minister.

I am always pleased to see these things. I take this opportunity to say that I am pleased that Clifton is going to get an ambulance centre. That has been needed for a long time. I am also pleased that funding has been made available for the Cecil Plains to Toowoomba road, which is on the border of my electorate and partly in the electorate of my colleague the member for Crows Nest. With the closure of the railway to Cecil Plains, we have seen a massive increase in the number of trucks using that road, and this has caused great deterioration of that road. Over the years, with the assistance of Peter Taylor, the Mayor of the Jondaryan Shire, a lot of

work, effort and money on the part of the coalition State Government has gone into that road to get it to a pretty good standard. I am pleased to see another \$2.58m or something like that going into that road. That will be a help at least.

When one looks at this Budget overall, quite frankly, this is the first time since I have been a member of this place that I have seen a downturn in real terms from what we have all worked for, namely, to ensure that Queensland was the low-tax State; that we balanced our books and our Budget; that we did not have a Budget that was in deficit; and that we did not spend more money than we had. It appears to me that, for the first time, we have turned the corner and headed south. And that is probably an apt description, because it is a bit like what happened to Bannon, Kirner and all those others in the southern States who got into a lot of trouble. It took Kennett to straighten out the Victorian mess.

I am not delighted with the Budget. As I said, I am pleased to see some aspects of it, particularly the Centre for Climate Applications. But I am amazed to see this downturn. When making comparisons between last year and this year, the Government says, "We are spending as much money as we did last year." But if we have a \$360m budget in a particular department, for argument's sake, and it gets \$360m in the following year, that represents a decrease of about 4%. If we take inflation into account, we have to have something a little over 1% on each \$100m. As a result, it has to increase by at least \$1m, if not \$2m.

Compared with last year, the amount for this year is down by some \$4m. I find it hard to see how the vital services we need in the area of primary industries are going to be delivered. I do not know how the people involved will be able to do their jobs properly. I find it absolutely incomprehensible that the acting Treasurer and his deputy are featherbedding their own departments. I do not know what the other Cabinet Ministers were doing when they were going through the Budget round. They must be short of backbone because they have not been trying to ensure that the money went in the right direction. Not enough regard was had to the recommendations of the Forde inquiry.

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.31 p.m.): History will record the Beattie Labor Government's Budget handed down this week as marking a turning point for Queensland. History will record that, at the very end of the 20th century, the Labor Party laid

the foundation to transform Queensland from a quarry and a farm into a technological and intellectual hub of the South-East Asia region.

Unlike the coalition, which continues to live in the past, the Labor Party recognises that the industries of tomorrow are the knowledge-based industries. We are committed to making Queensland the Smart State by providing strategies and strategic investments that will develop Queensland's human capital with record expenditure on education and training programs to buy skills, knowledge and attitudes required in the information economy. It will nurture emerging knowledge-based industries such as biotechnology through historic investment in the research infrastructure of Queensland. It will promote the development of the communications and information industry to provide sustainable, highly valued employment. It will develop an industry culture focused on innovation and the production and adaptation of our research and knowledge for commercial purposes through cooperative research centres and technology incubators. It will foster culture expression which brings new audiences together, and expand the access to new ideas through the use of interactive multimedia technologies. Finally, it will enhance the effectiveness of Government service delivery to Queenslanders through the use of new technologies.

In Wednesday's Courier-Mail, John Wanna, the Associate Professor of Politics at Griffith University, described the strategy as a brave political gamble. He said—

"Peter Beattie is taking a calculated political risk in his mid-term Budget. He has chosen to invest long-term in knowledge-based jobs in the future—hoping to pick winners and lay the foundation of a future jobs boom.

Politicians are often attacked for reacting only to the immediate concerns of the day. This Budget is anything but a knee-jerk response. It pushes the political agenda out to 10 to 20 years and advocates a new 'industry policy' commitment to sunrise technologies. As Beattie argued, the Budget 'propels Queensland into the New Age'. Hype perhaps, but the Premier should be applauded for having the courage of his convictions and having a go."

Risky it may be, but it is a risk that Queensland cannot afford not to take if we want to be a prosperous State in the next century.

The Labor Budget will also be regarded as a turning point for regional Queensland

because, for the first time, more than half of the \$5.2 billion capital works budget will be spent outside the south-east corner of the State. Similarly, over half of the current record \$5.3 billion five-year Roads Implementation Plan will be spent in the regions. There is also \$10m for a new Regional Centres program to bring new life to cities outside the metropolitan area.

The distribution of resources is a recognition on the part of the Government that the wealth of the State's economy as a whole is dependent upon the health of the regional economies. Also, and most importantly, the Government recognises that the people living in the State's regions are those best placed to identify and prioritise the issues relevant to their communities, and \$7.5m has been provided to support the eight ministerial regional forums that facilitate this process. I attended the first community forum in Cairns earlier this year, and I am looking forward to the Government's response at the next forum to the issues and ideas that were raised in Cairns.

As other members have pointed out this afternoon, it is a Budget that will continue to create jobs. Some 41,000 jobs are predicted to be created as a result of this Budget, bringing our unemployment level down to some 7.75% and on target to meet our 5% unemployment rate.

The success of the Government's Budget strategy in Cairns has been recognised by community leaders. The headline in the Cairns Post on Wednesday summed up the situation—"Budget Good for the North". It went on to outline the projects that confirm the Government's commitment to the Cairns region. I might highlight some of those big Budget items, namely: \$30m for the Cairns tilt trains; \$13.5m to expand Lotus Glen prison; \$12.47m for the Cairns Port Authority; \$13.2m for public housing; \$9.2m for the further development of the Cairns Base Hospital; \$9m for the Esplanade redevelopment project; \$8.2m for the continuation of work on the Cairns Convention Centre basketball court; \$7m for the James Cook University Medical School to be shared between Cairns and Townsville; \$5.75m for the Wet Tropics Management Authority; \$4.9m for community health facilities; \$4.05m for the Manoora Urban and Community Project; and \$2.4m for work on the Bentley Park State High School at Edmonton. Those are just the big Budget items. There is a whole range of other things. No wonder the Leader of the Opposition—who is from the Gold Coast—complained that it is

all going to Cairns! But in fact it is not all going to Cairns.

Mr Cooper: It sounds like you are going pretty well.

Dr CLARK: We are going very well, but it is spread throughout the region—it is not just in Cairns. I do not mind admitting that we are doing very well, because this Government recognises the significance of far-north Queensland. The leaders of our community recognise that—as does the member for Crows Nest.

The next day the headlines continued to be positive—"Funds to Fire up FNQ". The newspaper reported as follows—

"The State Budget has delivered a shot of confidence to Cairns by maintaining funds for key inner city projects and overseas tourism promotion', business leaders said yesterday.

'The provision of ongoing funding for redevelopments of the Esplanade, Cityport Wharf area and the central business district could only be seen as a stimulus', Northern Industry Development Association chairman Russell Board said.

'We see these as keystone projects for Cairns—there's a lot at stake with them because they will have a big impact on the confidence of property developers,' Mr Board said.

'They will act as a very positive stimulus and will probably lead to further private investment.'"

That is something which this Government is aiming to achieve. The article continues—

"Cairns Mayor and Local Government Association of Queensland president Tom Pyne also welcomed the regional centre funds as well as increased funding for disaster management programs, and maintained spending in the key areas of roads, water and sewerage.

'It is a solid Budget for which the State Government should be congratulated,' Cr Pyne said."

It was wonderful to see Mayor Tom Pyne recognising the contribution that this Government has made. Mr Pyne has always been prepared to give credit where credit is due, and he has done that for the Government. The article goes on—

"Tourism Tropical North Queensland general manager Ian Kean said extra funds for overseas marketing would help

the region maintain its presence on the world stage."

The tourism industry in far-north Queensland is beginning to look up again after the difficult times of the Asian recession. This Budget will add to the confident air that is pervading Cairns at present.

With regard to the move to the Smart State, Russell Board said—

"It would be interesting to see to what extent the initiatives would impact on the Far North."

That is not an unreasonable comment, because the Government has invested \$20m this year on major new biotechnological research centres at the University of Queensland and at Griffith University as part of an ambitious \$270m 10-year plan to create thousands of New Age jobs. It is an interesting question and one that I want to address, because the foundation for the Smart State must be laid in our schools, and all schools—including schools in far-north Queensland—are going to be benefiting from that.

We know that computer technology is becoming increasingly integrated into every aspect of our daily lives, both at home and at work, and all students must and will be adequately prepared. Education Queensland's \$65m investment in information technology programs and equipment in this Budget will not only introduce our students to a borderless world of learning but also equip them with the essential skills that are required in the labour market of tomorrow. The Government's goal is a ratio of one computer for every five students—half the current ratio. The first milestone towards this strategy will be the achievement of a ratio of one to 7.5 by the year 2001.

The Government has developed a new network learning community initiative, which will provide \$40m over four years, beginning with \$5m this year, to enhance IT base learning through professional development for teachers and technical support for schools. This funding is in addition to the \$23.5m funding under the Schooling 2001 program for learning technology grants that each year are distributed directly to schools. I am particularly pleased to see a recognition of the need for additional support for technical maintenance and professional development in IT, because such issues have been raised with me when I have visited the schools in my electorate, which are really embracing IT and developing exciting, innovative programs.

Among those schools, of course, is the Smithfield State High School. The students have won awards for their work in this area. As I have talked about this issue already in this House, members might recall that last year the IT building at Smithfield State High School was burnt down. A new state-of-the-art building has just been completed. The other day I had a sneak preview of it. It certainly is an exciting building. Later on this year I will be going with the Minister for Education to open that building. In that regard, I certainly will be telling members of this House more about the exciting things that are happening at Smithfield State High School.

The Budget also recognised the role of vocational education and training in information technology, making Queensland the Smart State. TAFE has been allocated a record \$38.3m in capital expenditure for IT & T. TAFE in Cairns has been selected as one of four TAFE institutions to deliver new IT & T training programs. It will share in the \$2.6m allocated for that purpose.

Other evidence in far-north Queensland of the Government's commitment to making Queensland the Smart State is increased bandwidth services in the Brisbane to Cairns corridor to heighten competition with Telstra and reduce the current prohibitive cost of access to the Internet for the rapid transfer of data. That will be of enormous value to the Smithfield campus of the James Cook University for their research and teaching. Indeed, that access is essential for any serious research university and the initiative is very welcome.

Although the Government has committed its major effort to new biotechnology research at the University of Queensland and Griffith University, as I have indicated the Government has also recognised the potential of a technology precinct associated with the Cairns campus at JCU. Consultants will shortly begin work on a business plan that will be prepared to progress this concept. As the person who chairs the committee that is involved in that project, I can say that I have really been very encouraged by the support that I have been given both by the Parliamentary Secretary, Stephen Robertson, and the Minister, Jim Elder, in this regard.

As members would know, the Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Rainforest Ecology and Management is located on the Smithfield campus. We are looking forward to that becoming a world centre of excellence for rainforest and related environmental research. Other research and technology areas that

have been discussed for our region are health, agriculture and mining. All of those have the potential to generate commercial developments, jobs and revenue.

The next stage in the development of a technology precinct at Smithfield could be the establishment of an incubator. These high-impact facilities foster the commercialisation of new technologies by creating a supportive and instructive environment for entrepreneurs. I visited Adelaide and Perth to see for myself first-hand how incubators can lead to exciting commercial developments in exports. I have already signalled to the Minister for State Development, Jim Elder, that I am keen to progress our technology precinct plans in next year's Budget.

The Government is also supporting to the tune of \$250,000 the Cairns Regional Economic Development Corporation to enable it to continue to support our industry clusters, including our very strong IT cluster. In fact, I have just received an invitation to launch the new company that they have formed called Cairns Infotech Enterprises. One of their exciting projects is a CBD touch screen, which will be part of the revitalisation program for the Cairns CBD.

New information technologies can expand our cultural activities. Cairns has a small but growing group of people developing skills in multimedia. Arts Queensland will be supporting this development by funding a digital multimedia lab in Cairns for artists and multimedia developers. I am looking forward to working with local groups to progress that concept, because it obviously has some very exciting potential. It should be clear by now that Cairns is ready to play its part in making Queensland the Smart State. We will be making good use of all of the opportunities that are provided in this Budget.

In the time remaining, I would like to conclude by referring to specific allocations in the Budget that will be particularly welcomed by the Barron River electorate. Firstly, I would like to touch on educational matters. The Freshwater, Trinity Beach and Edge Hill schools will be taking advantage of the airconditioning subsidies that are available. Work worth \$743,000 will be carried out to make learning and teaching more effective and enjoyable this summer.

I will ensure that my schools will benefit from the \$50m Building Better Schools program. I will be supporting Smithfield State High School in its bid to get the school repainted. In fact, the exterior of the school has not been painted since it was built in

1983. At this point, I would like to take the opportunity to commend Larry Gallagher, the principal, and his staff for the excellent work that they are doing. Some public schools have a leakage of students to private schools. However, I am very pleased to say that the reverse is occurring at Smithfield State High School.

I will also be working with the new Kuranda State High School, which has identified in its facilities development plan that it would like to have a community hall that could be utilised by both the school and the community. We will be looking at ways in which we can apply for Government subsidies to progress that initiative. Although Redlynch school is not in my electorate—at least not until after the next election—I will be working with Desley Boyle to ensure that plans for a new administration block, an extension to its resource centre and preschool, are all progressed in next year's Budget.

Police resources in Barron River have been very well catered for. Last year we had a boost by having a Police Beat at Trinity Beach and four extra officers appointed to the Smithfield Police Station. I would like to put the Police Minister on notice that I will be discussing with him the next Police Beat, which I would like to see at Holloways Beach. I have also been discussing with him the need to provide an extra car and an Aboriginal police liaison officer at Kuranda, as well as police accommodation there.

Kuranda is in great need of further Aboriginal housing. Unfortunately, they missed out on funds last year, but they have a community housing project in relation to which I will be doing some lobbying, because I believe that they are pretty close to the top of the priority list. I hope that they are going to be successful this year. No doubt along with the Housing Minister, Robert Schwarten, I will enjoy opening 10 seniors units shortly in Smithfield—the first ever seniors units in that region. In fact, when I last tried to have seniors units constructed in my electorate, there was an enormous community backlash. As a result, the seniors suffered. However, I am glad to say that we are now getting those seniors units.

Transport is a key issue in my electorate. I have been very pleased with the progress that has been made. Just last week, I was with the Minister at the opening of the \$21m Redlynch deviation. Certainly, there are problems in my electorate, and it would be wrong of me not to recognise those problems. However, I am glad to say that, starting in the school holidays,

some \$140,000 of work will be done to upgrade a problem intersection at Hartley Street and Kamerunga Road to make it safer for parents and students of the Peace Lutheran College.

Mr Johnson: A 50% cut in your road funding—do you endorse that?

Dr CLARK: I can tell the member that road funding for the Barron River electorate is spot-on. We are doing great things.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Dr CLARK: As the shadow Transport Minister knows, there will also be a need next year for a major project regarding the Kuranda Range road study, which will be reporting to the Government next August. Certainly we will be needing to think about putting funding in next year's Budget to help us progress those planning studies.

Work will be progressing on the Smithfield shopping centre transit hub, which I am really pleased about because it will be of benefit to everyone using public transport in my electorate. In terms of the environment, a State marine park is going to be gazetted later this year. Management money will be going into that marine park to improve the management of our coastal resources. Work totalling some \$1m will be done at the Barron River National Park for visitor infrastructure, which I have been working very hard to develop. There will be boardwalks and other infrastructure so that visitors can find their way to see the various exciting attributes of that park. The Smithfield Conservation Park will be gazetted later this year. We will be looking forward to developing a management plan for that.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority received funding of \$5.79m. It has been working very hard in developing projects that it is hoping will be funded through the Heritage Trails Network. That is going to be a very important project in many of the Wet Tropics areas in far-north Queensland if the infrastructure there is to be improved. To that end, the authority has been working very closely with all the local authorities.

Cassowaries has been a very important issue. I am glad to say that there is going to be an increase in funding to develop our recovery plan to employ a conservation officer. That officer will be dedicated to working with the community groups that are doing excellent work on the ground.

I have been working very closely with the local government to develop sports in my electorate. I am going to encourage the Cairns

City Council to apply for funding through the grants that are available to provide a regional facility for skateboarding and rollerblading—something for the teenagers in my electorate. Often they are the ones who miss out. Our parks often have things for the little ones to play on, but we need BMX tracks, skateboarding facilities and lots of other things for teenagers as part of our prevention of crime strategy.

Everyone in the Barron River electorate will benefit from the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital and the increase in HACC funding. Also I want to ensure that the community health centre at Smithfield continues to provide good service. I will be seeking to upgrade dental health services there in response to the growing demand.

One can see that there are lots of positive things happening in the far north and, particularly, in the Barron River electorate. I will continue to work very hard with my communities to ensure that they continue to benefit from the Budget that this Government has provided. I commend the Minister and the Premier for all their good work.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (10.50 p.m.): It is with a sense of regret that I rise tonight to speak on the Appropriation Bills. However, I will speak primarily about the budget of the Departments of Transport and Main Roads. There are certainly a few negatives in that budget. I have just heard the member for Barron River mentioning all the good things that she has been able to attract to the electorate of Barron River. However, the Main Roads budget for northern Queensland has been cut by some 50%.

When one looks at the Budget as it affects the whole State, Moreton and Brisbane have done pretty well out of the Main Roads budget, but the rest of the State has missed out. Of course, the Premier and the Minister have had much to say about their record of spending in this portfolio. However, the truth is that, as the *Courier-Mail* has found to its embarrassment, the Government has failed the people of Queensland. There is no worse example of this than the Transport portfolio. This Government has failed the regional and rural communities in Queensland, which need investment in transport infrastructure if they are to develop socially and economically.

It is very evident that Labor does not have a Transport policy or a Main Roads policy. I see that the Deputy Premier is sitting in the Chamber this evening. In the lead-up to last year's State election, the Opposition of the

time, now the Labor Government, did not have a policy. The Government is currently running on the policy of the Borbidge coalition Government, although a few changes have been made. Last year's funding for the Roads Implementation Program has been increased by this Government from \$5.2 billion to \$5.3 billion, but otherwise it is just a re-run of our program. Policy is an important part of any Government's delivery, and this Government does not have a policy in relation to the Main Roads and Transport portfolios.

The reality is that this Budget has failed to deliver any new transport infrastructure for the State in coming years. Under the coalition, the State benefited from an emphasis on major infrastructure development. That was the backbone of our policy. Last year, our Transport and Main Roads policy—which provided \$2.18 billion for Main Roads projects—accounted for 43.18% of our capital works infrastructure programs, which created a lot of wealth and many jobs in the State. That emphasis meant that we were able to attract major contract expertise to the State. There is no better example of this than the Pacific Motorway project.

On the eve of the finalisation of the Pacific Motorway project, there are no major projects in the wind. As the project draws to a close, there are no major contracts on the horizon to keep major contract expertise in the State. I have spoken to major contractors and they are gravely concerned about the future of their operations and their employees. They are also concerned about the future of the productivity of the State in that area. The Minister has made much about this project and the number of people who are employed by it. I now ask the Minister: where are those people to find their next jobs? Unfortunately, the answer is not in this Budget.

The slashing of Transport funding in the Budget is nothing short of an act of treachery by the Beattie Labor Government. Last year, prior to the election the present Deputy Premier and former shadow Minister—and now I hear that he wants to be the Treasurer—ran around north Queensland promising roadworks all over the north. In this Budget, far-north Queensland pays the price for believing the Deputy Premier. It is also paying the price for the failure of its local representatives, who have been rolled by the touchy-feely social engineers who dominate this George Street Government. It has been abandoned by the Transport Minister himself, who has delivered a \$23m gutting of Transport funding in the far north. However, the situation gets worse.

The statistical region of Mackay has had its Transport allocation reduced from \$168m to just over \$96m, which is a reduction of 40%. Under the scalpel of the Minister for Transport, Mr Bredhauer, the allocation for the northern statistical region based on Townsville has been reduced from \$172m to \$76m, which is a reduction of 56%. The member for Townsville was obviously a big help to the north.

Unfortunately the member for Townsville and the Premier's Parliamentary Secretary to north Queensland is not in the Chamber this evening. Some short while ago he criticised the Darwin-Melbourne rail concept, which would have been a great advantage to the growth and future viability of this great State of ours. That project was about creating employment. The generation of that type of enterprise is certainly something that would be very well received, not only by the people of Queensland but the people of Australia generally. The member for Townsville was very critical of the project. Is it any wonder that he was on his feet yesterday trying to cover up on the Townsville Railway Station debacle? Where is the money for the upgrade that he promised? If members keep listening, they will find out. There is no chaff for the Townsville Railway Station in the Budget.

Last year's Budget allocation to the north-west was \$53m. With help from the Minister for Mines and Energy, the member for Mount Isa, that figure has been reduced to \$34m, which is a reduction of 36%. Here we go again! Thanks to John Anderson, we have the money for the Barkly Highway in north Queensland. The north-west minerals province is a wealth generator for the State and the nation, yet that region has received a 36% cutback in road funding.

I was interested to note that today the member for Mount Isa rushed out to the media to advise his constituents that the Budget has delivered funds for the completion of major roads in the north-west. Again, I thank God for John Anderson, who provided Federal funding for the Barkly Highway. It is just as well that the member for Mount Isa is satisfied with the completion of the roads now being undertaken, because it looks like he will not be getting any more for a long while.

When the Borbidge coalition Government was in power, we were looking for an extra \$350m to develop potential road infrastructure works throughout the State. We needed \$70m for the area between Townsville and Cairns alone, to upgrade sugar roads and fruit roads as a result of the growth and development that is occurring in that part of Queensland. We

needed about \$100m for the north-west minerals province. However, no such money has been provided in this Budget.

Mr Rowell: There is a lot of exciting development going on there. It's going to be stifled.

Mr JOHNSON: It is going to be absolutely crippled. We are trying to develop this State. A couple of days ago, the Government launched its Budget, saying that we are going to become the Smart State. There is no doubt that we are the Smart State. We are the best money managers in the Commonwealth. If we are going to make this State grow, we have to have good road, rail, port and air link infrastructure.

This evening the member for Logan delivered a fairly comprehensive speech that I felt had a lot of merit. He spoke about information technology. And I note that the member for Barron River spoke about biotechnology. The member for Logan also spoke about the export culture and export by air. That is a great concept. Queensland is a diversified State. In every nook and cranny of the State there is primary production. We can get that produce to our ports only via road or rail infrastructure. It is absolutely paramount that we have top quality road and rail infrastructure. That is something on which the Borbidge Government placed emphasis. However, this Government is cutting road funding by some \$170m. It does not see road funding as a priority.

Mr Cooper: I would be pretty concerned about the Darling Downs.

Mr JOHNSON: My colleague the honourable member for Crows Nest mentioned the Darling Downs. Last year, road funding for the Darling Downs totalled \$69.89m. This year the budget is \$26.6m. It has experienced a cut of 60% in its road budget. The Government has cut the roads budget by nearly two-thirds in the agricultural base of south-east Queensland.

As my time is running out, I turn to the central-west, which has been spared somewhat. That must be because of good representation. Its budget has come back from \$30m to \$28m. It has lost only a couple of million dollars. My good friend the member for Fitzroy is in the Chamber. Perhaps he should start a new picket line over the transport funding for the Fitzroy region, because that funding has been cut from \$235m under the coalition Government to \$133m under his Labor mates. It is a good thing they are his mates and not his enemies! \$100m has been taken out of the heart of central Queensland's

road infrastructure program. Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the former coalition Government introduced coalmining and electrification into that area of Queensland, which has been the wealth generator of this State for many years. That area and the north-west mineral province, which are probably the two most important areas of this State, have been set back severely because of cuts to road infrastructure funding.

In the south-west region transport spending is down from \$26m to almost \$15m—a 43% reduction. As expected, Labor has delivered a kick in the guts for the Darling Downs, which I mentioned a moment ago. Do honourable members remember the good people of the Wide Bay region? They have been abandoned by Labor, with funding in that fast-growing area cut from \$195m to \$162m—more than 16%.

We now come to the Moreton region, and this is interesting. This is the home of the stood aside Treasurer. Obviously, he got to the papers early and has increased the funding for his region from \$243m to \$324m—an increase of almost \$81m on the coalition allocation last year. But the champion bushranger title goes to the frugal Scotsman himself, the acting Treasurer, who must have sharpened the pencil to try to bail out his mate, our friend, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Jim Soorley, with a massive \$1.4 billion for Brisbane. That is up \$152m on Labor's allocation last year and up \$202m on the coalition allocation.

On a Statewide basis, total funding to the Department of Main Roads has been decreased by almost \$150m. Roads capital funding has been reduced by \$174m. This is in spite of what the Government points to as an increase in total funding. What has happened to all of this money? Similar to everything else it does, this is another deception by the Beattie Government. This is all smoke and mirrors. It has introduced the Beattie stealth tax, and Main Roads is one of the biggest victims. The equity return of almost \$800m has been added in at the top, with more being subtracted at the bottom. We now have a Main Roads Department that is costing more but delivering less.

What is this equity tax all about? The Premier's idea is that all public servants are bad managers and have not been squeezing enough money out of the taxpayers. The Government requires departments to pay a 6% tax on property that they are holding. What are the departments to do? Their first choice would be to sell their holdings so that they do not have to pay this tax. Is this what the

Premier wants them to do? The Premier should think about the consequences. What would a fire sale of Government owned land do for property values around the State? It is little wonder Standard and Poor's is worried. I think other people are also worried. Plenty of honourable members on this side of the House are worried.

What is the Premier's record in handling Government owned land in this State? Recently, the Premier gave millions of dollars in Government land to the Lord Mayor so that the Brisbane/Valley bypass, which dissects his electorate, could proceed. It was given nine blocks of land along that route so that the bypass could be built. Perhaps other departments could do something like that as well and give away taxpayers' land. Is that what being a smart Government is all about?

That land is being subjected to the Beattie stealth tax. Most of the land held by Main Roads is for strategic transport corridors that have been reserved for the future economic development of our State. Of course, a significant portion of the land purchased at a premium for Main Roads was for the koala tunnel. I can assure honourable members that that proposal is not dead and buried; we have not seen the sale of that land. Does this Premier want this land sold at a loss? Is that what being a Smart State is all about?

The truth is that Main Roads cannot do a Beattie and give it away because no-one wants it. Why? Because a lot of people do not believe that Labor has forgotten the idea of building that corridor. This Budget should reassure these people, because it does not look like this Government intends to building anything. The way things are going it looks like it will never be able to build anything.

The same sorry story is also true of the Queensland Transport budget. Labor is pumping in more and more money to try to fix the customer service bungle it has created. It is not just me who is saying that customer service delivery by Queensland Transport has failed. It is not just the thousands of people who have contacted their local member to complain. Most telling of all, the staff of the customer service centres have stopped work at offices throughout the State in protest about the mess. We now have a Queensland Transport Department that is doing very well, just as long as no-one from the public tries to ring it up or even tries to pay a bill. Just to make sure that no-one attempts to disturb its good work, it has taken the phone numbers of local offices out of the phone book. I am sure

that the Minister could run a very good department if it did not have to deal with taxpayers.

Today the Premier came in here like something out of the Monty Python dead parrot sketch, but he had only to look behind him to see a Yes, Minister rerun. We now have 54 more staff employed in Transport, but the service is worse. Can honourable members guess where the increased funding for QT is going? Only an additional \$11m found its way into capital acquisition, with much of this being spent on the vital work of the corporate desktop, because the previous software decision by Labor was a dud. I note, and I hope that the Minister for Communication and Information has noted also, an allocation of \$369,000 for Y2K rectification for this year. If he lets it go any longer he would save all of that amount.

I wish to touch on the Minister's favourite toy—his train set. I have a document from the chief executive of Queensland Rail in relation to the Labor Party's policy on the tilt train to Cairns. While the Government has chosen to put the rail community service obligations on the Bankcard, he continues with the billion-dollar tilt train to Cairns fiasco. This document, which has been signed by Vince O'Rourke, quotes \$760m in 1998 figures; this Government is running with a 1992 figure of \$122m.

Labor went to the election saying that it could build two 10-car sets—and have \$20m to upgrade tracks—for \$122m, but this is an absolute furphy as this document that I have here proves. I might add that KPMG supported these figures. The other week the Minister announced that two trains alone will cost \$138m and that \$240m would have to be spent on track upgrade between Rockhampton and Townsville. The track upgrade itself, Queensland Rail says, will cost \$600m. Passengers will have to sit up for the 21-hour trip. Again, these are not issues that are going to be creating jobs in Queensland.

I notice that the member for Logan is in the chair at the moment. I pay tribute to him for some of things that he said here this evening. We have to embrace the technology that he spoke about. I also pay tribute to the member for Kallangur for the very good address on taxation that he gave here this evening. The communication links in this State and all the technology that we have available to us today have to be harnessed. We have to embrace the concept so that we can make Queensland better for all Queenslanders, not just for a few.

Time expired.

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (11.11 p.m.): Let me open by saying that there are many issues that I would like to cover in my contribution to this debate. Unfortunately, time restricts me, so I will not be able to touch on a lot of issues which I believe are important to the people of the Fitzroy electorate and central Queensland.

This year's State Budget is a Budget that delivers jobs, industries of the future, regional development and a record Capital Works Program. It delivers \$566m to the Fitzroy region and it puts back some of the revenue dollars into what is a region of wealth.

As a former coalminer and labourer in many different jobs, I always welcome announcements and initiatives that create or maintain jobs, firstly in central Queensland and, secondly, across the State. Jobs, as we all know, provide opportunity and stability in a person's lifestyle and allow for the family to function in the home, enjoy quality of life and give their children the opportunity to be educated and to be protected by a good health system.

The Premier, in his second-reading speech, forecast 41,000 more new jobs in the current Budget year. The target of 5% unemployment set by Peter Beattie prior to the last State election is looking more achievable as the Labor Government settles into getting on with the job—developing Queensland. The 41,000 new jobs will reduce the State's unemployment rate to an average of 7.75% over the year—down from the 9% level left to us by the coalition.

Today I want to touch on several areas of the Budget and what it means to central Queensland. I will then speak to a few issues that need to be addressed so that the quality of life for people in the Fitzroy electorate can be improved. Capital works for any level of government is the engine room for jobs and for the public. Capital works are always recognised as the Government doing something. This Budget has delivered the biggest Capital Works Program that Queensland has ever seen. Not only will it deliver jobs and confidence for Queenslanders; it will deliver significant advances in key infrastructure.

Fifty-four per cent of the capital works scheduled for this year are in regional Queensland. I am pleased that the Premier and the Cabinet have recognised the importance of regional Queensland. Regional areas will share in the \$328m allocated for capital works in Education, \$304m for law and order, \$1 billion for power infrastructure and \$585m for Health.

In the Fitzroy electorate, Allenstown State School will get \$294,000 for the replacement of an amenities block. This will be welcomed by the school community as it has been a long struggle and there has been plenty of lobbying to make sure that this facility is provided. A covered play area that the P & C has lobbied hard for over a number of years was promised as an incentive for the school, which was concerned about inadequate facilities to meet the demands of a special education unit which has now been attached to the school. There is no evidence that funding has been provided for that structure. We are a little bit concerned that the department has failed to deliver on a commitment accepted in good faith by the school community. It has caused me much embarrassment because I was encouraged to make the announcement to an end-of-year presentation audience. That is one issue that I know the P & C wants me to pursue. I will be taking this matter up with the Minister in the coming week.

Parents, staff and students at Bouldercombe State School will appreciate that some moneys have been allocated for the planning of a modular building and a new amenities block. The toilet facilities at the school are inadequate and should have been replaced years ago. However, we are pleased that the Budget allocation means that we are on the way. We can expect the new facilities to be in place before the end of the next year. That is certainly welcomed by that school community.

I note that for the third year in a row the Middlemount State School has been identified in Budget papers as receiving a \$396,000 allocation for a new resource centre. We are hoping that the department will surprise us this year by actually completing the construction of that facility. I am certainly not promoting it again as a Budget initiative as we will believe it when we see it.

The Cooler Schools program has been allocated \$27.3m in this Budget. The next round of schools—91, in fact—will be able to put in airconditioning and improve learning environments for students and staff. This program has moved about as quickly as a snail and has caused much frustration amongst eligible schools. I encourage the Minister to look at this delay pattern and, where possible, kick some backsides because, quite frankly, the department's performance in moving this program ahead has been pathetic. Schools in the Fitzroy electorate identified for funding in the Budget papers include Allenstown, Duaringa, Gracemere, Mount Morgan and Ridgeland State Schools.

We are pleased that the Budget provides for another 228 teachers. We are pleased that the \$50m allocated for the Building Better Schools scheme will take up the gaps where schools are in need of upgrading and improvements. \$5m will be allocated for the network learning community. This program will provide for information technology, which is something that we all have to take on board and be prepared to see as a necessity. If we do not get on board with IT, we are going to be left behind as a nation.

Behaviour management programs for students at risk will receive \$5m. While this Budget allocation recognises that children with behavioural problems do need assistance, its size is an indication that Education Queensland is still not prepared to acknowledge or recognise the major impact that children with attention deficit disorder—ADD—or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder—ADHD—have on a school community. It is about time that someone took this matter more seriously. \$10m has been allocated to support students with disabilities and learning difficulties.

I welcome the doubling of the Budget allocation for teacher housing. I know that parents and citizens organisations in Dysart prepared an excellent submission to Government for the maintenance and upgrade of teacher accommodation. I think that we as members of this place all realise that, if teachers are to be encouraged to take on rural appointments, better teacher housing needs to be provided. We are certainly appreciative of what the Minister has done in recent months with regard to the standard of accommodation in Dysart in particular.

I wish to talk now about women in rural Queensland. I think all of us here recognise that women in rural and regional Queensland are always a consideration for Labor Governments when it comes to framing a Budget. The women of rural Queensland have the respect of our Government. We recognise the important and sometimes thankless role that they play in the family and in the community, especially small communities, as volunteers, business operators, service providers, and as employees of Government and the private sector.

Women are important to getting the balance right when it comes to the development of policy that impacts on our quality of life and family values. I will be encouraging women across central Queensland to voice their concerns to Government through the extensive community

outreach strategy announced in this Budget. This strategy will be implemented through a series of community forums hosted by the Office of Women's Policy.

The Rockhampton Office of Fair Trading will continue to provide consumer awareness education to people about their rights and responsibilities. \$750,000 has been allocated for the establishment of a new tribunal to hear disputes between retirement village residents and village operators. This is another Labor Government social justice initiative. I applaud the setting up of a special investigation squad to target unscrupulous property dealers. There are a couple of crooks operating in the Rockhampton area who will be brought to the attention of this squad.

Emergency Services will be enhanced through a record \$478.5m budget allocation. This is up \$49.5m on last year. I am particularly pleased about the record \$16m budget allocation for the rural fire brigade service. We all know just how important a role the rural fire service volunteers play in protecting property and valuable primary production land. Government has an obligation to do what it can to give a helping hand to these dedicated volunteer bush firefighters. There are 45,000 volunteers in 1,600 brigades protecting 90% of the State. This year's budget allocation represents a 30% increase on last year and will deliver 124 new fire trucks.

\$510,000 has been allocated for personal protective equipment such as helmets, gloves and overalls. An important boost has been given to communications by the allocation of \$305,000 for new equipment and radios. \$1.85 million has been allocated for subsidies for brigade equipment such as hoses, drip torches and knapsacks. An allocation of \$160,000 has also been made for brigade insurance costs and an amount of \$350,000 has been made available for station construction and upgrades. The Labor Government is helping rural bush fire brigades because it knows the important role that they play and the difficulty they have trying in to raise the dollars necessary to carry out their activities in a safe and acceptable way.

Local councils have ongoing funding worth \$1.2m annually to support counterdisaster and rescue services. The SES cadet program will continue, with \$1m having been allocated for this important activity. \$24.5m has been provided in the Budget for the free ambulance service introduced by the Beattie Labor Government at the beginning of this year. This will be of benefit to some

850,000 pensioners, seniors and their dependants. It has certainly been very warmly welcomed by people in the Fitzroy electorate.

Changes to the electoral boundaries mean that at the time of the next State election in 2001, the Fitzroy electorate will expand to approximately 40,000 square kilometres. A number of small communities such as Wowan, Dululu, Baralaba, Goovigen, Jambin and Banana will be added to the electorate of Fitzroy, along with Moura. Each and every one of these communities will have particular issues which will be important to them and which will require my support as their elected member. I am already assisting with funding applications on education and housing matters and pursuing such things as fish ladders at water storage facilities, a water supply to Banana and coal industry related issues.

The Fitzroy electorate is one that brings with it new challenges almost every day. My experience of 10 years so far means that I know the short cuts and know how to go about getting, wherever possible, the outcomes that benefit the people. One issue that I am determined to win sooner rather than later is improved television reception for the town of Mount Morgan. I have, on behalf of the good people of Mount Morgan, made a formal submission to the Federal Government's television fund issues paper and in doing so I have highlighted the poor to nil television reception that Mount Morgan people have had to put up with, despite living only 45 minutes from the regional city of Rockhampton. Premier Beattie is supporting me on this quality of life issue.

I will continue to lobby strongly for funding through the black spots program. I am pleased to see \$2.75m allocated for ongoing roadworks that will in time see the completion of the widening of the Fitzroy Development Road, also known as the Dingo/Mount Flora Road, north of Middlemount. Much of the work has been completed to the satisfaction of central Queenslanders who make frequent trips from the coalfields to Mackay and Rockhampton. I thank the people of Middlemount, Tieri and Dysart for their patience and confidence in me as their local member. They know that the job is getting done and they appreciate that the Government remains committed to upgrading roads to improve safety and movement of passenger vehicles and transportation of primary produce.

Health services will always remain a priority issue for people living in rural and

isolated areas, and the Fitzroy electorate is no different from any other rural electorate when it comes to the delivery of health services. The lack of professional health workers and the reluctance of medical practitioners to establish services means that rural Queensland will always be disadvantaged.

The ongoing downsizing of the coal industry means that a number of hospitals will be put under the microscope by Treasury bean counters. I know the importance of hospital facilities for people living in these areas. I know that, through fundraising activities, the community has contributed to the purchase of equipment and the maintenance of hospitals. It is well recognised that a well-equipped hospital is essential to rural towns.

The Government recognises that rural communities must have appropriately funded health services. The Government acknowledges the magnificent contribution made by the public to maintaining hospital facilities and will continue to provide the necessary funds. This is supported by yet another record recurrent budget for Health of \$3.45 billion.

I am pleased that an extra \$4.4m has been allocated to the Home and Community Care program. Every member of this House knows and understands that there is an ever increasing demand for care in the home for our frail elderly residents and their carers. Our Government acknowledges the needs of our most valued citizens and has put the money up front. Another 6,000 Queenslanders will receive assistance under the program. Mental health services will get a \$13m boost. Community based mental health care will get an additional 80 clinical staff. I know this will be welcomed by people in rural Queensland, in particular in the Emerald area.

There are one or two issues that I am prepared to put some effort into in the hope that we as a Government and I as the local member can deliver on and in doing so improve quality of life for those in our community who, for health or financial reasons, are disadvantaged. In the area of health, there is a group of people who suffer in silence. They are the people who suffer from chronic ulcers—chronic wounds which can easily turn malignant. They can cause stress and confine sufferers to their homes. I am told that one woman in Rockhampton has suffered from chronic leg ulcers for 45 years. The average time for which people suffer with this problem is about 16 years. In recent years a machine called a VAC—a vacuum assistance closure machine—has come on to the market.

The VAC machine has been tested. It cleans and promotes growth of granulation tissue. Wounds that have in the past refused to heal are now healing in a matter of a few short weeks.

This machine reduces long-term cost of care and treatment. Not only is it cost effective; it is easy to use and contributes to a decrease in suffering and an improvement in quality of life for affected people. The cost of a machine is around \$5,000—a mere pittance in light of the long-term benefits to patients and the Health budget. There are, of course, other costs such as dressings, but the short-term cost increases will be a minor consideration in the light of the long-term savings. The purchase and distribution of the VAC machine has been earmarked as a project that I intend to take up.

I will be continuing to work with Government Ministers, in particular the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, Anna Bligh, in an effort to have women on a widow's pension recognised as eligible for consideration for concessions allowable under the Queensland Seniors Card. The card, as all members would know, provides holders with discounts on many services offered by Government and the private sector. I see no reason why the widows cannot access the same benefits. The widow's pension is less than a single pensioner's level of payment by more than \$40 a fortnight. Honourable members can see how difficult it would be for those women who have lost their loved one. Age and lack of skills means that many widows are left to carry the financial burden once shared by them and their husbands. I thank Minister Bligh for taking this matter seriously and for implementing action that could see these inequities addressed.

As I said at the beginning of my contribution, there are plenty of issues that I could cover, but time does not permit. I could look at police services—those things that benefit people in local communities by having a good police service. I could look at hospitals in more detail. There are a number of issues that I could talk about. I believe that this is a good Budget. It sets the basis for the Labor Government to move on. I certainly look forward to working with the Ministers over the coming months to put in place a number of programs that I wish to address in the Fitzroy electorate.

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (11.30 p.m.): The Beattie Budget for 1999-2000 has received a very lukewarm reception by all sectors across Queensland. I suppose

that most of them are still trying to get around all the rhetoric contained in the Budget papers. Even the members of the Labor backbench were not at their supportive best when the Premier delivered the Budget Speech on Tuesday afternoon. I must say that they were very quiet and very reserved. He even lost his union mates, who cannot make head nor tail of where the Government is actually heading. Everyone has been saying how wishy-washy the Budget papers are compared to those of previous years, with very little detail of capital works spending outlined for specific areas. I suppose that there is a method in their madness. The Premier and acting Treasurer has decided that the smoke and mirrors tricks will cover up a very dismal excuse for a State Budget.

On top of this he has thrown in a 6% BST—a Beattie stealth tax—which will have myriad impacts on all electorates and departments across Queensland. This tax can only operate as a major disincentive for additional infrastructure across the State. It is a tax on the development and the growth of Queensland. From July next year, every Government department that builds a hospital, a road or a police station will have to pay 6% to the Treasury Department. There is no limit to how wide ranging the BST will be, both socially and on capital works.

On Tuesday, the member for Cunningham outlined the worrying position of the decimation of small schools across the State. Those schools will be valued at their replacement cost. Of course, in most cases, rural and regional Queensland will once again suffer. The Premier mentioned that he will not allow capital assets to run down. The only other option, if they do not meet the criteria, is to shut down or be sold off. It is a shape up or ship out option for all departments. I am just wondering if it is very workable.

Will this be the final nail in the coffin—that is, if we really need one—of the Tarong Power Station expansion? Public generators already pay a massive dividend. Will it be the end of hopes for mains power for many isolated communities? The BST will be another disincentive to the already challenging task of improving electricity distribution across Queensland. The list can go on and on, and I am sure that it will be covered by most speakers in this debate. It has already been covered during this debate.

Is it not marvellous that the Premier and acting Treasurer has been able to rummage around the departments and, bingo, find \$568m of unspent moneys or so-called

carryover funds? Why is such a huge amount of money left unspent when, every week in Parliament, we have been told that there has been no freeze, no hold-ups in capital works or any other programs? \$568m? He has to be kidding! Something or someone has missed out badly. But doesn't it make this year's Budget look a lot better! Why was that money not transferred to other departments, such as Health, which is suffering across the State on service delivery because of budget blow-outs? It is really a joke. I believe it is a joke, anyway. In the Charters Towers electorate, we could have built the Hells Gate dam with that sort of money and secured a future for the Charters Towers and Dalrymple Shires into the next millennium.

That brings me to another point. Will the Department of Natural Resources build any dams? Will the department dare expose itself to the increased BST—the Beattie stealth tax? The cost of water from new projects is already a major issue. The cost of water will certainly rise to reflect the additional tax burden.

I can confidently say that no member has any qualms about establishing Queensland as the Smart State. As a Queenslander, I have always considered Queensland to be the smartest State in Australia, anyway. But yes, I do agree that Queensland needs to be the educated State and an innovative State. There is a definite need for our children to be given the opportunity to be leaders in the technology and intellectual arenas for the coming century.

Mr Nuttall interjected.

Mr MITCHELL: I will have something to say about that later. I know that the people with the right skills will have the best opportunities of getting and keeping employment. But let us not get carried away with the need for high intelligence and leave the not so fortunate behind without assistance to acquire work skills of some level to gain employment or to keep employment.

Recently, I was informed about the proposed accreditation of field harvesters—better known to most of us as kangaroo shooters. I believe this to be just another bureaucratic bungle simply to verify their existence. Most of the shooters out there have been doing this for most—if not all—of their lives, and they could teach any instructor more than they will ever know. The cost of this accreditation is well beyond most of those people, who would have to travel to TAFE institutes from western areas such as Julia Creek, Hughenden and Winton and accommodate themselves for a couple of days

while they accessed the training courses. That would be just another burden on some of those people out there who are trying to make a living. These are some of the stupid things that make it difficult for our grassroots people to maintain employment in rural Queensland.

I turn now to the capital works funding in the Budget for the electorate of Charters Towers. Roads are an integral part of my electorate. The Flinders Highway is one of the most strategic roads in Queensland, connecting the north-west mineral shelf to the port of Townsville. \$1m for about 10 kilometres of road west of Hughenden into Richmond will finally see that section widened. In Budget Paper No. 4, under service priorities, it is noted that the continuation of the widening and rehabilitation of the highway totals \$61m. We definitely need to keep money rolling into that highway. I notice that the Minister is in the Chamber. I am sure that he would realise just how much that highway is used. That money will be spent over the next five years. It is good to know that the money is rolling in.

Budget Paper No. 4 also mentions the ongoing upgrading of the link between Hughenden and Winton, which is due for completion by December 2000. I certainly hope that this is the case, because I believe that it is a very important link for the betterment of the economy of the centres in that mid west region and the central region between Winton and Hughenden, mainly because of the increased tourism traffic in that area over the last couple of years.

I know that the Gregory Developmental Road is also mentioned in this section of the Budget papers, with the widening of the Belyando crossing to Charters Towers to be completed by 2005 at a cost of \$35m. However, it does not state how much will be spent this year on the highway. Once again, I cannot stress enough the importance of completing the sections between Charters Towers and the Highway mine—a 13 kilometre section—due to the increased mining cartage and, once again, the tourist and heavy vehicle traffic on that highway. That is very important. I hope that something will be forthcoming this year. As I said, that road is not mentioned directly in the Budget papers.

\$5.5m has been budgeted for the Hervey's Range Developmental Road, for the Keelbottom, Boundary, Spring and Stockyard Creeks, and sealed construction of some 30 kilometres. This is a very welcome addition to that road. They have worked on that for a good few years.

Mr Pitt: We've pumped a few bucks into your electorate, haven't we?

Mr MITCHELL: I certainly hope it keeps coming.

I am very pleased that the Mines and Energy Department has released further funding for the completion of the 66 kV transmission line from Hughenden to Winton and \$3m of a \$6.5m 66 kV line for the transmission between Hughenden and Richmond. This will further enhance the continuing upgrade of power supply in north-west and central-west Queensland.

The ongoing funding for shaft repairs in Charters Towers is most welcome. It is very important for the continuation of that program until we finally get to the bottom of some of those open shafts around Charters Towers. The new DPI office and laboratory funding of \$1.346m will see the start of the construction within the next month of the purpose built structure, which will make a much better working environment for all DPI staff in Charters Towers.

\$14m has been made available for the community sports and recreation facilities program. I believe that applications are currently under consideration. I am quite hopeful about the funding of the squash court centre in Moranbah from that fund. We have seen the completion of the \$7.2m Clermont multipurpose service hospital and the six-bed nursing home unit. That will be a tremendous asset for health care for many years into the future. The Minister opened that facility in early February this year.

The long-awaited \$450,000 upgrade of the Julia Creek accommodation will be a great boost to that north-west centre. Hopefully it will help to attract professional health workers to the area. Accommodation has always been a deterrent to maintaining staff levels in Julia Creek and many other towns. \$778,000 has been allocated for the completion of the psychogeriatric unit at Eventide Home in Charters Towers. Mosman Hall has received \$1.367m of a \$3.3m project for the rehabilitation/dual diagnosis and transition unit. This will be of great benefit in relation to psychiatric care for long-term residents. Eventide Home has also received funding of \$1.643m for residential care at the institution.

Whilst on Eventide Home, I would like to thank the Minister for Health for the opportunity to have a deputation with her today about the concerns I have received from constituents. I believe we can work together to reach a successful outcome for all concerned. I hope that will be the case.

At long last, the Nelly Bay project on Magnetic Island—which is in the electorate of the member for Townsville—has finally received funding and hopefully will be completed in the not so distant future. The Mount Isa rail line stage 3 will finally be completed this coming year with funding of \$2.4m. The Goonyella relay will reach near completion in this Budget year. Whilst I am dealing with railway issues, I wish to mention the support we have received from a South Australian rail lobby group for the Queensland Transport Minister's call for all livestock to be carried by rail. This was scuttled by the Beattie Budget, which provides a \$400m subsidy to rail. The rating agency, Standard and Poor's, has made specific mention of this payment as contributing to a decline in the operating cash flows for the State in the next year. This payment is the main reason why Queensland has gone into deficit. We now have some out-of-State boffin ranting on about rail's increased efficiency.

What Rail 2000 Inc. has conveniently overlooked is that the road transport industry is one of the highest taxed industries in the nation. Unfortunately, Rail 2000 Inc. has interpreted my defence of the road transport industry on the grounds of fair competition as some sort of condemnation of rail. Well, Rail 2000 Inc. is totally wrong. Rail 2000 Inc. has also asked where I was when thousands of rail employees were losing their jobs some years ago. I was there in the front line at Townsville, Mount Isa and other centres in my area defending those workers and I certainly do not recall seeing Rail 2000 Inc. there. If representatives of Rail 2000 Inc. were present, they would know that it was the Labor Government that sacked some 8,000 rail workers in six years. It was the coalition Government that put a stop to that.

If Rail 2000 Inc. had any interest in Queensland Rail, it would be defending the 1,500 rail jobs that are now under threat by the Beattie Government. I, together with everyone else on this side of the House, wait with bated breath to see just how far the State of Queensland will be in debt as a result of the Beattie Government's Budget.

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (11.43 p.m.): We have two Bills before the House this evening, namely the Appropriation Bill and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill. I want to touch firstly on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill. I mentioned to Mr Speaker in passing that I hope that some of the money that has been allocated can be used to do something about the microphones that we have in this Chamber. I do not believe that

there is one microphone in the Chamber that does not have some sort of sticky tape or masking tape around it to keep it together. The seat behind me is falling apart. The whole place is falling apart. I hope some money will be spent on the Chamber. I might mention that we also need a microphone for the Clerk because every time he stands up to read the petitions we can never hear what he says.

There are a few issues that I want to touch on in relation to my electorate and also in relation to the broader issue of the Budget in general. The first issue I want to raise in relation to my electorate concerns the Northpoint TAFE College. It is the third largest TAFE college in the State. In this Budget, some \$4m has been allocated to that college. I am pleased to see that and I congratulate the Minister on it. That money will go towards continued improvements of facilities for students.

Over the past five or six years the Northpoint TAFE College has become a college of which we in my electorate are particularly proud. The director of the college, Mr Craig Sherrin, and I share a close working relationship. I want to place on the public record my congratulations to Mr Sherrin for a job well done. The college has continued to grow. I understand that its annual Budget is some \$25m, of which this Government contributes some \$12m. It is a credit to the director and the administrators that the college raises the remainder of those funds.

Another issue I wish to raise concerns schools within my electorate. This is an issue that is dear to my heart because, whether people accept it or not, when Labor was in Opposition for some 34 years Labor seats such as mine were particularly neglected.

Mr Reynolds: A disgrace!

Mr NUTTALL: The member for Townsville is right, it was a disgrace, because politics were played at the expense of children's education. I believe in equity, and I believe that all children should be on a level playing field in terms of the availability of resources to enable them to learn. However, we cannot have a level playing field until we are all on the same level. Schools within my electorate have been neglected for too long.

I will give honourable members a perfect example. When Labor was in Government and the Honourable David Hamill was Minister for Education, Sandgate State High School was marked down for a new home economics block. That school has the second worst home economics block in the State. When we lost Government, that home economics block was

dropped off the Capital Works Program by the conservative Government that took power. I thought that those days were gone, but when Labor lost Government in 1996, the conservative Government that took over immediately crucified Labor electorates—and mine in particular—in relation to this home economics block.

Mr Pitt: It's vindictive.

Mr NUTTALL: It is vindictive when it is at the expense of children and their education. I have had enough of that sort of nonsense. I have had a lot of correspondence with the Minister and the department relating to this home economics block. I note in the Budget papers that 10 high schools are earmarked for the Building Better Schools program, which is going to be moved from primary schools to secondary schools.

Sandgate State High School is some 40 years old but continues to maintain an enrolment of between 1,100 and 1,200 students. I would say to the Minister and the Department of Education that not only do I expect, but the school community and the community in general would expect and anticipate that Sandgate State High School will be amongst the 10 schools which are earmarked for master planning. I do not want to see a plan put on paper; I want to see money spent at the school.

The school urgently needs major refurbishment. I anticipate and expect that that will be done. Having said that, and having made my position quite clear regarding Sandgate State High School, I must thank the Minister for Education for other facilities which have been provided at schools in my electorate. I am deeply appreciative of that. I want to make it quite clear to the Minister that I am not complaining about what has been done. However, I am putting the Minister and the department on notice that more needs to be done. It is time for the parents, the students and the teachers in my electorate to receive their fair share.

The ambulance centre in my electorate is an older centre. I am pleased to see that \$250,000 has been earmarked to purchase land for a new ambulance station in the future. Indeed, the ambulance station does need to be relocated. I look forward to seeing in the following Budget an allocation for a new ambulance centre for my electorate. That would be very welcome.

Currently, the ambulance centre occupies a prime location. I appreciate the fact that the Minister and the department will need to sell the centre to offset the costs of relocation.

However, a delegation of people has already been to see the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and I am hopeful that, in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council, we can purchase the old ambulance station site for a community centre for the people of Sandgate. Sandgate was one of last areas to be brought under the jurisdiction of the Brisbane City Council when it was formed. It has a very, very strong sense of community. A large number of community organisations within my electorate work very hard and they are in need of a home. The current ambulance station site would be an ideal location for such a centre. I know that the acquisition of that site is not going to be inexpensive. However, both the community and I have set the goal of establishing a full community centre on that site.

I turn now to health services. My electorate has eight aged nursing homes, two of which are the biggest nursing homes in the State: the Freemasons nursing home and Eventide. I want to refer in particular to the Eventide nursing home. People would well be aware that, when Labor moved from Government into Opposition, the Eventide nursing home came under attack and was to be sold by the conservative Government. Ironically, on the day that Mr Howard called the Federal election, the Honourable the Premier, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, and the Honourable Kim Beazley, the Leader of the Federal Opposition, were both at Eventide nursing home. I am pleased to say that the Premier gave a commitment that Eventide was not for sale.

There is much more that I would like to say about how the Budget contributes to my electorate but, as I am mindful of the hour, in closing I will say that I noted a comment in the Courier-Mail that this Budget was a traditional Labor Budget. I am extremely proud to be a member of a Government that has focused on health, education, law and order and, more importantly, on employment. In my view, one of the strongest, most telling factors of this good Labor Government has been the way in which we have continued to ensure that the public sector has played a vital role and that jobs in the public sector have been retained by this Labor Government. With those few words, I commend these Bills to the House.

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (11.54 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that tonight I stand to speak in strong support of this Budget, the second Beattie Labor Government Budget, which is continuing in the tradition established by the first Beattie Labor Government Budget delivered last year. This is

a sound, responsible and cautious State Budget. It promotes the traditional planks of Labor Government in this State—health, police, more money for education, public works, and major public expenditure.

The broad highlights of this excellent Budget are as follows: the average unemployment rate is targeted to fall to 7.75%, the lowest rate in a decade; 41,000 new jobs are expected out of this Budget; the net operating surplus from this Budget from the general Government sector is \$21m; tax concessions total \$27.7m, and a significant part of that is an exemption for employers in relation to trainees and apprentices taken on by those employers; a State Capital Works Program of \$5.2 billion supporting 2,600 additional and 65,400 ongoing jobs; and finally, the economic growth rate is forecast to be 3.75% with an employment growth rate of 2.5%.

People in the suburbs of Brisbane, and in particular the north-west suburbs of Brisbane where my electorate is located, will relate more to these figures: this State Budget will provide across Queensland 288 more teachers, 325 more police, 44 more ambulance officers, 27 more fire and rescue personnel, and more nurses to complement the hospital system. So many, many aspects of this Budget are commendable and they apply to areas throughout the State.

In the limited time that I have available, I would like to focus particularly on the impact that this Budget has on the Ferny Grove electorate. The funds that are earmarked broadly for work to be undertaken in the Ferny Grove electorate and for the services being provided by this Beattie Labor Government in the Ferny Grove electorate, and in the north-western suburbs more generally, amount to in excess of about \$6.8m. A couple of key projects that are targeted focus essentially on the more efficient supply of electricity to the north-western suburbs, and particularly the newly emerging suburbs and residential developments in the Samford Valley.

In Upper Kedron, Powerlink earmarked a project worth \$3.5m, for which it is to be highly commended. Prior to this project and until recently, Powerlink proposed that it would upgrade the major electricity transmission line that comes from the Brendale substation down south to the suburbs around Ferny Grove and Upper Kedron—a distance of 15 kilometres. That would require the removal of good stands of trees and bushland in a strip about 20 metres wide over those 15 kilometres. When

the environmental impact of that development and the cost was investigated fully, at about the same time it was revealed that some other changes needed to be made, which meant that the work could be delayed indefinitely. It may be that the upgrading of that particular line never needs to happen. Instead of carrying out that work, Powerlink is proposing to build the first stage of a substation in Upper Kedron and also to build a temporary transmission line and tower spanning only 700 metres to assist in the provision of more secure and reliable power to the north-western suburbs.

In addition to that project, Energex is proposing to build a 33/11 kV substation in the area of Samford. The substation is designed to augment the transmission lines that provide power to the Samford Valley and, in particular, Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious. As those areas develop, the load on the electricity system will increase. The new substation will allow those areas to be more readily catered for. Energex has a very difficult job and it finds it very difficult to develop a very positive public relations image in terms of the service it sometimes provides. In the last 15 to 16 months, my office has received many complaints from Samford Valley, Upper Kedron, Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious residents about the highly unreliable provision of power. It is hoped that the substation at Samford and the development at Upper Kedron will overcome some of those problems.

In the last six months, a number of my constituents have raised concerns about the congested parking around the Ferny Grove Railway Station, particularly in the suburban streets, as the station car park fills up. As a result of representations to Queensland Rail and the Minister for Transport, Queensland Rail has been allocated \$100,000 to undertake a planning study for a bus/rail interchange at the Ferny Grove Railway Station. As I indicated earlier, the suburban growth that is taking place in the north-western corner of my electorate is putting a lot of vehicular pressure on the car parking facilities at the railway station.

QR is very keen to look at the development of a bus/rail interchange and an elevated car park to cater for the increasing vehicular traffic in the area of the Ferny Grove Railway Station. That is being done at the same time as the Samford Road upgrade, which is going through the final consultation process. The intersection of Ferny Way and Samford Road at the Ferny Grove Railway Station will be reconfigured.

A number of constituents have also complained to me about the service on the Ferny Grove line. As a result of the issues being raised with me, I have made representations to Queensland Rail. I have been advised that part of the moneys, amounting to approximately \$87m in this year's Budget, will provide for additional suburban car units. Part of that funding increase will cover the provision of extra carriages on the Ferny Grove line. Three steps are proposed in this regard. The diesel service that, until the last couple of weeks, ran in the morning from Mitchelton Railway Station to the city has now been replaced by a three-car electric train. In early 2000, it is anticipated that the afternoon service from Mitchelton to the city will be replaced by a second three-car set. In early February 2001, it is anticipated that an additional three-car set will operate the morning and afternoon service from Mitchelton into the city. Those changes have all been made possible because of the allocation of funding provided in this year's Budget for those and many other three-car sets throughout the suburban network.

In the last six months, the Ferny Grove Railway Station has been the venue for a trial of a new safety approach called the core zone, which has been undertaken by Queensland Rail. Cameras have been installed to focus on particular sections of the platform that have been marked out. Those sections are adjacent to services such as the ticket vending machine, the attendant's window and other facilities. Therefore, there is a dedicated section of continuous observation to give added security to people using the rail system. Commuters using the railway system from the Ferny Grove Railway Station have been surveyed and I am advised that quite a positive response has been received—so much so that \$5m has been allocated in the Budget to extend that security approach to other suburban railway stations.

As I draw to the close of the time that I have available tonight, I wish to mention a couple of other things that are commendable in this Budget. A sum of \$1m has been provided from the Emergency Services budget to secure the long-term operation of the SES cadet program. As some members will know, the Mitchelton State High School was the first metropolitan State high school at which the SES and youth action cadet program was trialled. As a result of that trial, the program has been extended into other high schools. I am pleased to say that the Budget has been crafted in such a way as to secure the continuing operation of the SES cadet unit at

the Mitchelton State High School. That is an excellent program and I commend it to the other high schools into which it will be introduced.

A matter that I think warrants attention in the education section of the Budget is the Building Better Schools program, which has been provided with about \$18m of additional funding, \$14m of which is to be allocated to south-east Queensland schools. I am pleased to see that high schools have been added to this program. There are 14 schools in my electorate. I can assure members and the people of the Ferny Grove electorate that with great vigour I will be lobbying the department to ensure that the various needs of the schools in my area are met through the Building Better Schools scheme.

I know that many other members are busting to make their contributions in this debate tonight, but I have a few final points to make. I commend the Minister for Health for the provision of an additional \$640,000 for the crime prevention strategy, which is directed at young people at risk. The strategy enables youth workers, medical practitioners and others to be engaged to work with the local communities in the identification of and early intervention with young people who are at risk, particularly in relation to the problem of illicit and licit drugs and their misuse.

I commend the Minister for Health for the introduction of an extra day at the Mitchelton State High School and an extra day at the Ferny Grove State High School for the school health nurse. The nurse now spends two days at Mitchie high, two days at Ferny Grove high and one day at The Gap high school. This is a very commendable initiative. That initiative also links with a local initiative that I have assisted with. A number of community groups in my area have come together to explore ways in which they may be able to work more cooperatively with each other and Government to assist kids who are on the edge. The Kids on the Edge project has kicked off in my area.

As I am mindful of the time, I will conclude by saying that this is a very good but cautious and probably conservative Budget from the Beattie Labor Government. It is soundly based, particularly as it builds on the principles established in the first Beattie Labor Government Budget relating to the key areas of health, police, education and public works. I commend the two Bills to the House.

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (12.09 a.m.): I congratulate the Minister, Anna Bligh, on the Youth Justice Program. This is an excellent initiative and hopefully our wayward

youth can be rehabilitated back into the community. I acknowledge also funding for the highway from Bluewater to Leichhardt Creek, which was in a very sorry state and extremely dangerous, with major potholes that could easily swallow a Mini Minor. It is well under way.

In April this year the Beattie Government Ministers rode into Thuringowa for a Cabinet meeting, spouting that they were honouring their election promise by listening to the people and building partnerships with communities. They promised to build a police station in Deeragun. The Minister even sent me plans of the new building, which I published in newsletters and community papers, informing residents of the good news. I have had numerous approaches from constituents from Deeragun, Mount Low and Bushland Beach who are all concerned with the rise in crime in that area. I have written to the police with regard to people's anxiety caused by delays in police responding to calls for help.

I had brought all of these matters to the attention of the Minister and his response at the Cabinet meeting, that is, an announcement that a police station would be built, was very welcome. It is very disappointing for me and all residents in the area to find that this project is not included in the Budget. I believe a person is only as good as their word, and that also applies to Governments.

I am also saddened by the lack of funding for unmet needs for people with disabilities. The Unmet Needs campaign also is bitterly disappointed at the Government's lack of response to unmet need for people with disabilities and their families in Queensland.

Mr Reynolds: What about the extra \$20m?

Mr TURNER: That is peanuts.

Whilst the campaign is pleased to see the Moving Ahead program for school leavers funded by \$2m annually, the second Labor Budget does nothing to help the thousands of Queenslanders still needing services after Labor's first positive Budget. How can the Smart State with "the best economy in Australia" so neglect its citizens with a disability when other States contribute so much per person? How can a Government with a low tax base supposedly committed to improving services for its citizens further reduce its tax base when its social welfare spending is at such appallingly low levels compared with those of other States? The Government's most recent data shows \$125m in new funding is required to address unmet need in

Queensland. In this Budget, the Government has lowered racing taxes, reduced land tax and payroll tax and eliminated stamp duty exemption for foreign share trading. These Budget highlights are of no help to funding needs for people with disabilities. It is time that these members of our community had their needs addressed.

I delivered a speech in this House informing members that I was trying to obtain a purpose-built fishing vessel for seniors and people with disabilities. We formed the Leisure Accessible Club Inc. and have applied for funding through the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund. So far we have heard nothing and I am very anxious in case this funding will also be rejected. There are a lot of excited people in Townsville and Thuringowa and I hope their optimism will not be dashed. When this club is up and functioning, I intend to approach the major centres with the concept and form a network of clubs in Queensland to provide recreation services and information for people who cannot participate in able-bodied recreation. I anticipate interaction between clubs and more travel becoming possible for members, which will mean more money injected into the Queensland economy. I cannot overemphasise the importance of funding for this project, and I call on the Beattie Government to provide the funding for the fishing vessel.

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.13 a.m.): I congratulate the Premier and the member for Ipswich on the role they played in the production of this year's Budget. The pivotal role played by the far north as part of a vibrant Queensland economy was given further emphasis by the 1999-2000 Budget handed down two days ago. Interestingly, the local media made positive comment on the Budget and in the process refused to be duped by the negativity emanating from the Opposition Leader, Rob Borbidge, and shadow Treasurer David Watson. Unfortunately, this constant negativity has become the hallmark of an Opposition unwilling to make a positive contribution to Queensland's economic growth.

The second Beattie Government Budget continues to build on the sound foundation of the first Budget last year, which was based on improving the employment opportunities of all Queenslanders. The far north will share in the jobs to be created as part of a \$5.2 billion Capital Works Program. Capital works spending in the far north amounts to \$1,640 per person, as part of a \$359.7m Capital Works Program. \$20m will be spent on local government infrastructure to improve roads,

water supply and sewerage projects. In addition, the Yarrabah Community Council will receive \$1.7m to enhance its water supply. This is on top of the \$43,000 to be spent on that community's sewerage upgrade to commence a program which will see \$2.23m injected into this area.

The correctional facility at Lotus Glen is to be expanded at a cost of \$13.5m. A total of \$52m has been earmarked for Education. Of that, the further development of the Bentley Park College is to commence, with \$1.7m to be expended in this financial year. The total project will cost in the vicinity of \$28m and it is to be staged over the next three years. The educational precinct is destined to be a model for new schools as we move into the new millennium. That this technology is to be provided is in keeping with the Premier's determination to make Queensland the Smart State.

Even construction design breaks new ground to meet the demands of the tropical climate and provide a more flexible delivery of educational services. The concept of three subschools puts into effect well-documented educational understandings of the complexity of schooling for adolescents. In the Health area, a further \$9m is being targeted for the completion of the Cairns Base Hospital upgrade. It is no secret that I did not support the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital on its existing site. It was my preferred option to establish a world-class facility on a greenfield site. However, the finished wings of the redevelopment are of the highest standard and will serve the people of the far north well into the future.

The Edmonton Community Health Centre, which was funded under the Goss Government and completed during the term of the coalition, has become a vital link in the integrated health network in the southern suburbs of Cairns. The expenditure of a further \$20,000 will finally deliver the balance of the original \$3.375m that formed part of the package. Similarly, the Innisfail Court House upgrade will continue, with a total project expenditure of \$743,000 to bring that facility up to standard.

Coming from one of the State's premier sugarcane growing areas, I am delighted to see the commitment in this Budget of \$6.3m out of a total program which will eventually, in conjunction with the Commonwealth, reach \$38m. There is no doubt that the sugar industry is at a low ebb, with falling prices, exceptionally poor weather conditions, the premature removal of tariffs and declining

productivity threatening an industry at the heart of many communities along the Queensland coast. The money used to support the valuable industry is an investment in the future of far-north Queensland.

I welcome the announcement in the Budget by the Premier that \$1m has been set aside for work on a new 24-hour police station at Edmonton. Work and construction will commence after the wet season, being scheduled for March, and it will be completed by the end of the year 2000. A further \$1m will be provided in the 2000-2001 Budget. The construction of a 24-hour police station fulfils a commitment I gave at the 1995 election. In spite of promises by the coalition when it occupied the Treasury benches, no further action was taken. The closest it got was to canvass local real estate agents with a view to purchasing cane land between Edmonton and Gordonvale. Such a proposition would never have met policing needs. It would have taken the police away from the population they were meant to serve. As a result, station numbers at Gordonvale and Edmonton would have had to be reduced. This was clearly unacceptable. The new Edmonton station will have a staffing complement of 20 officers, including CIB and JAB. In addition, the number at Gordonvale will be maintained and will grow in proportion to the population growth.

I have always been a strong supporter of public housing. This Budget delivers funds to provide 12 detached houses, 59 medium density accommodation units and a number of seniors units. Expenditure will exceed \$9m and is ongoing evidence of the priority Labor Governments place on the provision of public housing. This is in sharp contrast to the two and a half years of coalition Government, which saw the spending on public housing plummet to the dismal levels existing prior to the election of the Goss Government in 1989. The electorate of Mulgrave, which has been the major beneficiary of Labor public housing initiatives, suffered the most under the coalition. The only construction during its tenure was that programmed by Labor.

No new land acquisitions were made. As a matter of fact, the coalition embarked on a program of selling off public housing assets. While I am the member for Mulgrave, public housing will receive the funding priority it deserves. I congratulate Housing Minister Schwarten on his vigorous advocacy on behalf of Queenslanders seeking accommodation and public housing.

A number of projects under way in the City of Cairns benefit constituents from the

three electorates of Mulgrave, Barron River and Cairns. Besides the Cairns Hospital redevelopment, the Cairns Port Authority receives \$12.47m and the Cairns Convention Centre has an upgrade in the vicinity of \$8.16m. In addition, the Cairns Esplanade project is due for a \$9m injection. These projects are a return to significant capital works expenditure which characterised the Goss years.

During the term of the coalition, construction of public infrastructure in the far north had ground to a halt as it courted its constituency on the Gold and Sunshine Coasts. The people of the far north would have welcomed a portion of the then \$200m used to lift the toll on the Sunshine Motorway by the then Treasurer, Joan Sheldon. At the time, the coalition held four of the six far northern seats, yet its representatives failed to stand up and be counted for the region. Labor is delivering for the far north.

I have listened to the members opposite decry the Premier's call to reduce unemployment to 5%. It is accepted that the task is difficult, yet it is not impossible. One has only to look at the unemployment figures to see that Labor is determined to meet the unemployment program head on. The Premier's call for jobs, jobs, jobs is not just rhetoric. When the coalition was in Government, unemployment was nudging 9%. It is anticipated to drop to a 10-year low of 7.75%.

I welcome the announcement of a \$1m program to bring community police under Queensland Police Service control. Yarrabah is one of three communities to be targeted for this pilot program. The Beattie Government takes very seriously its commitment to redressing mistakes made by past Governments. That is why we decided to compensate former Government employees who were underpaid by the National Party between 1975 and 1986 because they were Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders.

The Government has pledged \$25.4m over three years to compensate the former workers. We arrived at this figure after extensive consultation with the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action—FAIRA. It was FAIRA that represented the Palm Islanders who first contested and, I might say, won a case for compensation before the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The commission awarded FAIRA's clients \$7,000 each. This is the benchmark figure that has been chosen.

The \$7,000 is compensation for the people who, because of their race, suffered discrimination at the hands of the National Party Government after the introduction of the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975. The Beattie Government has never pretended that this amount would precisely repay people for lost wages. The Government and FAIRA are now in the advanced stages of developing an efficient procedure for processing these claims.

Officers of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Development have already held a meeting in Yarrabah. There is an alternative to this process. It is a costly and painful business of pursuing cases through the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The previous National Party Government preferred this legalistic approach. By the time it vacated office last year, the claims were banking up. Labor did its sums and realised that the taxpayer would save millions if we took the conciliatory course. Money aside, it was a just course—one which acknowledges the wrongs of the past and attempts to make reparations. Constituents can decide which course they would rather take.

The people of far-north Queensland have given the Budget the thumbs up. Of course, there are many worthwhile projects that have not been funded for 1999-2000. However, we live in tight economic times and a responsible Government must live within its means. The Beattie Government has done that. Given the continuation of good Government and good local representation, I am certain that the far north will continue to prosper and will continue to receive its fair allocation of public funds in the years ahead. I commend the 1999-2000 Budget to the House.

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (12.23 a.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in this Budget debate. I am pleased to see a credit Budget, although there are some areas of concern. I support the concept of accrual accounting. However, it would appear that, in this case, the system has been a vehicle for some fairly rubbery figures. It is apparent that, under the traditional cash accounting method, we would be contemplating a Budget sliding into deficit.

The Australian newspaper estimated that, if translated into cash accounting terms, the Budget would actually be \$300m in deficit—perhaps more—if the Government had not factored in underspending on its capital and recurrent accounts. Of course, when one transfers from a cash basis to an accrual basis, it will be positive or negative depending upon

the balance of the prior year. In this instance, the Budget's surplus figure exists simply because the accrual based accounting method captures more revenues than the cash system would have. The benefit then is overstated, but only in the first year. As I have already stated, I do support accrual accounting methods and believe that this method will give a more meaningful long-term view of the State's financial position and budgetary allocations.

In relation to growth, the increase in gross State product for 1998-99, although down almost one percentage point from the 1997-98 result, has come in at a satisfactory 4.75%. This Budget's target of 3.75% looks achievable, but the downward trend will continue unless some of the warning signs are heeded.

I also have grave concerns about the components underpinning these growth figures. There is perhaps an air of complacency, with an assumption that the historic and projected figures for gross State product are entirely satisfactory and adequate. One major problem is the over-reliance on the household consumption component of those figures. Household consumption is divided into 13 categories and includes alcoholic beverages and tobacco. Gambling expenditure is also included in the household expenditure figure under the category "Recreation and Culture".

The inclusion of gambling in particular is of concern as we are all aware of the increase in gambling over the years. Growth with a large component delivered by gambling is unhealthy and fragile. Forward Estimates in the Budget papers indicate the expectation of a windfall from gaming—a \$101m increase in tax revenue from gaming. But it is nice to see that the Government that puts out the bait does have some compassion for the bunnies—a meagre amount of compassion only: the Gambling Help-Line. I note that the toll-free Gambling Help-Line was piloted in three regional centres providing 24-hour support, crisis counselling and referral to local services for gamblers, their families and others adversely affected by gaming. An independent evaluation of the projects has been completed, but I note that it is only consideration that will be given to expanding the Gambling Help-Line in 1999-2000 following the analysis and independent evaluation of the pilot services that operated in Cairns, Rockhampton and Mount Isa in 1998-99.

One can only wonder: at what cost will this gaming revenue be ripped from the pockets of

Queenslanders and off the dinner tables of their families? For every dollar of gaming income, there is certain to be a corresponding increase in the expenditure of the Department of Health and the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care as welfare workers struggle to ameliorate the enormous social costs in shattered families and deprived children. This Budget is a risky Budget in the extreme. Being founded and highly dependent upon an assumption of sustained solid growth, it is obvious that in the event of growth stalling—and in the current economic climate, that is a very real threat—the deficit would balloon out to dangerous and damaging levels.

We are all aware that we have an overheated economy at the moment and face the very real prospect of a major correction in the stock market. Should this occur or should our trading partners in the Asian region not continue to recover from their economic crisis, Queensland will be in financial trouble. This Government has taken a large risk with this Budget. We just hope that Queenslanders will not suffer.

The negative net export figure, with imports outstripping exports, is at least in part a product of our current obsession with economic rationalism. This trend towards increasing reliance on imports—and I note up they are up by 6.5%—will eventually have to be addressed. I believe that this Budget goes only part way towards that goal. In concert with the negative export result for 1998-99, our reliance on commodity exports as a percentage of total exports has well and truly been highlighted.

These two factors—negative or low net exports and the high percentage exported as commodities—underline the urgent need for Governments, both State and Federal, to provide meaningful incentives to manufacturing and value adding initiatives by the private sector. At the same time, the State Government should be pressing the Federal Government to introduce disincentives to imports. For the delicate and politically correct souls who cannot even bring themselves to say the word "tariff", there are numerous other mechanisms which are used in every country in the world except Australia to nurture their own manufacturing, primary production, and value adding industries. Primage is a good example.

The Government has made some small attempt in this area but has not faced up to the seriousness of the situation and has not afforded these measures the high priority that

they deserve and perhaps demand. The projected growth in business investment, in buildings and in machinery and equipment, represents a decline in the rate of growth and indicates soft business confidence. These figures further underscore a fundamental weakness in an economy sadly lacking in manufacturing and value adding sectors. Little money has been directed at encouraging and promoting growth in these industries.

Also, the decline in domestic dwelling investment is disappointing and the projected halt to that slide will be a vital benchmark which needs close monitoring and should have received greater impetus. A healthy building industry will always rely on a large component of domestic activity, and the flow-on effect of the building industry is a major influence on the State's economy and the noble aim of providing full employment. The reduction in domestic dwelling investment would lead one to assume that rentals are on the increase. The increase in rentals at the reduction of building would indicate a social problem within the community that the Government most certainly needs to keep an eye on. I am not convinced that the Government has placed a sufficiently high priority on stimulating business confidence.

Much of the thrust of this Budget has been on biotechnology. To be in the vanguard of biotechnology could indeed be to seek a crown of thorns. I support the notion of developing new technology in all fields, including biology, where there can be demonstrated benefits to mankind and to the sustainability of our environment. Unfortunately, though, the field of biotechnology is being increasingly hijacked by the school of genetic modification. There are major health concerns over genetically modified food throughout Europe and Asia. There is also major concern amongst consumers in America. Even though America is the leading producer of genetically modified food, this domestic buyer resistance is forcing Americans to dump their production wherever they can find an export market.

Undoubtedly, Australia's greatest marketing asset for our primary production export products is the clean green image that we have so successfully promoted. Given the level of concern over genetically modified foods, it is absolutely impossible for us to promote ourselves as leaders in the field of genetic engineering and contemporaneously to maintain our image as a supplier of the cleanest and most wholesome foodstuffs in the world. A few billion dollars earned in biotech industries would be quickly dissipated

in damage to export markets for our existing production. Eminent academic professor Gordon Conway makes the point that, whether there is any risk or not, the perception in relation to genetically modified products is very real and it is that perception which is sure to be extremely damaging.

There is also justifiable concern amongst farmers over the possibility of one or two cartels capturing the exclusive rights to sell genetic material. This is a very real threat, with the technology already available to produce seeds which will be non-viable and plants which will not develop without the application of a trigger chemical which would be patented and marketed only by the company that developed the genetic material. Pollens travel around the world and there is a genuine contamination threat to traditional, open pollinated varieties. There is a very real danger that everything we plant to grow foodstuffs to feed the world could be controlled by one or two mega-companies. This would be an intolerable situation.

I would caution against the blind obsession with biotechnology that is displayed in this Budget document. I note with some major trepidation that the Premier has alluded to the hard sell that he knows he will have to make to the wider community with biotechnology. He has proposed a biotechnology office to promote wider community understanding. I purposely ask that this not be an office of propaganda to front the multinationals that pervade this area of the industry. I hope that we do not blindly become the dumping ground of biotech and genetically modified foodstuffs that no other country, even America, wants. It is great to be at the forefront of an industry, as long as we do not kill our exports as a consequence.

I will now speak about my own little patch of country, just north of the metropolis of Brisbane. It is not a city, yet not all country either. I know that I fought hard during the last year and rattled the tin outside many doors—often enough to see such advances as the completion of the 25-bed mental health ward at the Caboolture Hospital and the \$2.5m upgrade of the Wamuran State School, both of which are still mentioned in this Budget as ongoing projects. The Wamuran State School was in such an appalling state that it was known as a demountable school. Other advances were the extra police allocated to Caboolture and Bribie Island, even though the recent direction in relation to leave and recreation leave hours has reduced the effectiveness of service delivery to this area in expectation of an increase in numbers of the

thin blue line. More police are needed, especially for the new millennium celebration, Y2K and pending involvement in the protection and direction of overseas visiting teams and tourists associated with the Olympic Games.

A new ambulance station on Bribie Island was also welcomed. It is a pleasure to see the final touches being allocated in this Budget to the tune of some \$25,000. I thank the Minister for Emergency Services for the provision of the much-needed cutting and rescue equipment provided to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service on Bribie Island. This much-needed resource will no longer leave the area of the Caboolture electorate exposed to the embarrassment of being unable to respond appropriately to serious motor vehicle accidents in which injured persons are trapped in vehicles, as was the case prior to this extra allocation.

The grant of the land and some \$4m to commence building the Caboolture aquatic centre and sports reserve is most welcomed by the community. The Caboolture Cricket Club is even now in deep consultation with council in respect of the two A-grade Brisbane standard turf wickets expected to be built in the next phase of this development. Enticing some Brisbane district club work will only increase the ability of our burgeoning junior cricketers to advance into the Brisbane competition and perhaps beyond to State representation.

The northern bypass has progressed beyond environment and traffic studies to the point of actual plans being on display rather than on the drawing board. We know that there are still a few minor obstacles to overcome, such as a couple of resumptions, the erection of noise barriers in certain areas and the location of on and off ramps. The initial problems associated with the Caboolture aerodrome, where the northern bypass intersects with the Bruce Highway, appear at this time to be solved to the satisfaction of all parties.

The Caboolture Airport supports the Caboolture War Plane Museum, which is proving a real boon for tourism in the area. Once again, the Caboolture Airshow spectacular proved a great success, with over 30,000 vehicles and 60,000 visitors to the show again this year. This makes it the second most successful airshow in Australia. That is a great credit to all those involved. The airshow ball this year attracted some 300 attendees.

The Bribie Island road upgrade is also continuing and the passing lanes already built are working for the effective and efficient flow

of traffic to and from Bribie. I am sure that this will only enhance the attractiveness of a trip to visit Bribie as a preferred tourist destination, as this trip will be less stressful with the ability now to pass slower vehicles on the upgraded sections of road.

Speaking of approved roadworks and promises, I did not see in the Estimates any allocation for the promised upgrade of Lower King Street and Charles Street to alleviate the pressure on this intersection as traffic seeks to enter Caboolture's city heart from the Bruce Highway. Traffic congestion in this section of road from Charles Street to the highway must be urgently addressed, with traffic backing up out to the highway and actually over the Bruce Highway overpass. I highlight this as a priority so that action can be taken before serious tragedy befalls this area, especially around peak times when parents are taking children to one of the three schools located in Charles/Manly Street and Lower King Street, such as the Caboolture East State School, the Caboolture State High School and North Point TAFE Caboolture campus. This area also contains the Caboolture Hospital which, I am pleased to see, has been given ongoing funding to the tune of \$8.7m. With the new mental health ward and private hospital co-location creating greater access, traffic to the hospital is increasing.

But that was the past. Let us look at the future for Caboolture under the Labor Government. As to education—we get some funding for the Tullawong State High School with a general learning area block and extending the existing music block. The Wamuran State School redevelopment continues. The Caboolture Special School has an administration upgrade. Beerwah, which is now in the new seat of Glass House, receives an eight-space general learning area block.

I also need to ask the Minister: what happened to the Caboolture State School's amenities block? This was an urgent need that I actually addressed to the Minister. That school has an old lower primary boys' toilet located under a fixed building that is an extreme health risk. I have already highlighted to the Minister this urgent need, especially the health risk aspects. The lower primary schoolchildren refuse to go to that particular toilet, and they sometimes hold on in an effort to try to get home before they actually have to use a place emitting such a stench, where liquid leaks onto the floor, and the tiles are falling off the walls. Q-Build have already been out, and they have photographed the appalling conditions of that block, yet nothing has been done. Perhaps the first severely ill

child may stimulate this Minister into action to actually allocate some funding in this area. Again, I urge the Minister to look at the photographs that were taken and see the appalling condition of that particular amenities block so that it may be moved up the list of capital works expenditure for this year. It is an urgent problem that really needs to be addressed. As well, I could see no allocation for the secure covered area for the Caboolture State High School—another issue that I highlighted to the Minister—because that older State high school does not have enough covered areas.

It would be remiss of me not to warn to Minister for Health that the questions that I need answered at the Estimates committee will be in relation to HACC funding, especially for the Caboolture area, and especially for my pet area of Home Help services for the aged and infirm. I need to know about that, especially as there has been a flagged 9% increase in funding and the target numbers have been estimated to be increased from 29,950 clients to some 32,000 clients. How many are actually allocated to the Caboolture and Bribie Island areas, and what is the budget for the Caboolture Home Help services? It is not something that I can pluck readily from the output statement.

I might add that the elderly, who are only growing older while we wait to see what the allocation is going to be for Caboolture and Bribie Island, are actually being taken off Home Help services or having their Home Help services reduced. This is something that I hope the Minister will address. I really need the Minister to answer this question—and I will be putting it to her at the Estimates committee—about what sort of funding allocations she will be giving to the Caboolture area with respect to the growing aged population there. My particular concern is for the older people in that area. I really feel for them because of the situation in which they are placed. I have had people taken off Home Help who have clearly displayed an inability to do their own cleaning in their homes, particularly raising their arms to actually clean and dust high places and other awkward places.

Time expired.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—IND) (12.43 a.m.): I rise to speak in this Budget debate and note that the Kenilworth State School is finally getting its general learning block. I thank the Beattie Labor Government and, in particular, the Minister for Education for finally delivering to the Kenilworth school

community a general learning block which I am certain will be well used. I am also pleased that, finally, the schools at Palmwoods and Woombye have been recognised by the Government as needing capital works expansion, with money to be spent at the Woombye school for a general learning half block and further funds to be spent at the Palmwoods school for a general learning half block.

The dramatic student growth at the Beerwah State High School has also been acknowledged by this Government with the allocation of significant funds for further capital works. Yesterday in this House, we heard a debate about the Government's decision to undertake a major capital works expansion at the Woodford Correctional Centre. I am very pleased that this Government has recognised the strategic significance of expanding the Woodford Correctional Centre. My constituents look forward to the job opportunities which will be created as a result of this significant and substantial capital works expansion. Further jobs will be available, not just during the construction works, but new jobs will be created once the construction works are completed and staffing of the new buildings will be required. I thank the Minister for Emergency Services for acknowledging the need for a replacement to the existing ambulance station in Nambour, and I look forward to the Minister returning to Nambour when the new station is finally operational.

A few short months ago, the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations visited Nambour and turned the first sod at the Nambour Cooloola Sunshine TAFE expansion. It is great to see the significant dollars which the Beattie Labor Government has allocated in this Budget to ensure that the Nambour TAFE campus continues to play a key role in the education of students in our region. The redevelopment of the Nambour Hospital is also clearly continuing, with further significant dollars being allocated in this year's Budget for the next stage of the hospital's redevelopment. The further allocation of funds for the hospital car park is also greatly appreciated.

Recently, the Premier of Queensland and the Minister for Health officially opened the Nambour psychogeriatric unit. Significant funds have already been spent on that redevelopment. It is great to see further funds allocated in this year's Budget to complete the capital works project. The Nambour Nursing Home has also been acknowledged as being in need of capital works funding. Again, I

recognise the continuation during this financial year of the nursing home redevelopment.

Last year, the Minister for Main Roads visited Nambour and inspected the dangerous situation at the Nambour Connection/Keil Mountain Road intersection. After years of lobbying successive Governments, I acknowledge that it was the Beattie Labor Government which actually delivered on this project in my electorate. I am very pleased to see the continued allocation of funds in this Budget to ensure the speedy completion of that overdue capital works project.

The Beerwah area of my electorate was also acknowledged to be in need of specific funding for the reconstruction of the Mount Beerwah road. I know that, as a result of the reconstruction of that 3.7 kilometres of road, the safety of that road will be significantly improved. We all identify Queensland with the Sunshine State. I thank the Minister for Mines and Energy for continuing to ensure that this Government funds the Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme. Simply put, Queenslanders who want to convert from an electric hot water system to a solar hot water system are able to apply for a range of rebates from the State Government, ranging from \$500 to \$200 depending on which rebate category the applicant falls into. We all need to be energy efficient, and it is great to see this Government providing this type of incentive to encourage Queenslanders to convert electric hot water systems to solar hot water systems.

There can be no doubt that the Beerwah Police Station is getting closer to being a reality with the allocation of further funds in this year's Budget. I thank the Minister for Police and Corrective Services for ensuring that appropriate funding was provided in this year's Budget for that important future police station.

The expansion of the School Nurse Program is to be commended, because I know that a lot can be achieved through this program. I thank the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education for working together on this important initiative. The school nurse trial pioneered at the Nambour and Burnside schools last year has proved to be the success that many people anticipated. Thank you very much, Ministers. The further funding of the Positive Parenting Program is also appreciated, because this has proved to be another successful program.

Finally, I thank the Premier and the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads for their funding of the significant improvement to the rail service linking Nambour and the railway stations in between

to Brisbane. I see this as a significant step forward by the Beattie Labor Government in finally acknowledging the need to provide improved public transport opportunities for the Sunshine Coast hinterland and the total region. I thank the Beattie Labor Government for listening to my constituents' calls for improved services.

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP)

(12.50 a.m.): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I speak in favour of the second Beattie Budget—a Budget which contains good news for the Townsville/Thuringowa region. I welcome the commitments that have been made to the Townsville/Thuringowa region in the Appropriation Bill which is being debated in the Parliament this evening. The Budget contains a number of key aspects and I congratulate the Premier and acting Treasurer on the excellent work that has been done in presenting this Budget to the Parliament over the last couple of days.

I previously mentioned some key aspects, and I would like to highlight some of those again tonight. The 1999-2000 Budget allows for a record capital works expenditure. It is also a strong Budget for jobs. It is a Smart State Budget providing record spending of \$3.8 billion on education. Queensland is going to employ an extra 288 teachers. The electorate of Townsville has a number of key needs in the education area. I am very pleased with the priority that the Beattie Government has given to the education of children in my region.

May I say to members this evening that the Townsville/Thuringowa region has done extremely well in attracting State Government budgetary allocations. I would like to commend my colleague the member for Mundingburra, Lindy Nelson-Carr, for working with me in representing our electorates over the past 15 months. We have worked hard to ensure that the Townsville/Thuringowa region receives a fair go. We live in Townsville, which is about 900 miles from the State capital. It is a long way away. It takes strong representation to ensure that we receive our rightful allocations. In the last two Budgets we have been able to receive our rightful allocations under a Beattie Labor Government. It is a far cry from what happened under a coalition Government which neglected Townsville, neglected Thuringowa, and neglected the electorate of Mundingburra.

The Beattie Government Budget provides for 325 additional police and 73 emergency services personnel to be employed across the State. I would like to commend the Premier and the Ministers who brought those increases forward. This represents a real addition to

services in the State of Queensland. The Townsville/Thuringowa region will receive a large share of the State's record \$5.2 billion capital works program. This program will build infrastructure and create important jobs for 68,000 Queenslanders.

Labor inherited an unemployment rate of 9% from the Borbidge coalition Government. Labor came to Government some 15 months ago with a promise of jobs, jobs and more jobs. It is great to see that, in this Budget, Labor is projecting an unemployment rate of 7.75%—well below the 9% rate inherited from the Borbidge coalition Government.

May I say to my fellow members tonight that, as we strive towards our 5% unemployment target, we do so with a great deal of credence. We will work towards ensuring that we maximise regional economic development opportunities.

I would like to welcome the health aspects of the 1999-2000 Budget, particularly as they pertain to the Townsville/Thuringowa region. Some \$53m has been allocated to the new Douglas Hospital, which is being developed right next door to James Cook University. Construction will be completed in mid-2001 and the hospital will be opened at the end of that year. The hospital will be complemented by an \$8m commitment to the James Cook University medical school. It has taken 26 years of hard fighting and campaigning to get this medical school. I feel very proud that north Queensland will now be served by a first-class medical school at James Cook University.

These health facilities are important to the whole of north Queensland. These facilities will work on indigenous health problems in rural and remote Queensland. The facilities will help to ensure that we are able to retain doctors in north Queensland. For far too long we have seen doctors being trained in the metropolitan capitals of Australia. This has meant that we have not been able to retain doctors in the north Queensland region. There are many reasons why the medical school will be a success. It will work in conjunction with the Douglas Hospital, the Cairns Hospital and the Mackay Hospital. We will have a first-class medical school for the whole of north Queensland.

I welcome the commitment that has been made by the State Government to roadworks in my region. I know that the national highway work is important. \$6m has been allocated to the Bluewater/Leichhardt Creek road construction project. This is a section of the Bruce Highway which was neglected by the coalition Government. It is a very important

part of the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Ingham. This work has been long overdue.

The Government has allocated \$3.5m to the Garbutt to Upper Ross Road development. This is another key part of our national highway network. As was mentioned by the member for Charters Towers, \$5.5m has been allocated to the Herveys Range development road. This is an important road when one considers the exports and imports to and from the area, including the cattle industry.

I am very impressed with the work that the Beattie Government has undertaken with regard to rail infrastructure. The 1999-2000 Budget contains another commitment to rail infrastructure in the Townsville region, with \$4.5m being allocated to the Stuart rail servicing site Stage 2 development. All these infrastructure developments are coming to Townsville at a time when Townsville is poised to ensure that our growth and development will kick on. These developments will ensure that we maximise job opportunities in Townsville and Thuringowa. It is an exciting period of our development. We will ensure that we maximise the regional, social and economic opportunities that are going to come our way.

I welcome the number of capital works items that have been committed by the Beattie Government in this year's Budget. I would like to refer to some of the ongoing commitments that the Beattie Government has made to the Townsville electorate. In about a month's time we will see the completion of the Townsville Strand development. This is a \$28m development. It was constructed as a result of a partnership between the Beattie Labor Government and the Townsville City Council, which is ably led by Mayor Tony Mooney. The Beattie Labor Government and the Townsville Labor City Council has been a great partnership.

This Budget contains a \$4.3m allocation to the development of the Townsville Strand. On 24 October we will be very proud when the Premier of this State, Peter Beattie, comes to Townsville and opens the Strand development. It is a great development for Townsville. It is a signature development for Townsville. It is a great tourism development for Townsville. It will highlight the amenity of Townsville. The people of Townsville will be able to use the Strand for a great number of recreational opportunities.

The Budget allocates \$6m to the Nelly Bay development. I am very much aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Nelly Bay area is an area which is very dear to your heart. The Nelly

Bay development will be important to Magnetic Island.

The Budget also allocates the final \$4m to the Dairy Farmers Stadium. This stadium is very important to all north Queenslanders. We often find that people come from Brisbane to attend Cowboys matches. We see crowds of 31,000 people attending the stadium for matches between the Cowboys and the Broncos.

I applaud the Minister for Housing and Public Works for his commitment to the Garbutt urban renewal program. This program languished under the coalition Government. We saw dozens of houses disappear from the suburb of Garbutt. In this Budget we see a further \$3m allocated to assist with urban and community renewal in the suburb.

Another part of my electorate which has been ignored by coalition Governments is Palm Island. Palm Island has been particularly targeted for infrastructure renewal with a further \$4.6m being allocated to the Palm Island Hospital development, \$500,000 for a new ambulance station and \$3.5m to complete the Palm Island dam. These are all very important infrastructure projects for Palm Island. The people of Palm Island have worked incredibly hard over the last 12 months.

The \$50m allocated to the new regional centres program will provide assistance with social and economic infrastructure and facilities in large regional centres such as Townsville. It will focus on community infrastructure programs such as city centre rejuvenation. It is ideally suited as a funding base for the re-development of Townsville's CBD.

I conclude by saying that the Beattie Government recognises the dynamic climate in the Townsville/Thuringowa region. This State Budget is very much reflective of this in terms of its social, environmental and economic impacts in regard to the Townsville/Thuringowa region. I commend the Budget to the House.

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (1 a.m.): I would have liked to believe everything that the Premier said in his Budget Speech. Unfortunately, there have been some very worrying developments, in particular the comment by Standard and Poor's. I hope that someone from the Government side will address that issue. Is what they are saying true or not? I have heard a lot of speeches tonight, but I have not heard anyone actually say, "No, there isn't really a \$350m deficit."

Mr Mackenroth: No, there isn't a \$350m deficit.

Mr NELSON: I would like to see that proven. These people have made a lot of claims. All I am asking is that somebody demonstrate to me that that is not right.

Mr Reeves: They tell me you're trying to get on The Panel. Is that true?

Mr NELSON: It is true. I would love to go on The Panel. However, I do not think that that has anything to do with the Budget. Would the member not like to go on it? As I said during the last Budget debate, I do not know much about accounting. It is probably one of my weakest points. I am not about to blast anyone's Budget; I know that I personally could not do a better job. However, I would like to make a few points. I do not want to take anything away from anyone. I know that my electorate is completely surrounded by Labor electorates, which all did quite well out of the Budget. There are quite a lot of good things for those electorates in the Budget. Of course, what is good for Cairns is good for the region around it, so I do not want to be critical of that at all. However, a couple of matters are causing me concern.

The first matter that I want to raise is the issue of three-phase power for the dairy industry. The issue has been ongoing from the term of the previous Government. My predecessor promised the dairy industry—and I have press releases to back this up—that he would give them \$1m to get three-phase power to certain areas in the dairy industry. As any member who has worked in the dairy industry would know, it is hard to keep milk cold before the trucks come to collect it. It is even harder to do that when one has to do it by using a generator or when there is an unsteady power supply. I am not talking about a massive amount of money; \$1m was promised to them. It did not come in the last Budget and it has not come in this Budget. I raise the issue in vain, but at least I have raised it.

I am sure the Minister would remember that at the Atherton Community Cabinet meeting, Premier Beattie quite barefacedly tried to draw some heat off the issue. Of course, at the time I was quite vocal about it. The Premier said that he would give—please correct me if I am wrong—in the vicinity of \$700,000 and \$150,000 in capital works. I would really like someone to point that allocation out to me in the Budget. I cannot find it. I have looked. I found \$50,000, but I certainly have not found anywhere in the vicinity of \$700,000. I would also like members to think about the figures that I am talking about. So far, everyone else in this Chamber

has talked about billions of dollars; I am talking about \$700,000. That was a promise that was made before a large crowd. There were a lot of people at that Community Cabinet meeting. These Community Cabinet meetings are a very good initiative of the Beattie Government. They are very popular. Certainly they were well supported on the tablelands. In relation to that \$700,000—and again I stand corrected if it was a little bit more or a little bit less—I remember the Premier promising that amount right at the very start of that meeting. I cannot find that allocation in the Budget. I hope that somebody can point out to me where it is in the Budget.

I do not know whether anyone remembers the previous Budget debate, but during that debate the member for Ipswich took great pleasure—and I think I was the only member mentioned by name in his speech but, again, I cannot be sure—in referring to my comments about the Malanda State High School. He said, "The manual arts block will be built this year." Those are the words that he used. Of course, that was in 1998. I let 1998 go by. I gave him the benefit of the doubt; I thought that he might have meant the financial year. Another Budget has been delivered, and not one single stone has been moved. I have heard absolutely nothing whatsoever about it, except from people at the high school itself saying that they have no knowledge of it being commenced. Again, I am sure that if members look at Hansard they will see that the member for Ipswich, who at the time was the Treasurer, stood up and said that that would be done. It has not been done. That is not letting me down; that is letting down the people of Malanda. I guarantee that those people know that.

Many roads on the tablelands are in need of work. I do not want members to think that I am singling out only two roads, but one is McHugh Road. It is a rather dangerous section of road and is frequented regularly by dairy trucks, cattle trucks and sometimes—even though it is not supposed to happen—B-doubles. As I say, it is a very dangerous section of road. I was told quite emphatically that work would start on it in June so that it would be done before the wet season. Work has not commenced on that road at all. Transport Department staff brought me the plans and so on and said that the work was going to be done. I repeat: not a single bit of work has commenced.

I have raised with the Department of Transport the issue of a realignment that was to be carried out at Marks Lane and the Gillies Highway. One farmer in particular was told, "It

is going to happen in May. Be ready, it will be happening in May. The resumption of your land will be in May. The roadworks will be commenced in May." He actually altered his crop rotation, did not plant as much as he should have planted, and the work did not commence. It is now September and that work still has not commenced. People have been told that it would be carried out and it has not even begun. Obviously the money has been allocated for those works to be carried out, or the Department of Transport would not say that it has. I would be very interested if somebody could tell me where that money has gone.

While I am speaking about major projects, I have heard a lot of members on this side talk about the major projects that are going on in their electorates. Again, I looked through the Budget—I do not have anyone down here working for me, I work by myself—and I cannot find any major projects—

Mr Reeves: Join the club.

Mr NELSON: The member has a party to back him up. I am an Independent. I cannot find any major projects in the Budget for the tablelands. I cannot find an allocation of any massive amount of money. As I said, I cannot even find \$700,000 for the Atherton Hospital. As I have said before in this Chamber, that hospital does not even have flyscreens. It services a very large population and certainly has a high workload.

One very worrying fact about the Budget that has been brought to my attention by somebody who knows a hell of a lot more about budgets than me is in relation to this 6% equity return. That person is very worried about such things as one-man police stations and the fact that the capital expenditure for one-man police stations might become an issue. The actual asset outlay for those stations might become an issue in the future and we might see a rationalisation of one-man police stations. I do not believe that the Beattie Government intends to do that. However, I would like to put on the record here and now that I do not want to ever see that happen. One-man police stations are very important, especially in my electorate where there are quite a few.

To end on a high note, I express my appreciation for certain provisions in the Budget. Of course, there is the money that has been allocated to much-needed improvements at Lotus Glen. It is a very large facility. It certainly houses a lot of people from north Queensland who probably have not been very good.

It is good that money is being allocated to the sugar industry, which at the moment is experiencing a number of problems. The Sugar Industry Bill is before the House. To the best of my knowledge, sugar is a very new industry on the tablelands. To the best of my knowledge and from the representations that I have had from people involved in the sugar industry on the tablelands, the very big issue of transferability needs to be addressed. Again, that is an issue that will be dealt with when the Sugar Industry Bill is debated.

In all, I cannot say whether this is a good Budget or a bad Budget. I do not have that sort of expertise. I ask that the issues that I have raised be addressed. I am talking about expenditure in the vicinity of \$5m or maybe \$6m. If those issues could be addressed, that would be very greatly appreciated not only by me but also by the 27,000-odd people who live on the tablelands. It would certainly keep me quiet for the next year. I do not believe that that small amount of money is too much to ask. Time and time again, these issues have been addressed in this House not only by me but also by the previous member.

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (1.09 a.m.): I have much pleasure in rising in support of the Budget, which is a great Budget for Queensland and, in particular, for the people of my electorate of Mansfield. Before discussing the benefits of the Budget, I wish to congratulate the Premier, the member for Ipswich and other members of the CBRC team, particularly the Deputy Premier. I make special mention of the Minister for Local Government, the member for Chatsworth, for his outstanding efforts in the four months that were spent working on the Budget process.

I wish to take the time allotted to me to inform the House of the benefits that will flow from the Budget to the people of the electorate that I am privileged to represent. Obviously a number of the benefits contained in the Budget will also assist the electorate of Chatsworth.

Over \$140m is to be spent on capital works on Brisbane's south side. This is made up of \$95m for the ongoing redevelopment of the Princess Alexandra Hospital, \$20.5m for the Mater Hospital at South Brisbane, and \$26.7m for the Logan Hospital. As a person who had the pleasure of attending the Princess Alexandra Hospital for two overnight stays, I saw at first hand why the redevelopment is badly needed. While the staff were first-class, unfortunately I cannot say the same about the facilities. The staff, especially in the neurosurgery ward that I was

in, are looking forward to having a first-class hospital so that they can provide the quality of care that they wish to provide.

It is probably appropriate to make special mention of redevelopment of the Mater Children's Hospital. Like many in this House, I was born at the Mater Hospital. In fact, in two days time it will be 33 years ago. The Mater Children's Hospital is probably the most important health asset on the whole south side of Brisbane. Without disregarding other age groups, providing quality health care for our very young is one of the most important roles that the health professions have. That is why it is great to see that this Government is allocating \$20.5m to redevelop the Mater Children's Hospital to enable quality and effective health services to be performed. While the Health budget will have a major bearing on the delivery of the most important services, the record budget of \$3.45 billion for recurrent funding will enable the delivery of vital health services to the people of Mansfield.

Some of the Health programs that I wish to emphasise include the introduction of a Positive Parenting program at the Child Health Centre at the Palmdale Shopping Centre in my electorate. Every parent in the electorate that I represent will benefit from the Positive Parenting program. Better parenting skills can lead to less stress in the home and reduce marital conflict. Research shows that behavioural problems in children can contribute to crime in later life. The program aims to give parents the tools they need to help overcome problems before they take root. This Budget item will produce real results at the grassroots level. It will have a greater effect on the quality of life of many in the electorate than most other initiatives. Once again, Labor is caring about real issues.

The enhancement of the Brisbane Youth Service, with the appointment of a specialist drug counsellor, will tackle the single most dramatic problem facing the community today. The increase in this service recognises that drug and alcohol abuse could have a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families. It is also a fact that drug and alcohol abuse contributes to a significant proportion of crime, violence and social disruption in our community. Once again, Labor is delivering on services that impact on real problems.

The \$13m boost to mental health services illustrates our commitment to ensuring that health services are provided close to where people live and will ensure that they will be used to expand community-based mental

health services. It is a fact that one in five adults will experience some kind of mental health problem at some time in their lives. In Queensland we have a comparatively high rate of youth suicide. Initiatives such as the provision of additional funding of \$1m for non-Government community organisations and the development of suicide prevention materials are most welcome. Non-Government community organisations are now \$2m a year better off under a Labor Government. Once again, we have a Labor Government delivering on real issues that have a major impact on the quality of life of the people of my electorate.

An additional \$12m will be injected into the Queensland Home and Community Care program, which will give more Queenslanders access to a range of community nursing and allied health and respite care services. This extra money will help to meet the increasing demand on the program, which provides care, support and services to frail, elderly people and people with a disability and their carers. Programs such as the Mount Gravatt Meals on Wheel and the HACC program based at the Mount Gravatt Community Centre are prime examples of community services that positively provide support to those who simply need a hand. I have seen at first hand the effect on the quality of life of those who use these services in my electorate. That is why I am proud that a Labor Government is providing a boost for HACC. Once again, Labor is delivering a service that produces real results for our local people.

I turn now to the area of training. Some \$7.6m is being spent on improving southside TAFE colleges. These colleges provide vital training to both young and not-so-young people of the electorate of Mansfield. A sum of \$3.5m is provided to the Moreton Bayside College. I might add that that college has produced, and still produces, some high quality graduates. A sum of \$1m has been provided to South Bank TAFE, \$1.9m to Yeronga TAFE and \$1m to the Queensland College of Arts. Once again, we have a Labor Government that is spending money that will improve the delivery of services in a most important area—the training of our population. That is real delivery, creating real results.

I turn now to the area of public housing. The people of Queensland fully realise that only a Labor Government actually cares about affordable and available housing. Once again, that view has been proven to be correct. In the Brisbane southside area, 24 new homes, 65 medium units and 19 senior units will be built this financial year. Above all else, we have a Minister who not only talks about his regard for

the people who rent from the department but who matches his words with actions. Like me, the Minister knows that those who want to stereotype public housing tenants as second-class citizens are not only lacking in compassion but show complete ignorance. The Minister's granting of \$22m to improve the existing dwellings clearly shows that his words are matched by action.

I remember in the early days of this Government that the Minister made a statement that he was concerned that we reward our good tenants, particularly those who may have been renting for 40 years, by renovating their houses once they have passed away. New tenants get the benefit of the excellent tenant who had done everything right and who had cared for the property. The Minister questioned why we should not reward the long-term tenant by fixing up the sections of their homes or units that need it. I do not think anyone could argue with his belief. It is great that the Minister has been able to deliver that for those people. Once again, we have a Labor Government delivering real results that affect real people.

The Roma Street development, which will cost \$13.4m, will be something that all Queenslanders and, in particular, Brisbanites can be extremely proud of. Above all, we will have a first-class place for recreation. Along with the entire city west precinct, we will have a leisure precinct that will be unmatched in any place in the world.

In the area of State Development, I am proud of the fact that the Brisbane Technology Park, which is located within the Mansfield electorate, is a major focus of our plans to ensure that Queensland becomes a Smart State. A sum of \$50,000 has been funded for the Queensland light metal industries, which is an initial amount of the \$10m promised by our Government. The Brisbane Technology Park will finally receive \$1m to ensure the roll-out of the fibre optic cable.

Of all the Budget amounts that will have a major impact on improving the services to the electorate of Mansfield, one of the most important will be the provision of a further \$180m for the South East Transit Project busway. As I have previously mentioned in this place, the busway will revolutionise public transport usage for the people of the Mansfield electorate.

Like many other people within my electorate, I went to the Gabba last Saturday night. On the way home, the talk was of the anticipation felt at the nearing of the completion of the Gabba redevelopment. I am

proud that we have allocated \$38m to complete this plan. I cannot wait to see what it is like to be one of 40,000 people watching the Lions or the Bulls win next year, and the Olympic soccer games will be a highlight. If Saturday is any indication, in terms of atmosphere the Gabba will give Lang Park a run for its money.

Education is certainly the winner in this Budget, with 288 more teachers as part of the 3.7% boost in spending. The Government has extended the Building Better Schools system, with an allocation of \$50m. The Budget is great news for the people of Mansfield and, above all else, it follows our No. 1 commitment—jobs, jobs, jobs.

In conclusion, I wish to reflect on what Mansfield has achieved over the past 14 months. We gained real results in respect of the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road with the changing of the dangerous goods route. The Police Beat at Garden City had a major impact in terms of community policing. We have had extra-urgent maintenance at the Mansfield State High School, the Wishart State School and the Mansfield State School. There is also an after-school facility at the Mansfield State School. Also, \$160,000 to fund the completion of the Evans Deakin Hall at the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds was allocated by the Minister for Local Government. There has been extra funding for the painting of the Wishart State School, for shade structures at the Mansfield State High and for a school nurse at the Rochedale State High School. This Budget and what we have achieved in Mansfield shows the people of Mansfield and Queensland that Labor cares and that only Labor can produce real results.

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (1.20 a.m.): It gives me pleasure to take this opportunity to speak on the 1999-2000 Budget. Last night the first thought that came into my mind was that, although this is the most important Bill to come before the House each year, we have the least time in which to study it before the second-reading debate. I realise the Estimates process affords members the opportunity to scrutinise the appropriation, and I agree that this process is a valuable contribution to Budget procedure. However, I believe that a little more time between the tabling and the reply might lead to an improved reply process.

I intend to make some general comments on the overall Budget, to look at it from a regional perspective and to touch on some of the more obvious trends in the Public Works and Housing area. Based on the selective leaks over recent weeks, I must say that I

anticipated a somewhat better Budget than it turned out to be. One of the aspects of our State that Queenslanders who follow these things have always been quite proud of is our lowest taxed State status. I know that we are still below the average, but to be out low taxed by Tasmania is the possible source of some embarrassment. I make that comment without casting any aspersions on our parliamentary colleagues across Bass Strait. Indeed, my family and I lived in Tasmania for four years and have a high regard for that State and its people. But I understand it has an extremely high level of debt and I wonder what level of financial mismanagement causes this Government to inflict a higher overall average tax rate than Tasmania's. Perhaps the acting Treasurer can shed some light on that.

Similarly, I do not recall any mention of a possible deficit in the acting Treasurer's speech, yet subsequent observations would seem to indicate that Queensland has one foot on the slippery dip which will plunge the State into the red. I mentioned earlier that Queenslanders were proud of their lowest taxed State status. Equally, we have been proud of our State's net debt free status. Is this, too, about to be squandered? I wonder whether the comment by Rick Shepherd of Standard and Poor's surprised the acting Treasurer as much as it alarmed the Opposition and will alarm many concerned Queenslanders. It is worth repeating. He stated:

"In contrast to recent years, the general government sector is expected to slip into the red in fiscal 2000 ... A general government underlying cash deficit of A\$0.4 billion is forecast ..."

This, together with a forecast 20% slump in economic growth down to 3.75% this year points to a gloomy Budget. Personally, I cannot see the Government achieving its stated unemployment figure of 7.75% while the economic indicators are so stodgy, to say the least.

Although all members on both sides of this House accept the need to and the benefits of moving to an accrual accounting basis, it would seem that the Government has used this as some sort of subterfuge to introduce a brand-new tax with the seemingly innocuous title of equity return. Its description in the glossary of terms commences with—

"A periodic payment reflecting the potential benefit forgone by government as a result of its investment in the equity of an agency."

I wonder who came up with that one. Does this mean that any agency that is not getting 6% on any of its assets should flog them off? I wonder how the Ministers for Housing, Health, or Family Services have responded privately when advised that new capital works funding represents a benefit forgone by the Government. What is the Government? I thought it was the Government's function to provide public housing, hospitals and schools, not to see their provision as a benefit forgone.

I have been advised by others that this new tax grab, based on last year's Budget, would be \$306m. What is the next step? Will we have the Treasury boffins lining up to advise Ministers and directors-general how to avoid the tax? I suspect that that would be a reasonable assumption. The options would seem to be to get rid of what the acting Treasurer calls "lazy assets" and/or avoid new capital expenditure. One option would seem to disadvantage old established areas and the other would disadvantage the State's growth areas, particularly areas such as the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, Townsville and Cairns.

Although I represent a rapid growth area, I can give the House an example of the former. A couple of years ago, I was successful in convincing a Minister to retain a former principal's house in the grounds of the Buderim Primary School. The school gets great use out of that house and the school community has painted and maintained it nicely. Would the boffins advise the Minister that the removal and sale of this school would save them tax? Possibly. But would the students, staff and parents agree? No way in the world! The latter option, that of avoiding new capital works, is even more relevant in electorates such as Mooloolah. Will Ministers be reluctant to provide new education, health and police facilities to our growth regions until absolutely necessary so as to put off the liability for the tax? Then the disadvantage that the growth areas of the State already share becomes a double whammy. I have not yet heard the members for Townsville and Cairns expressing their concerns about this.

I have not yet been able to ascertain how this tax comes back to the agencies. I trust Treasury does not keep it. Perhaps we will see this initiative as causing a transfer of expenditure from capital works to recurrent, and that, too, is a worry. It would seem to me that this tax will punish those departments which best meet the challenge of delivering capital works as and when required, and if this is the case I believe it is a stupid tax.

The second aspect that I wish to cover tonight relates to capital expenditure in my electorate. Fortunately, I have always approached budgetary matters from a regional perspective. Electoral boundaries are rather artificial and change from time to time. For this reason I welcome the proposed improvements at the Nambour and Caloundra Hospitals. However, I wonder whether they are reannouncements of previously planned work. Improvements on Maroochydore Road are welcome and, like all roadworks, are most welcome when complete. The planned works at the Nambour TAFE and the Currumbundi Recreation Camp will also be welcome in an area of such rapid growth as the Sunshine Coast. None of those works are located in the electorate of Mooloolah, but all of them will be used by my constituents.

I would say that the omissions are more worthy of comment today, and I put the Government on notice that it has a responsibility not just to match the Sunshine Coast's growth rate but also to anticipate it. I refer particularly to duplication to four lanes of the Sunshine Motorway and major works at the intersection of Buderim-Mooloolaba Road and the motorway. Schools, particularly at Buderim and Mountain Creek, are still experiencing growth pains, both at a primary and high school level. One shudders to think of the load on the State Government for education on the Sunshine Coast were it not for the four fine private schools—Immanuel Lutheran, Matthew Flinders, Sunshine Coast Grammar School and Siena Catholic College—all of which are in or very close to my electorate.

In relation to Health, Nambour General and its dedicated staff continue to provide the lion's share of health services on the coast. I applaud it, together with the Caloundra Hospital and Buderim Private. Thanks to them the coast is managing to keep close to requirements, but waiting lists are still a problem. The Noosa Hospital has just come on stream thanks to a joint private sector/Government arrangement during the coalition term in Government, and I wish them well in contributing to health care on the coast.

Time will not permit me to go into detail on policing in the north coast region, but I commend the officers on their approach to what is often a thankless task. Our region will continue to be disadvantaged until the police staffing allocation model is revised to take out the inherent biases against growth areas such as the Sunshine Coast. I call on the Minister to look at this.

I am hopeful that the next State Budget will recognise the obvious need for a cultural/convention centre in the Maroochy Shire. I understand planning is proceeding, but I take this opportunity to advise the House that the need is great and becoming greater. Similarly, the Sunshine Coast Hockey Association has submitted an excellent submission for a synthetic field and now has the full support of the Maroochy Shire Council. The Sunshine Coast should no longer have to export its best players to Brisbane or elsewhere to enjoy top-level facilities.

As I said at the beginning of my contribution, one day is not really sufficient time to study a full set of Budget papers in detail, particularly when there is such a fundamental change as moving from cash to accrual accounting. However, to see what appears to be a massive reduction in the Public Works budget is quite disturbing. Other speakers in addition to me have been quite critical of the BST, the Beattie stealth tax. After taking this tax into account, it amounts to a massive \$142.8m reduction in the Public Works budget, which is more than 33%.

While it is pleasing to see some good outcomes, particularly by Project Services and Q-Fleet, they were rather lonely amongst the whole-of-Government's public trading enterprises deficit of \$402m. From going through the Public Works' commercialised business units, there is no escaping the fact that there seems to be some very poor and concerning performances. Q-Build's return on net assets of 4.4% is, to say the least, disappointing after a 1998-99 target of nearly 16%. This year's target of over 10% return on net assets will be a challenge for the Government and will require a significant effort by all concerned.

Project Services, as I said earlier, has had a good year and those officers need to be commended. Similarly, Q-Fleet seems to have had a solid year. On the other hand, Goprint's bottom line—which from my rather quick look at the figures seems to have come from a drop in sales—a \$3.5m loss, or a 68.5% loss on net assets, is a situation that the Minister must address as a matter of urgency. The SDS result of \$105,000 profit, or 5.7% on net assets, is not only down on Budget, but the forecast this year for a \$38,000 profit, or 4.4% return on net assets, is of significant concern and poses another challenge for the Minister in the current year.

On the housing side, the first comment I would like to make is that the changes to the method of recording the key performance

indicators to output statements might fit in with the terminology used elsewhere in accrual accounting systems. However, where performance can be definitively measured, this output statement method can mask poor Government performance. I note the intention to commence 700 new homes this year. This compares poorly with the 780 starts by the coalition in 1997-98, a figure derived from the Government's own MPS. Even this Government achieved 763 last financial year after a target of 803. The coalition's superior record was achieved notwithstanding the burden of having to help fill in Keating's black hole of debt at the same time.

Another area of concern is community housing. Why is the Government attempting only half of the budgeted amount as last year—and that fell well short, anyway? It would appear that the need in the rural and regional areas is not being recognised and, if it is recognised, it is only being addressed at a 50% level. The bush deserves better than this.

I also note the proposed emergence of what is termed a new lending product to assist in the purchase by tenants of rental properties. I also note the intention of the reintroduction of the Home Share Scheme. As much as I support the concept of home ownership, I fear that this might signal the reintroduction of those tired, failed schemes which cost the taxpayer dearly not that long ago, not to mention the anguish of purchasers. To the Minister I say: take care. I do not believe it helps the taxpayer or the tenant purchaser if badly structured schemes fall apart. I will be watching this one with interest.

In summary, what do we have in this Budget? Yes, there are quite a few good bits scattered through, but there seem to be far more very worrying aspects. What strikes me most in all this is: where is the vision? There is rhetoric but little substance.

In four weeks' time I will be attending the Snowy Mountains reunion in Jindabyne. Naturally this has given rise to a certain amount of anticipated nostalgia. How well I recall the energy, excitement and sense of achievement of that project. I think that is what is missing in this Budget. Queensland is looking for a real stimulus. Whether that is to be found in the big projects or in finding more jobs in small business or a mixture of both, it does not seem to be found in this Budget.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (1.34 a.m.): As a proud member of the Beattie can-do Labor Government, I have a great deal of pleasure in speaking to these Appropriation Bills this morning and

highlighting some of the benefits to my electorate of Bundaberg. This 1999 Budget, the second for the Beattie Labor Government, is a sound Budget, a Budget for all Queenslanders, a Budget that delivers on the Government's key priorities and continues the drive towards our 5% unemployment target with a range of measures to provide jobs and job security. It offers unprecedented support for rural and regional Queensland and provides opportunities for us all to meet the challenges of the future.

My electorate of Bundaberg has gained funding for many positive projects. Our hospital that was heavily attacked by the Opposition during the past year has gained a boost to recurrent funding of \$2m. This has been widely acclaimed in our community by people who know that the shortage of funding has been there and has been growing worse for many years and was not addressed by the previous Government. In fact, the base hospital in Bundaberg was never mentioned in this House by the member for Burnett throughout his two and a half years as a senior Minister when he could have made a difference.

As well as that \$2m boost to recurrent funding, the Budget also provides \$9.4m to complete the redevelopment of our hospital in this financial year. The people of Bundaberg and the surrounding district can now look forward to the opening of their redeveloped hospital early next year. It is to be hoped that the 5,000 people who were frightened into signing petitions because they were told the outpatients was closing or the hospital was being closed will all come along to the official opening and see for themselves just what we do have at our hospital, the extent of the services that are available and the wonderful job that our staff do to provide a service second to none. I pay tribute to the Minister for Health, who is so committed to providing the best possible health services for all Queenslanders.

Of course, there are some problems in Health that have been growing over the past 20 years and are beyond the control of any State Government. People now live longer and in their latter years they have a much greater need for medical help and hospitalisation. People are dropping out of private health funds by the thousands and flooding the public systems. In recent years, the cost of individual treatments has escalated, with some surgery procedures now reaching six figures—and these operations are being done daily. There is an acute shortage of doctors, specialists and dentists in the public and the private systems.

I believe that there will always be these health problems until the whole provision of health services and the funding of health services in Australia is addressed. I commend the Premier and the Health Minister, who recently joined with all other States in requesting a Federal commission of inquiry into the provision of health services throughout Australia. This would have had enormous benefits for everyone, and it is a sad day for Australia that this request was denied.

Moving on to the benefits for Bundaberg, \$2.67m has been provided for the Bundaberg campus of the Central Queensland University in this Budget and will fund the new academic building and the refectory that are valuable additions to our university campus. This campus is another asset in Bundaberg that Labor can be proud of. It was the Goss Labor Government that transferred the land to enable this campus to be established, and that Government then supported the initial buildings with \$2.5m of funding.

The strong argument to have that campus in Bundaberg was that students in Bundaberg were being deprived of a tertiary education because of the high cost to families of relocating students to either Brisbane or Rockhampton. The establishment of this campus has now been justified. It is now the fastest growing campus of CQU. It is experiencing enormous growth in demand for student places. Most importantly, more than half of the 400 students at our university are the first members of their families to have ever received a tertiary education.

It is to the credit of the current Minister for Education that he has recognised the importance to every university to have a refectory and it is to this Government's credit that it has again financially supported our university. In fact, this Government's support of tertiary education in Queensland is widely recognised and is the envy of universities in all other States. Kepnock State High School will receive \$340,000—the cost of new facilities. This follows the recent announcement that Bundaberg State High School will benefit from a full redevelopment plan. Our TAFE college will be refurbished at a cost of \$900,000 in this Budget and \$947,000 has been allocated to fund office extensions at the Department of Natural Resources.

The major problems in Bundaberg are unemployment and the urgent need for more water, and it is good to see this Budget continuing the planning processes and studies that are so necessary for the proposed new dam and stage 2 of the Walla Weir. The Walla

Weir is now complete and producing an extra 35,000 megalitres of water annually. This is almost four times the annual water use for the entire city of Bundaberg, so it is indeed a major boost to our water storage in the short term.

Other processes in place to relieve the problems we all face include the recently announced \$41m water efficiency program, which has the capacity to put another \$280m into the Queensland economy over the next four years and another 1,600 jobs in regional Queensland, just by making better use of the water that we already have. This initiative of Minister Rod Welford has been welcomed by the Queensland Farmers Federation, Queensland Canegrowers, Cotton Australia and Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers. It would certainly be of enormous benefit to my area if the review of the development incentive scheme for on-farm storages could result in the lowering of the threshold from the \$200,000 that benefited only major growers to a lower figure to allow subsidies for smaller farmers.

Of course, Bundaberg will share in the funding for Main Roads. The Burnett Heads boat harbour will be dredged in this financial year, and extra funding for Home and Community Care programs, mental health, school nurses and positive parenting programs is welcome.

I will be talking with the city council to see if Bundaberg can take advantage of the \$100m joint State and local government Regional Centres program. We will welcome some of the 288 additional teachers, 253 police officers and 73 emergency service personnel that will be provided throughout the State in this financial year.

We will gain a substantial share of the public housing projects, the \$22.9m that has been provided for Community Jobs Plans which fund work projects for long-term unemployed people, and the \$3.37m that has been provided for community employment assistance programs, which provide training and job skills to long-term and disadvantaged unemployed people. These projects are invaluable in my area, where the unemployment rate is among the worst in Australia.

Three weeks ago on behalf of the Minister for Housing, Robert Schwarten, I opened a block of four units in Bundaberg. Not only have these units become a wonderful new home for four very excited families; their construction was undertaken by the Bundaberg area community apprenticeship and training

scheme, known as BACAS. This was a valuable training opportunity for the 16 young apprentices and trainees who worked on this project. Last week I had the opportunity to congratulate another group of 20 young people who, again through BACAS, were employed to upgrade our showgrounds—mending fences, painting, gardening and carrying out general maintenance work.

This work gives the community better facilities and it also gives these young people some incentive and some hope for the future. They gain skills, but more importantly they gain friends. It is difficult for us to understand just how low morale is for these young unemployed people. When I spoke to these young men one said to me, "It has been really good to have this job. I have some friends now." It is hard for us to realise that those young people have no education, they have no work and they have no friends. This is a side of these job opportunities that is often overlooked.

While it was premature to expect that the dam that is so badly needed would be in this Budget, it is nevertheless a good Budget for Bundaberg and for this State. It provides for record spending of \$4.2 billion in education, \$5.2 billion in capital works and \$3.4 billion in recurrent funding for health, as well as \$563m for health building projects. It provides incentives for State development and includes many fine initiatives in child care, family services, Aboriginal health and emergency services.

This is a Budget for all Queenslanders. It does lay the foundations for a stronger and smarter Queensland as we move into the new millennium, and it does introduce a host of new initiatives to provide a better quality of life for all Queenslanders. I congratulate the Premier and acting Treasurer on a sound Budget. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Ipswich and I commend the Appropriation Bills to the House.

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (1.44 a.m.): This Budget, which the Premier, in his usual over-the-top manner, described as a millennium Budget, is already being seen by people right across the political, social and economic spectrum as a massive failure. When environmentalists, the Queensland Teachers Union, victims of crime groups, the Property Council and the tourism industry all come out to attack this document, we begin to understand what a flawed vision the Premier has crafted.

Basically, this is a Budget that offers next to nothing to rural Queensland. It offers next to

nothing for law and order, for education, for health or for our mining industry. It is a big spending, big taxing Budget which according to its own figures will drive down gross State product, reduce State employment growth and increase the rate of inflation.

According to the Budget papers, taxes, fees and fines are due to rise by 7.1% over the coming year. This so-called frugal Premier and acting Treasurer has actually increased tax revenue by about \$330m in this financial year. What should be a matter of great concern is where some of these increases have their origin.

This Government will not reduce payroll tax until the next financial year, but in the meantime has slugged employers with a 5% payroll tax or employer superannuation contribution. In the period 1 January 2000 to 30 June 2000 alone, this Government intends to rip from the private sector an extra \$28m in payroll tax. One does not have to be a genius to know that this is a tax on jobs and job creation. So much for this Government's claim that its actions are centred around job creation.

This Government's full frontal attack on Mr and Mrs Average does not stop there. The machine gaming tax, the money that the Government gets from poker machines, is due to increase by an amazing 14.3%. In the next 12 months this Government intends to rip out of the poker machines in pubs and clubs more than \$294 million. That will be an increase of around \$37m in revenue in one year alone.

Motor vehicle registration fees will increase by 6.6% in the coming year. When any of my constituents drive around, they should recall that this Labor Government will be grabbing from them and their fellow car owners an extra \$34m in this year alone.

I turn to the fire levy of the Department of Emergency Services. This document shows that in the next 12 months the money collected by the fire levy will increase by 18.3% and will hit Queenslanders to the tune of \$168.4m.

One would think that, with the tax revenue expected to rise by 7.1% and inflation estimated to rise by 1.75% in the same period, even allowing for economic growth and other factors this Budget would be in a healthy state. In fact, the Premier claimed long and loud on Tuesday that it was in surplus, yet it appears to be in surplus only from an accrual accounting point of view.

This is the first Budget calculated on an accrual rather than cash method. Fortunately,

tucked away in Budget Paper No. 2 was the real figure for this Budget—the cash figure that the Premier tried to fudge. Last year the Premier's figures showed that it was estimated that by 30 June this year there would be a \$390m surplus. In fact, this big spending and grossly incompetent Government ended up with a surplus of only \$27m.

What can we look forward to this year? We can look forward to a Budget deficit of \$350m. This is the first time that our Budget has been in the red—in debt—since 1977. In fact, if we add to that the expected debt of public trading enterprises, the total debt in this Budget for the coming year alone is \$1.235 billion. So keen was this Government to hide the debt situation that half of table A18 on page 94 of Budget Paper No. 2 is blacked out. The debt situation for trading enterprises over the next few years is not even disclosed. As Alan Wood said in the Australian, the Premier "has not made a great start on getting things under control".

Then we had the Premier announcing the expenditure of \$270m over 10 years for bioindustries and bemoaning the fact that Queensland might be seen as other than just a quarry or a farm. As Alan Mitchell said in the Australian Financial Review—

"Premiers that try to pick winners end up saddled with losers, or being held hostage by footloose industries ever ready to take the operations to where the tax concessions are the highest."

All I can say when I look at this Budget is that it ain't too smart. It ain't smart to project a Government wages bill that will rise by 4.3% on average over the next three years when inflation will rise by around 1% less in the same period. Sounds a bit like buying votes to me! It ain't smart for the Government to claim that it can bring unemployment down, when its own Budget highlights that it will create 8,000 fewer jobs this year. It ain't smart to put the Budget in deficit, and it ain't smart to broaden the payroll tax base—which is a barrier to job creation—and it ain't smart to undermine all of the key service provision departments.

When we look at this document we find that the key departments of Primary Industries, Mines and Energy, Health, Education and Police have all done badly. Only the Premier's key and pet projects and central agencies seem to have come out of this flawed Budget with substantial funding increases. As a member representing a non-metropolitan electorate, I see precious little in this Budget to help our rural industries or provincial centres. I find it almost obscene that the Department of

Primary Industries' funding was slashed by \$26.6m, and yet that of the Premier's Department went up by \$59.2m and it increased its staff by 107. Central agencies and pet projects were the real winners from this gimmicky Budget, rather than practical and sustained assistance for our traditional industries and for communities already hard hit by global economic trends. So from the viewpoint of my own electorate, I see very little good news from this Budget.

I will now turn to the Ministerial Portfolio Statements for the Minister for Emergency Services. The Gold Coast Bulletin was unkind enough on Wednesday to refer to the Minister as the "Master of Disaster". Yet if we read the portfolio statement we see that the Minister is trying very hard to earn that title. The first point I make about the document is that key information is hidden away, and it is a document that erodes accountability. For example, when we look at employee numbers in the Department of Emergency Services we see that Corporate Services full-time equivalent employee numbers—and budget—are spread across the various so-called output areas of the department according to consumption ratios. The statement seems to indicate that Corporate Services staff have increased by five, but in what area of so-called Corporate Services it is impossible to tell, because on top of that the document points out that the Support Service Business Unit and the Strategic and Executive Services area are all collectively referred to as Corporate Services.

And as if that was not enough, when we peruse the figures for the Queensland Ambulance Service we see that staff figures for the QAS include an allocation of staff numbers relating to the Corporate Services area of the department. So a person who is keen to determine whether operational funds are being soaked up on FIR or IT functions or the like would find it almost impossible to determine from this document. If we wanted to find out if a massive bureaucracy from the director-general down was being created—and I might add that this is of real concern to many uniformed officers in Emergency Services—it is impossible to determine based on these Budget documents.

In an endeavour to comply with accrual accounting, the Parliament has been presented with a portfolio statement which actually obscures performance and inhibits proper scrutiny of this portfolio. I can assure the House that from the time that it was first created in 1993 there has always been a degree of friction within this department

between head office and Corporate Services and the men and women at the coalface. The level of concern has increased in recent times, and all I can say is that reading this portfolio statement only increases my resolution that the Estimates hearing will be absolutely critical to getting to the bottom of what is going on.

One area which has received considerable publicity in recent months has been the impact of free ambulance coverage for all pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants from 1 January 1999. I preface my comments by pointing out that the coalition is supportive of this initiative but, nevertheless, its introduction and ongoing maintenance raise a number of key questions. What is of concern is that, in the area of grants and contributions, the QAS budgeted on \$77,964,000 from consolidated revenue for the 1998-99 period. In fact, due to the introduction of the free service, this rose to almost \$87m.

Now the estimated contribution for this financial year will be \$108m. In other words, it has gone up by \$30m in one year. Yet in the user charges column, which reflects income gained from ambulance subscriptions, we see a decrease from the almost \$79m anticipated to a figure under \$76m. Again, the portfolio statement makes it clear that this was principally due to the introduction of the free ambulance service. We can see from this document that the QAS targeted that, by 30 June 1999, 1,650,000 Queenslanders would be covered by the QAS subscription scheme, whereas in fact the figure reached was almost 45,000 less than that. The Budget papers show that \$24.5m per annum has been allocated for this service. But added to that must be the loss of income from lapsed subscriptions. All in all, this is a very serious impost—and one which the Minister knows has impacted significantly on the QAS.

One does not oppose providing a free service to those in need and our elderly, but it is clear that this has been, and will continue to be, a very costly initiative, and not necessarily one targeted at meeting those most in need, either financially or medically. At the same time, and despite the so-called extra funds, it is clear that the QAS is not going forward. The proportion of single-stretcher vehicles within economic life instead of being in excess of 80% as targeted last year had dropped to 64% by June this year. In fact, when members read this document they will see statistic after statistic indicating that, in key service delivery areas, Emergency Services is going backwards under this Government.

Before concluding, I would like to touch on the issue of the fire levy. We have debated the levy in this House, and I am not going to repeat the arguments put forward at that time. However, when we look at the Budget documents we see under taxes, fees and fines that only in the area of conveyancing stamp duties is any Government tax proposed to be increased by a greater percentage than the fire levy. The coalition inherited in 1996 a Fire Service in disarray. It was driven by internal dissent. The then Fire Commissioner was on a collision course with the union representing firefighters and had alienated himself from his work force. The coalition inherited a Fire Service in debt to the Treasury by \$17.5m. When the Minister took over last year, that debt had been reduced to \$13.5m—a reduction of \$4m—without slugging every property owner with a fire levy increase of 14%. That is a levy which hits at everyone in the community. It is a regressive tax. This year alone, this Government will slug ordinary ratepayers—not just commercial businesses, but Mr and Mrs Average—with an extra \$24m in fire levies, a slug which local authorities will have the responsibility of collecting.

In comparison, the coalition reduced the debt of the Fire Service, gave firefighters their first real pay increase in years and actually increased the numbers of uniformed officers—people at the pit face, not non-operational staff. We gave back to the Fire Service a degree of respect—of unity—and hope for the future, a future not tied up with meddling bureaucrats building up empires and settling scores. So from my preliminary reading of the portfolio statement, I see lots of publicity, but at its core it is a document without much heart and soul; it is a document which is dominated by grabs for cash and promises of free services. But it raises major questions about the capacity of the uniformed officers to get the staff and the equipment to do the job. Like this whole Budget, this is a document of smoke and mirrors, and I look forward to using the Estimates process to try to get behind the rhetoric and extravagant claims to find out what the real situation is.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mackenroth, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1.59 a.m. (Friday).